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Global Cities and Cultural Diversity Governance:
Comparing Doha and Singapore

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Abstract

The rise of global cities has raised multiple questions regarding the governance of diversity. While they are often portrayed as spaces of ungovernable global flows and as catalysts of the disappearance of national identities, this paper aims to analyse these cities' actions and strategies to govern their cultural diversity and defend a renewed conception of the national. I combine an analysis of outward-looking strategies that promote their cultural diversity on the global cultural field, and of inward-looking strategies that attempt to project their plural identity in the urban space. I compare two cities, Doha and Singapore, which have emerged as major centres of the global economy and offer a perspective that differs from the large Western cities where the notion of global city was initially coined. The affirmation of Doha and Singapore as global cities does not go along with a process of weakening of the nation-state, but on the contrary takes part in a logic of nation building and nation branding. The paper analyses how local actors negotiate this dialectic between the global and the national. Firstly, I show that they have put transnational regional networks and identities at the centre of the promotion of these cities as cultural hub. Secondly, I show that the recognition of these cities' diverse heritage and its display in the urban landscape, go in parallel with an increasing spatial exclusion of recent migrants.

Keywords

Global city, Globalisation, Cultural diversity, Urban Governance, Doha, Singapore.

Introduction

Migrants represent 95% of the Qatari workforce and 35% of the Singaporean workforce, a vast majority of them are invisible low-skilled and low-paid workers. Their sheer number contrasts with their absence in the glossy images that these cities project of themselves through their proactive urban marketing strategies, and the hardship they live through to feed the rapid urban growth of these cities create dissonance in the idea of creative, successful and happy cities that urban elites would like to diffuse. In the early 2010s, critiques on the treatment of migrant workers in Doha and Singapore published in the international press, was followed by a number of public measures aiming to create a positive showcase of their place within their respective cities. In Singapore, the state organised a photograph competition where they were invited to show pictures of their daily life. In Doha, a mall entitled Asian Town was built to provide them with cultures of their countries of origin and they were invited to contribute to Qatar's national day celebration. This battle of image reveals the contradictions that emerging global cities try to negotiate as their aspiration to project themselves as "cultural hubs", and to portray themselves as successful cosmopolitan models while denying the fate of the diverse populations that are the engine of their development.

How do cities that aspire to raise their status as global cultural hubs deal with their diversity? How do they mobilise cultural policies to reshape their identity and their place in regional and global networks? How can diversity be an instrument for globalising cities? And what consequence does this have for the lives of migrants and minorities?

The majority of the world's population now live in cities and urbanisation keeps progressing throughout the world, especially in Asia and Africa, making cities increasingly diverse. The "age of migration", which emerged following the drop in transport cost and the on-going acceleration of information flows enabled by new technologies, has rendered obsolete the traditional models to address diversity (Castles et al. 2013). The classical assimilationist and multiculturalist model have both fallen under numerous critiques, as they no longer fit with the increasing connectedness of people across borders, the rise of transnational identities, and the increase of different forms of mobility (Vertovec 2007). The city has therefore emerged as a key site to reflect on changing patterns of mobility, but also on emerging models of diversity governance (Fainstein 2005). Cities are not only sites of everyday coexistence of individuals of all backgrounds, origins, values, religions, they are also the sites of formation of collective identities that extend beyond the city itself (Wessendorf 2013).

For urban policies, cultural diversity represents both a challenge and an asset. It is a challenge; because it requires addressing differentiated needs, embracing various worldviews and norms, ensure peaceful coexistence. But a number of cities view their diversity as an asset, not only to promote themselves internationally, but also to foster social cohesion. These constitutes the two dominant frames that structure the current reflection on the management of cities' diversity (Hatziprokopiou et al. 2016): the first one presents diversity as a problem to deal with, referring to issues such as segregation, interethnic tensions and discriminations, whereas the second portrays diversity as a source of urban vitality, emphasizing vibrant communities and cosmopolitan urban spaces. The paper proposes a different take to address this question by stressing the interaction of two dimensions of city cultures which are usually considered separately: an outward-looking dimension, perceived space, how the city culture is imagined and projected, and an inward-looking dimension, the lived culture, referring to the experience of diversity within the urban population. This paper aims to develop an approach to trace the articulation of these two dimensions in the governance of contemporary globalising cities.

This paper is based on an on-going reflection, as part of the project entitled "Global Cities in Asia and Africa. Urban Configurations of (trans)nationalism", aiming to study governance of cultural diversity in non-western global cities. I focus on the cases of Singapore and Doha. These cities are particularly relevant to this discussion because they have both set up proactive cultural policies aiming

to promote themselves as vibrant and cosmopolitan ‘global cities’, and due to the numerous issues that they have to face with regards to the management of their diversity. I have conducted desk research as well as fieldwork in both cities, with a total of above 50 semi-structured interviews. Most of the empirical materials for this paper are drawn from the desk research, although it is fed by the insights of the fieldwork.

In the first section, I highlight some key lessons drawn from the global cities literature to grasp the effects of economic globalisation on contemporary cities, before arguing for a stronger emphasis on cultural analysis. In the second section, I set out a framework to grasp cities’ diversity governance, taking into account the city’s use of culture to position itself in the global cultural hierarchy, as well as the place different urban communities’ cultures occupy within the urban landscape. In the last two sections, I propose a comparative analysis of the cases of Singapore and Doha on the basis of this framework. I first explain how both cities mobilise their cultural diversity to promote themselves as regional and global “cultural hubs”. Then I analyse how they try to project and reflect their vision of cultural diversity in the urban space and stress the differential management of “old” and “new” diversities in both cities.

1. Culture and the global city

Over the last three decades, the global city has not only been central concept in the discussions the transformations of the role of cities in a globalizing world, it has also been widely used by urban policy-makers to define and project their ambitions for their own cities (Lai 2009). But how useful can this concept be to grasp the dynamics of culture in globalising urban spaces?

By the 1980s, authors like John Friedman (1986) and Anthony King (1990) have emphasized the ever-stronger role ‘world cities’ as nodes of global economic processes emerging as a result of the increase of international trade and the acceleration of financial transactions across borders. World cities were presented not only as prominent sites of capital accumulation, but also as centres of command and control of global economic networks. Saskia Sassen (1991), who popularised the notion of “global city”, drew attention on the new power dynamics that it gave rise to. This concept was widely used in a variety of works dealing with the different economic, political, social, cultural consequences of economic globalisation on contemporary cities.

Overall, we can distinguish three different kinds literatures that refer to the notion of global city.

(a) *An academic reflection on the implications of globalisation for cities.* It showed that while new technologies enable ubiquity, they entail an accentuation of concentration in cities. It argued that cities have become major spaces of power and have increased their influence in world affairs. Cities like New York, London, and Tokyo have been presented as the key global nodes where these transformations were particularly visible.

(b) *A policy-oriented literature on the criteria to rank global cities* (Beverstock et al. 1999, Kourtit et al 2014). It relies on and participates to the construction of the global city as a normative model. These political, economic, social, and cultural criteria have become standards that aspiring global cities have to comply to in order to rise in the hierarchy. This approach proved influential not only within cities on top of the hierarchy, but to a wide variety of cities throughout the world.

(c) *A circulating policy model.* Another body of literature has reflected upon the consequences of the diffusion of an urban policy model referring to the global city label (McCann and Ward 2011, Baker and Ruming 2015). This is often equated to the global diffusion of a neoliberal urban model, going along with a rise in spatial inequalities, standardization and sanitation of urban space, gentrification and exclusion of the urban poor.

Despite the major differences among these works, the global city literature puts forward some key features of transformation of contemporary cities.

a) *Inter-city competition generates a global economic hierarchy.* The intensification of worldwide trade and the emergence of global production systems led to economic polarisation, and a hierarchisation of economic spaces based on their ability to attract mobile capital and function as economic and financial hubs (Knox 1996).

b) *Urban governance has become entrepreneurial.* Cities evolved from mere administrations, local government in charge of implementing state policies, including redistribution and welfare state, to entrepreneurial actors (Harvey 1989). In this context, urban elites are expected to cooperate to mobilise various resources at the local, regional, national and international scales to establish their city's profile, and make it attractive for high value-added businesses, and highly skilled professionals.

c) *Global cities challenge the nation-state model.* The restructuring of global capitalism grants the city a certain form of autonomy from the nation-state (Munger 2002). This goes along with a corporatisation of urban governance and an increasing influence of the private sector in the management of urban affairs and the provision of urban services (Logan & Molotch 2007, Peck et al. 2009). In addition, as Saskia Sassen (2005 :81) puts it, global cities lead to a "deterritorializing of citizenship practices and identities", as a result of the rise of people mobility. She argues that "the global city is reconfigured as a partly denationalized space that enables a partial reinvention of citizenship". Transnational engagements and the mobilisation for local issues both challenge traditional forms of political participation.

d) *Global cities accentuate the divide between the "winners" and the "losers" of globalisation.* Another consequence of the rise of global cities is an increase of social polarization and inequalities (Hamnett 2004). On the one hand, the income of a few proportion of highly skilled upper-class professionals working in the globalised service economy have skyrocketed, and cities have been proactive to develop housing and services specifically catered to this mobile elite. On the other hand, the global city attracts a large number of precarious labours, often coming from low-income countries, working in sectors such as construction or domestic care services.

e) *Globalization generates urban fragmentations.* This social polarization manifests itself through the fragmentation of urban landscapes. Numerous studies have shown the multiplication of gated communities throughout the world (Glasze et al 2004), contrasting with impoverished neighbourhoods lacking basic urban services (Davis 2006). Others have stressed the generalization of gentrification of inner neighbourhoods at the expense of local inhabitants (Smith 2002).

f) *Homogenization of global urban landscapes.* The cultural economy represents a strategic sector for global cities (Zukin 1995, Scott 2000). Culture has been put forward as a component of a "global city status" and as a "competitive factor" (Pratt 2009). As cities mobilise cultural policies as a tool of urban marketing, through highly mediated "mega-events" and "flagship museums" or "cultural districts", they often disregard actually existing local culture and pay less attention to the social and civic roles of culture (Garcia 2004, McGuigan 2005).

Despite the importance of the global city framework to explain the changes in contemporary cities, a number of critiques have been formulated and several limitations have become increasingly apparent and require being addressed.

a) *Western-centrism:* The global city framework emerged with a focus on a specific type of Western cities, and appears as too reductive to grasp dynamics in myriads of cities throughout the world that differ in terms of geography and history (Robinson 2005). In their analysis of city-states, Olds and Yeung (2004) emphasize the differential and contextually specific logics that each city goes through in their globalization processes.

b) *A unique path towards globalisation:* The global city framework, along with the model of the "colonial city" has constituted dominant models for the analysis of non-Western cities (King 2016). Thus Bracken's (2005) book on *Asian cities: from colonial to global* traces a series of "genealogies" of the rise of Asian cities from nodes of colonial empires, to powerful global cities, but without singling

out a unique path, rather pointing out the diversity of models of development, and of ways in which the colonial has been taken either as a resource or as something to go beyond. Roy and Ong (2011) argue that “any hope we have to grasp the particularity and variability of the great urban transformation demands situated accounts of how urban environments are formed through specific combinations of the past and the future, the postcolonial and the metropolitan, the global and the situated, but is not dominated by any single mechanism” (: 9). They show that Asian cities have set up place specific experiments, home-grown norms and aesthetics rooted in local traditions and political contexts.

c) *The return of the national.* The assumption that the rise of global cities brings about a post-national order is contradicted by recent trends, as there has been numerous signs suggesting that the nation remains a key element of identification for societies in the context of globalization (Triandafyllidou 2017). The electoral success of nationalist rhetoric has been demonstrated with the Brexit, the election of Donald Trump in the US, but also beyond the West, for instance with the success of the BJP in India. This means that the national scale, and state power dynamics still require scrutiny in order to understand power dynamics at play in globalizing cities (Brenner 2004, Le Galès 2015).

d) *The local strikes back.* Wilson and Dissanayake (1996) argue that there is no contradiction between increasing global interconnectedness, and the rising claims for cultural specificity, in “a new world-space of cultural production and national representation which is simultaneously becoming more globalized (unified around dynamics of capitals moving across borders) and more localized (fragmented into contestatory enclaves of difference, coalition, and resistance) in everyday texture and composition” (Wilson and Dissanayake 1996 :1). This remark invites us to study global processes as dialectic: instead of imposing themselves locally, they are strategically mobilised by local actors. Adopting such a multiscale global perspective, allows to “approach cities not as units of analysis or as bounded territorial units but as institutional political, economic, and cultural actors positioned within multiple institutionally structured scales of differentiated but connected domains of power” (Çağlar and Glick-Schiller 2018).

e) *The symbolic and intangible aspects of globalisation that take shape in urban landscapes.* The global city framework tends to focus on hard and measurable networks, rather than soft circulations, including people, ideas, for which data are either at national scale or difficult to trace systematically. Flusty’s (2006) proposed to “culture the world city”, by addressing a wider variety of processes emerging in cities, such as circulations of cultural artefacts or religious practices. Appadurai (1990) argued that the increase of global mobility and the possibilities offered by new modes of communication lead a variety of disjunctured global processes, which are reflected in different “ethnoscapes”, “mediascapes”, or “ideascapes”. This plural approach to globalisation takes into account varieties of global processes.

These critiques converge towards the idea that the importance of culture as a key component of globalisation processes needs a more in-depth analysis. As a result, this paper sets out to consider the management of culture, through culture as a significant dimension of urban governance, and to analyse global cultural flows and transnational cultural practices as key dimensions of urban change.

2. Cultural diversity governance in globalising cities

How do cities mobilise their diverse heritage and their transnational cultural networks in order to position themselves in the global cultural hierarchy? How do cities’ global aspirations affect their cultural fabric? Answering these questions requires moving beyond the normative approaches that have dominated reflections on urban diversity governance so far. These approaches fall into two main categories: the *divided city perspective* that frames diversity as a challenge to address, and the *creative city perspective* that views diversity as a resource to tap.

a) *The divided city perspective* shows that cities’ increasing social and cultural fragmentations are not only obstacles for the coexistence and interactions across different communities, but create also

vicious circles by increasing the difficulties of marginalised groups, ranging from lower educational success to unemployment (Hall 2004, Graham and Marvin 2001). Based on this diagnostic, works have provided insights or recommendations for cities to welcome and integrate people of different backgrounds, alleviate the social injustices that affect minorities, build mutual understanding between individuals and communities of different backgrounds (Galster 2007, Matejkovska and Leinter 2011, Sandercock 1998, 2003, Fincher and Iveson 2008, Fainstein 2005).

b) The creative city perspective emphasizes the various economic impacts of diversity, and explains how cities can leverage their diversity to reach a variety of policy objectives such as urban regeneration or city marketing. Numerous theories have shown that cultural diversity represents an economic asset for cities, and can contribute to innovation and development (Alesina & Ferrara 2005, Ottaviano & Peri 2006). Richard Florida's 2002 book on the *Rise of the Creative Class* proved highly popular among mayors and emphasized the role of diversity to make cities attractive and innovative. Charles Landry (2012) also included cultural diversity as part of his toolkit to teach urban policymakers on how to make their cities creative. These approaches have spread through numerous reports, projects, rankings, forums, textbooks, and an increasing number of cities started to believe they needed to make their cities more diverse (Kong et al. 2006)

Establishing a critical framework to analyse how diversity is mobilised as an instrument of urban governance implies not only taking some distance from such normative frameworks, but also putting in dialogue different aspects of diversity management, which are generally studied separately. I draw on the work of Peggy Levitt (2005) who has argue for a need to create a dialogue between migration scholarship and cultural sociology. Specifically, I draw on the concept of diversity management regime, which she introduced in 2015 in her book *Artifacts and Allegiances*. She uses this concept to designate the way in which diversity gets talked about, measured and promoted in a particular city, and argues that this constitute a key aspect to understand the kinds of discourses that get promoted externally, for example within cultural institutions. Elaborating on this concept, I propose a framework that takes into account an inward-looking approach to diversity governance, considering how population differences are dealt with in particular cities, and an outward-looking dimension, considering the various forms of culture that get promoted within the global field.

These dimensions are usually studied in different academic and professional fields, which have distinct understandings of culture and diversity. On the one hand, the inward-looking dimension understands culture mainly as an element of characterization and of differentiation of social groups, or as Clifford Geertz puts it as a « system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms » (Geertz 1973 :89). This approach, which considers different cultural practices, traditions, or religions, understands diversity as the coexistence of different communities (Meer and Modood 2012). The works in this perspective are interested in the way the relations between different communities are organised in particular urban settings. On the other hand, for the outward-looking dimension, culture is rather approached as a specific sphere of creative and artistic activities (Bille and Schulze 2006). The studies of cultural policies and of the cultural economy, based on this understanding, approach diversity as plurality of ideas, and of forms of cultural expressions (Smier 2003). The works in this perspective look at how cities, as local production systems contribute to the production and projection of different local cultures.

Instead of separating them, I take these as complementary components of cities' diversity management regimes.

a) Inward-looking dimension: Addressing the diversifying demography of contemporary cities. Globalisation leads to the rise of "superdiverse cities", due to complexifying migration flows and rising identity claims (Vertovec 2007, Hall 2015). This "new diversity", which stems from recent patterns of mobility adds up onto established systems of governance of "old diversity", "long-standing understandings and patterns of social and cultural difference" (Vertovec, 2015 :6). The different communities that live in the city mark the urban space through a variety of place-making activities,

ranging from the adaptation of the commercial structure of neighbourhoods to cater to their culturally specific demands, to the creation of specific places of worship, community centres or recreational facilities (Isin and Siemiatycki 2002, Erkamp 2005). Diversity governance results from the conjunction of different organisational dynamics. First, state-led diversity policies represent major structuring factors. The way in which different communities are designated and recognised relies on an incremental and path-dependent institutional framework, which can be characterised in relation to general models like assimilation or multiculturalism. Second, in recent decades the notion of “diversity management”, which emerged in the corporate world to promote efficiency and creativity among diverse workforce, has spread in the practice of urban governance along with the wider movement of corporatization of urban policies. Third, grassroots logics play a fundamental role in the governance of diversity (Amin 2002). Ethnographic studies of urban diversity account for the way diversity is negotiated through daily encounters and interactions in the urban context, and point out how conviviality can be created as well as how tensions are dealt with (Wessendorf 2013). Cities can be sites of “side-by-side” coexistence of diverse ethnicities, religion and cultures, they can be agonistic sites of confrontation of various worldviews, beliefs, and social norms, or they can enable cosmopolitan exchanges, when various spheres of belonging are merged to produce new forms of expression (Van Leeuwen 2006). Characterising diversity governance consists therefore in analysing the combination but also the tensions that arise between these different organisational logics.

b) Outward-looking dimension: Safeguarding or stimulating the plurality of forms of cultural expression and of creativity. Cultural globalisation is synonym with a worldwide expansion of dominant cultural industries, which harm the development of local cultural productions, and represent a threat to the plurality of forms cultural expression (Harvey 2002, Berry 2008, Pratt 2008, Winseck 2011). As a result, the case for cultural diversity consists in a resistance against such processes, and an attempt to foster local culture (Robertson 1995). This effort relies on three different organisational logics. First, the promotion of cultural diversity as an intrinsic value needing protection has progressively emerged in the international relations field (Parekh 2001, Nieto 1992), along with notions of cultural rights and freedom of cultural expression (Hale 2002). This idea has justified the creation of institutional frameworks at an international level, for instance the UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity (Graber 2006), and at a national level, like for example the multiple measures implemented in France under the banner of the ‘cultural exception’ (Sapiro 2010). Second, market dynamics can also generate diversity within the cultural field. Despite homogenizing logics, globalisation also went along with rise of new cultural hubs, which attempt to challenge centre-periphery dynamics within the global cultural economy (Thussu 2006, Velthuis and Curioni 2015). In addition, in order to expand to new markets, dominant cultural industry players have to incorporate innovations coming from a variety of cultural influences, and adjust to different cultural tastes (Crane 2014). Finally, the struggle for cultural diversity also constitutes an engine for the emergence of cultural movements dedicated to challenging cultural hierarchies and canons, and fostering subaltern aesthetics (Rao 2010, Iwabuchi 2001, Keane 2006). The literature on media is particularly dynamic in this regard, but works on the visual arts attest similar patterns. For instance, Gardner and Green (2006) argue that the emergence of biennials of the South, which have their roots in the 1950s, in the context of the non-aligned movement, has constituted “alternative routes of cultural as well as commercial exchange from those focused on the first and second worlds”.

In sum, I propose to consider two key dimensions of the governance of cultural diversity in cities: an outward looking dimension, referring to the way cities project their plural identity to the world; and an inward looking dimension, referring to the way cities negotiate cultural difference within their urban landscape. But my intension is also to stress the interactions between these two dimensions: By projecting a diverse image on the global scene, the city also promotes its identity locally. By transforming the urban landscape along with a certain vision of its diversity, the city also contributes to shaping the way external visitors perceive the city. Besides, the diversity management regime relies on the interactions between state logics, market logics and social logics, which through a contentious process, shape the way diversity is framed and organised.

Table: Spatial and organisational dimensions of the diversity management regime

	Inward-looking dimension Promotion of diversity in a specific territory	Outward-looking dimension Promotion of diversity on a transnational and global scale
State logics	National diversity policy models	Intergovernmental initiatives for the preservation of plurality of forms of cultural expression
Market logics	Diversity management (conflict prevention and mobilisation of diversity of as resource)	Emergence of alternative centres of global cultural production
Social logics	Side-by-side coexistence, agonistic relations, cosmopolitan interactions	Resistance against global cannons, preservation/reinvention of vernacular cultures

Cities are collective actors. Analysing city governance does not only consist in looking at formal municipal institutions, but rather approaching the city as a complex process of negotiation between multi-level and transectoral actors that contribute to shape the city’s identity and policies (Pinson 2009). Analysing city governance implies therefore tracing key actors and characterising their role. I focus on educational and cultural institutions, which constitute particularly relevant actors to dive into the complex dynamics of diversity governance.

-They are catalysts of the inward-looking and the outward-looking dimensions diversity management regime. They are traditionally understood as institutions that construct and perform collective identities within a national framework, but they are also increasingly involved in global networks and charged with projecting local narratives on the global stage.

-They are sites of contentious interactions between national state logics, global market dynamics, and transnational social movements. These tensions are accentuated due to the increasing impetus towards entrepreneurialism, efficiency, and business-oriented practices, which goes in parallel with the expansion of their global civic mission.

-They are not closed organisations but are in interaction with their urban environment and reflect wider issues that arise in their surrounding. The increasing impetus to instrumentalise these institutions for different urban policy goals, such as urban regeneration, or city branding goes in parallel with these actors’ willingness to get out of their ivory towers and engage with local citizens.

3. Comparing Doha and Singapore: context and methodology

In this section, I will start by giving some background of the two cities that I am comparing, before explaining the methodology of my research project.

Some elements of context on Doha and Singapore

Qatar and Singapore like to remind the impressive growth they have gone through in the last half-century, which turned them into some of the richest countries in the world. Indeed, Qatar and Singapore rank respectively first and fourth in per capita GDP (PPP), with 128,703 and 98,014 dollars in 2018¹. Both cities like to stress the long way they have gone through during the second half of the 20th century, Doha reminding that before that, it was no more than a “small fishing port”, Singapore putting forward

¹ <http://m.statisticstimes.com/economy/projected-world-gdp-capita-ranking.php>

that it used to be viewed as a “third world country”². This is only to better highlight that they succeeded in rising as “global cities”. In fact, Singapore usually reaches the top of the hierarchy of the flourishing global cities rankings, whereas Doha, which is only second to its regional rival Dubai, remains a strong contestant in this staged global competition³. Despite their importance in global networks, their populations are relatively limited, with only 1,850 Million inhabitants in Doha and 5,850 Million inhabitants in Singapore

A brief comparative look at the two countries respective diversity policy models reveals an apparent contrast between a multicultural model in Singapore and a monocultural model in Doha. Both cities have historically constituted nodes within regions characterised by large flows of trade and migrations. Historical analyses of both regions attest the diversity of cultural, commercial and religious flows, which have shaped these regions’ heritage until the modern era. Southeast Asia’s important ethnic and religious diversity derives from its intermediary position in trading networks, and from a historical succession of external influences (Hall 2010). The importance of Southeast Asia in the production and trade of spices such as pepper or ginger explained the intense relations with Indian and Arab merchants. Such commercial exchanges have also contributed to the region’s extraordinary religious diversity (Ooi 2004). Likewise, the Arabian Gulf, was also highly ethnically diverse according to historians (Izady 2002). Due to the lack of local resources the peoples of the Gulf engaged in long distance trade with Asia and Africa (Onley 2005, Risso 2009). This culture of trade and migrations has generated an important ethnic diversity. Many Iranians were located on both sides of the Gulf, and traders from India, labourers from Baluchistan, as well as slaves from Africa constituted an important part of the population of urban centres in the region (Fawaz & Bayly 2002).

While both regions seem characterized by a multicultural history, the establishment of modern nation-states resulted in contrasted diversity policy models. On the one hand, despite the great differences between countries, Southeast Asian nations tend to display multicultural models, striving to recognize the different cultures that populate the region (Kymilicka & He 2005). Southeast Asia’s multicultural model appears as opposed to the monocultural model of the Gulf States. Their ‘rentier states’ nature has favoured the construction of national discourses that attribute a major importance to religion and allegiance to tribal leaders (Fattah 2016). This logic has shaped an exclusive identity discourse, emphasizing the role of the Bedouin tradition over the maritime and merchant culture (Cole 2003). This led these countries to downplay the contributions external influences on national culture, in particular those coming from Indians or Persians (Lienhardt 2001). Likewise, African slaves, who used to be employed in date agriculture and in pearling rarely appear in the iconography of cultural institutions, nor is their influence on local music, spiritual and cultural practices ever recognized (Hopper 2014).

Today, both Singapore and Doha are highly diverse cities, and their diversity policy models appear contrasted. In Singapore, which became an independent city-State in 1965, the establishment of a multicultural society has constituted a founding objective. It resulted in a continuous effort to accommodate the three main officially recognised ethnic groups that compose the Singaporean population: the Chinese (74%), the Malays (13%) and the Indians (9%). The so-called CMIO model (standing for Chinese, Malay, Indian and Other) has guided numerous state policies to establish a balance between these different ethnic groups. Through housing, education, or community development policies, the government has strived to create a strong national identity while maintaining the initial cultural, ethnic and religious diversity (Yeoh and Chang 2001). Like in Singapore, the Qatari population is composed of different groups that relate to their migration origins, referred to as “*Arabs*”, “*Ajams*”

² “From Third World to First” is the title of the memoirs of the founder of the Singaporean Republic, Lee Kuan Yew’s: Yew, L. K. (2012). *From third world to first: The Singapore story, 1965-2000* (Vol. 2). Marshall Cavendish International Asia Pte Ltd.

³ According to the GaWC’s world city index, Singapore is an Alpha + city (and ranks 5th in the world) and Doha is in the Beta+ Category : <https://www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc/world2018t.html>

and “*Abds*”, (Nagy 2006). Most of the Arabs descend from nomadic tribes originating in the Arabian Peninsula, and who settled in Doha along with the formation of Qatar as a modern state and the discovery of oil and gas. The Ajams predominantly descend from urban settled Persian traders and craftsmen. Finally, the Abds are the descendants of slaves, who were brought from East Africa to work in pearling, agriculture, or as servants. But while Singapore officially emphasizes the specificity of each distinctive community composing its population, in Doha, the three main groups are all merged into a uniform Qatari identity, modelled mainly on the Arab Bedouin identity. The Persian and African heritage of a significant part of the population is not integrated formally into the policy framework. Despite this apparent contrast, both models in fact rely on the simplification of diversity within broad categories. Each of the four categories in Singapore gathers people with very different languages, dialects, cultural practices and migratory backgrounds.

Doha and Singapore have been subject to a progressive diversification of their population. Since the 1980s the Qatari population has been multiplied by seven, to reach 2,6 million inhabitants in 2018. Foreign nationals are estimated to represent 91 per cent of the resident population and 95 per cent the workforce (De Bel-Air 2017). Qatar’s migration system is based on temporariness (Babar 2014). Migrants come as part of an employee sponsorship system that is bound to a limited duration. Contracts may be renewed, but this does not imply that migrants may ever obtain citizenship (Fargues, 2011). Nevertheless, many migrants end up being long-term residents and raising their families in Qatar. The myth of temporary migrants goes along with the notion of “Qatarization” strategy, which consists in spreading the belief that all jobs (especially high skill jobs) currently held by foreigners will be held by Qataris in the longer run, thanks to the large investment in knowledge infrastructures. As for Singapore, from 2000 to 2010, the rate of foreign born has increased from 18% to 23%, the majority being Malay, Chinese, South Asian, and then from other Asian countries (Yeoh and Lin 2012). This derives from a strategy to attract foreign workers who account for nearly 35% of the workforce and reached more than one million in 2010, while they were only 615 000 in 1990. In 2018 the foreign work force reached 1 371 700. The vast majority (966 200) consists of low-skilled workers⁴, which includes a majority of construction workers, and domestic labour. As opposed to Qatar, the presence of highly skilled professionals is not envisaged as temporary, as former PM Goh Chok Tong underlined in 1999: “To sustain our economy, we need to import foreign talents and offer some of them PR and citizenship”⁵. Conversely, low-skilled workers are only entitled to stay in Singapore for a limited amount of time and restrictions have been put in place to prevent them from settling in Singapore in the long run. Singapore’s model relies on status differentiation. Low-skilled workers have less rights and are subject to more controls. They have to work in the occupation and for the employer stated in their work permit and may only change employer under specific conditions. They are subject to regular medical screening and women who are found to be pregnant are immediately deported. They are also unable to marry with a citizen or Permanent Resident without the consent of their sponsor.

Doha and Singapore’s governance model are both characterised by a high level of concentration of power in the hands of ruling elites that have maintained themselves in power since the pre-independence era. Throughout the years, both systems have incorporated external policy models, both by calling onto foreign experts, and through the large number of local elites that have gotten their education abroad, especially in the UK and the US. A wave of corporatisation of urban governance has affected both cities in the 1990s, with the creation of governmental agencies managed like companies. But these remain under the strict control of political elites, and are charged with the implementation of a centrally established national vision.

Qatar is a monarchy in which most of the power is concentrated in the hands of the ruling Emir. Power transfers from father to son have been characterised by major policy shifts (Fromherz 2017). In

⁴ Foreign workers on work permit (earning less than 2000 Dollars)

⁵ Speech by prime minister Goh Chok Tong on Singapore 21 debate in parliament on Wednesday, 5 may 1999, <http://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/speeches/view-html?filename=1999050503.htm>

1995, the contentious succession between Khalifa and Hamad, through a “bloodless coup”, led to a major reconfiguration of state structures. While the administration was initially put in place by Khalifa, Hamad introduced some key changes in the organisation of the ministers, and created public organisations in charge of implementing his ambitious projects to project Qatar on the world stage, especially the Qatar Foundation (for education and research policy), Qatar Museums (for culture and heritage policy), and Qatar Tourism Authority. The transition between Hamad and Tamim in 2014, while much smoother and planned by the former, happened in the context of a sharp drop in oil and gas revenues and mounting tensions with regional neighbours, and therefore led to important cabinet changes, cuts in spending and public management reforms.

Since the country’s independence, Singapore’s government has been dominated by a single party, the People’s Action Party. The party’s tight control on power, restrictions on freedoms of expression, persecutions of political opponents, as well as the perceived success of its policies are the main reasons that are put forward to account for this hegemonic hold on power in successive elections. Lee Kuan Yew, considered as the “father of the nation” governed the country from the end of the colonial era to the 1980s. After a transition, his son Lee Hsien Loong took over as prime minister. The so-called “Singapore model” is based on a paternalistic and business oriented strategy, declined for each sector by the different ministries that set up strategic frameworks. “Statutory boards” are in charge of implementing the different policies such as housing (HDB), Heritage (NHB), culture (NAC), tourism (STB), urban planning (URA) or economic development (EDB).

This brief look suggests that despite the fact that both cities are located in different world regions, they share of a number of common characteristics, which make them interesting cases to compare. In particular, as I will elaborate further in the following sections, both cities try mobilise their diversity to position themselves as regional and global culture hubs. Besides, they constitute particularly relevant cases to explore the entanglement of the global and the national. Globalisation has a central place in the narratives that these cities and nations build about their past and their future. These national heritage narratives emphasize their pasts as trade ports, as sites of human and cultural exchanges, in order to establish a sense of unique identity. Their policy narratives or “national visions” negotiate openness to migration, innovations and trade and the preservation of an idealised traditional national culture. Thus, a comparative look at these two cities can shed light on the dialectic of globalisation and nationalism.

Methodology

My research methodology relies on desk research and on fieldwork. This paper draws mainly on the former but is informed by the observations and interviews I made in both cities. I conducted my fieldwork in January and December 2018, respectively in Doha and Singapore. This added up to some prior fieldwork done in Singapore back in February 2015. I did over 50 semi-structured interviews (30 in Singapore and 20 in Doha) with cultural policymakers and stakeholders. I have targeted three categories actors:

a) *Public organisations in charge of cultural policies*, or what I call the “cultural hub strategies”. In Singapore, this includes the Economic Development Board, the National Arts Council, the National Heritage Board, the Urban Redevelopment Authority. In Doha, this refers in particular to the Qatar Foundation, Qatar Museums, and the Ministry of Urban Planning. Beyond these actors, which are at the core of the elaboration of these policies, the exchanges I had with other stakeholders were also useful to give different perspectives on these policies.

b) *Key cultural institutions*. In Singapore, this includes the Singapore Art Museum, the National Museum, the National Gallery, the Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall and Malay Heritage Centre, the Institute of Contemporary Art. In Doha, this refers to the Museum of Islamic Art, Mathaf, the National Museum, Msheireb museums. I was particularly interested in cultural “flagships”, that are instrumental in positioning these cities as cultural hubs, as well as institutions that raise questions regarding local identities.

c) *A wide range of arts and cultural organisations*: theatre companies, art galleries, art schools. I focused in particular on the organisations are located in officially recognised “cultural districts” in order to question the link between the labelling of cultural districts and the local practices of cultural organisations.

The interviews were semi-structured, and the questions were adjusted depending on the kinds of actors I was interviewing. Nevertheless, there were some broad categories of questions that tended to prevail. 1) Questions on governance and on the role of the organisation of my interlocutor in the cultural strategy of the city, which was a way to trace the genealogy and the networks of actors behind these cultural hub strategies. 2) Questions on the way in which the organisation addresses the different dimensions of the city’s diversity. 3) Questions on the organisation’s international and local networks, which enable to trace the way in which different actors contribute to the cities’ international strategies and to urban change.

Despite instances in which meeting requests were declined or remained unanswered, the respondents were welcoming, willing to share, and sincere about the way the system works, even though some of them were weary about the kinds of things they should not say. In Qatar, the request for off-record conversations and the explicit mention of the impossibility to discuss some subjects (like for example the content of the national museum that was going to open a year later) was particularly salient.

The interviews have been complemented with desk research, as well as observations conducted in the cities, their respective cultural districts and cultural institutions.

a) *Strategy and policy documents*. In Singapore, I analysed the various plans that specifically target culture, especially the Renaissance Plan (2000), Arts and Culture Review (2012), and most recent arts plan (2018). For Doha, I reviewed the Qatar National Vision 2030. In both cities, monographic academic literature has also constituted a rich source of information on the evolutions of both strategies.

b) *Focus on specific cultural projects and institutions*. I consulted a number of documents published by or on the above-mentioned cultural institutions, in order to examine their role in city’s cultural policy.

c) *Focus on specific districts/neighbourhoods*. I paid particular attention to the urban spaces that play a key role in cities’ cultural hub strategies, but also constitute spaces of contentions, and of exclusion. In Singapore: The historical ethnic districts (especially, Chinatown, Little India, Kampong Glam), the central districts that are labelled for culture and heritage (Civic district, Bras Basah Bugis) and the Gillman Barracks art cluster. In Doha, I conducted observation in Katara, Education City, and the central heritage districts, Msheireb and Souq Waqif.

4. Doha and Singapore as “cultural hubs”

Doha and Singapore have conducted significant investments in culture over the last two decades, presenting them as efforts to catch up in what they see as a global competition. The notion of ‘cultural hub’, explicitly found in the discourses of both cities, is at the basis of their strategies to position themselves as a transnational cultural centre, through ambitious cultural infrastructures and programmes. This notion sheds light on the narratives that both cities intend to project to the world and on how they mobilise their diverse heritage.

Both cities have used the concept of cultural hub to promote themselves, and their ambitious cultural policies. This expression was widely spread through the media, with some variants; some referring to Singapore as a “cosmopolitan gateway between the east and the west”⁶, or to Doha as a “regional hub

⁶ Adam G. (2015) Singapore races to become Southeast Asia-Pacific’s art hub Financial Times March 6 2015, <https://www.ft.com/content/2acbd800-b6b7-11e4-95dc-00144feab7de>

for culture and heritage”⁷. Framing these cities as ‘cultural hub’ explicitly comes from both cities’ official discourse. Recently, in 2018, Rosa Daniel, the CEO of Singapore’s National Arts Council, introduced a piece she published to explain Singapore’s cultural policy rationale by affirming that the city-state “aspires to become a global cultural hub”. Likewise, Doha’s cultural policy armed wing, Qatar Museums refers explicitly to its objective to mobilise its educational and cultural programmes in order to “enhance Qatar’s status as a cultural hub in the world”⁸. Others have commented on “Qatar’s efforts to rival Paris or New York as a cultural hub »⁹.

The great ambitions of Doha and Singapore to position themselves as new cultural centres, can nevertheless seem paradoxical: how could a city possibly emerge as a cultural centre from scratch, without benefiting either from the long tradition of a historical cultural capital or the affirmation of large and powerful nation state? Both cities have set out to respond to what appears as their weakness, the absence of what one might call a national cultural hinterland, by positioning themselves as regional hubs. Instead of seeking to appear as centres that promote one national culture, cultural hubs claim they can nurture regional interactions across national boundaries, provide space to discuss ties, commonalities, promote dialogue across nationally segmented cultures, and to establish discourses that connect the regional scene with the global cultural field.

The cultural hub strategy relies on centrally elaborated plans and on the establishment of highly visible and internationally connected cultural infrastructures. The vision 2030 plan in Doha, and the Renaissance plan as well as the Singapore 21 plan in Singapore reflect both city-states’ ambition to use culture and education as a central part of their social and economic development. Both cities have become leaders in the landscape of Transnational Higher Education, by attracting offshore campuses of top-ranked Universities, such as Yale (Singapore), Cornell and Georgetown (Doha) (Vora 2014, Sidhu et al. 2011). Both cities have also invested in the construction world-class museums, aiming to position them as regional cultural centres, like the Singapore Art Museum (1996), the National Gallery Singapore (2015), as well as Doha’s Museum of Islamic Art (2008) and Mathaf (2010). These strategies take part in shaping the urban landscape, with the establishment of dedicated districts such as Education City and Katara in Doha, or the Gillman Barracks art district in Singapore (see the maps of the figures 1 and 2). Both cities stress the rapid pace of their rise as a cultural centres, by putting forward a recent past in which they were viewed as “cultural deserts”. This point of view is often reported in the media and comes from the way local actors like to talk about their city to give a sense of evolution and dynamic. For instance, this is present in Giordina Adam’s (2015) article, which refers to a testimony of an actor in the Singaporean art scene remembering how in the early 2000s, few of her art history students even knew about Leonardo Da Vinci, only to emphasize that she now has many international students from Europe and Asia who are highly up-to-date with contemporary art trends and discussions¹⁰. In Doha, local actors often refer to the fact that not so long ago, people did not know about Qatar, in order to highlight the country’s achievement in building a global reputation in less than two decades.

Another key aspect of the cultural hub discourse in Doha and Singapore is the idea that by developing proactive cultural strategies, these cities contribute to establish new narratives that will allow their surrounding regions so far viewed as peripheral, to get a more prominent role in the global cultural economy. In both cities, museum professionals, cultural intermediaries and policymakers collaborate to construct new regional narratives. While both cities present themselves as interface between “East and

⁷ Walker, L. (2014) “Report: Qatar ramped up culture spending to \$1.3bn in 2012” Doha News June 24, 2014 <https://dohanews.co/qatars-culture-boom/>

⁸ Qatar News Agency (2016) Qatar’s status grows as a cultural hub of world Gulf Times December 08 2016 <https://www.gulf-times.com/story/523982/Qatar-s-status-grows-as-a-cultural-hub-of-world>

⁹ Cited in CNN ‘Creating an international arts hub in the Middle East’ May 8, 2013 <https://edition.cnn.com/2013/05/05/world/meast/uae-qatar-art-scene/index.html>

¹⁰ Adam G. (2015) Singapore races to become Southeast Asia-Pacific’s art hub Financial Times March 6 2015, <https://www.ft.com/content/2acbd800-b6b7-11e4-95dc-00144feab7de>

West”, they interpret this evocative image differently. In Doha, the reference of the ‘East’ is associated with the Islamic and the Arab worlds. The enunciation of a dialectics between “Islam and the West” takes part in the idea of setting Doha as an intellectual centre for the Islamic world. Many discourses produced in the higher education and cultural sectors intend to challenge the way Islam is perceived in the West by shaping progressive interpretations. Qatar Museums sets up projects ranging from blockbuster exhibitions to heritage conservation, and presents them as a way of “playing the role of a national link between civilisations, which aims to promote cultural exchanges”¹¹. The Museum of Islamic Art (MIA) plays a major role in this regard, by displaying the diversity and commonalities within its collection of artworks originating from different countries from North Africa to South Asia. Its former director Aisha al-Khater emphasized that the museum enabled Doha to embrace “the combination of cultures, the people of different ethnic groups all coming together to produce this wonderful art”¹². Whereas the MIA contributes to setting Doha as a centre for Islamic art, its other major cultural institution, Mathaf, focused on modern and contemporary art sets the city a centre for “cultural pan-arabism”. According to Sooud Al Qassemi, an influential Bahraini art patron, the museum drew commonalities in the fates of people throughout the Arab world: “Mathaf’s artistic frontiers stretch the width of the Arab world from Morocco to the Gulf and include artworks by diaspora Arabs who have often been neglected for political or geographical reasons. Mathaf’s pan-Arab collection demonstrates that the struggles of Algerians and Iraqis, Palestinians and Yemenis as depicted by Arab artists blend together seamlessly as though pieces of a giant puzzle have finally started to fall into place.”¹³ He argues that artists can build connections where politicians have been unable to construct unity, artists draw on an existing sense of belonging, and celebrate transnational causes, like the Palestinian struggle. In fact, the artworks of the permanent collection of Mathaf contain many references to the various political issues, events, and crises that have marked the history of Arab world.

In Singapore, the much-debated notion of “Asian values” reflects the way in which the city-state has strived to demark itself from the West along with its rise as a global city. This notion promoted by former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, to stress the attachment of Singapore, as an Asian society, to Confucian ethics was criticised as a form of “reverse orientalism” (Hill 2000). This concept has been dismissed as it was clear that the importance that the Singaporean leader (along with his Malaysian counterpart) was allocating to a communitarian ethics, as opposed to a supposedly Western individualism, was a mere justification of his tight grip on power and his tough repression of dissenting opinions. But the cultural scene gave a different meaning to this focus on Asia. By drawing on a connected history, it has framed the region as an interface between the Chinese, the Indian, the European, and the Middle Eastern cultures. The Asian Civilisations Museum is central to this narrative, as stressed by its director Kennie Ting: “Southeast Asia has an incredible diversity of indigenous and migrant peoples, cultures, and faiths. It is a region that has played a pivotal role in global maritime trade and the spread of systems of faith and belief across Asia”¹⁴. Indeed, the museum’s exhibition emphasizes the role of Singapore and its surrounding as space of trade between China, the Gulf, Europe, as testified by the multiple influences that can be observed in the exhibited objects. The museum displays the diversity of beliefs and cultural practices that the region hosts, with different sections displaying successively artworks produced in different religious contexts: Animism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and

¹¹ Qatar News Agency (2016) Qatar’s status grows as a cultural hub of world Gulf Times December 08 2016 <https://www.gulf-times.com/story/523982/Qatar-s-status-grows-as-a-cultural-hub-of-world>

¹² Cited in Creating an international arts hub in the Middle East, CNN May 8, 2013 <https://edition.cnn.com/2013/05/05/world/meast/uae-qatar-art-scene/index.html>

¹³ Al-Qassemi, S. (2013) “The Arab Museum of Modern Art in Qatar Can Mathaf Restore a Pan-Arab Artistic Identity?” Qantara <https://en.qantara.de/content/the-arab-museum-of-modern-art-in-qatar-can-mathaf-restore-a-pan-arab-artistic-identity>

¹⁴ Cited in: Toh W.-L. (2018) Asian Civilisations Museum to open 3 new galleries for Christian Art, Islamic Art, and Ancestors and Rituals Straits Times Nov 27, 2018 <https://www.straitstimes.com/lifestyle/arts/asian-civilisations-museum-to-open-3-new-galleries-for-christian-art-islamic-art-and>

Islam. For each of these categories, the internal diversity is displayed, mutual influences and circulations are systematically stressed. Since it hosts numerous religious and ethnic communities, Singapore can present itself as a synthesis of this regional diversity, and thus it celebrates the festivals of the different Singaporean communities, such as the Malay Hari Raya, the Chinese New Year, or the Hindu Festival of Lights, as a way to “showcase Singapore’s unique historical roots, and ties to the rest of Asia”¹⁵.

The large Southeast Asian art collection that the City-State has assembled and displays in the recently inaugurated National Gallery is another aspect of the city’s ambition to promote Southeast Asia within the global cultural field. Eugene Tan, the director of the National Gallery, is well known in the international art world for his role in promoting the Southeast Asian art scene. When the gallery opened, he defended the role of the institution in this regard, arguing that “the history of Southeast Asian art has been absent from the world, which is why [he] think[s] [they]’re doing here is so important in presenting this art history from a regional perspective through a long term extensive exhibition”¹⁶. The gallery showcases a Singaporean art exhibition and a Southeast Asian one separately. The latter contains 400 artworks from Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Singapore, Myanmar, Laos and Brunei. It attempts to show commonalities among the different nations that constitute Southeast Asia, including their parallel colonisation and the Cold War. The exhibition that focuses specifically on Singapore’s art history reflects its transnational character. It stresses the international mobility of Singaporean artists, and their intense aesthetic connection with the region as a central peculiarity of their work.

The notion of ‘cultural hub’ captures Doha and Singapore’s strategies to use culture to project themselves on the global stage. Both cities’ diversity and transnational ties are instrumental to this strategy. They portray themselves as rooted regionally while incorporating global standards. Within their own regional contexts, they present themselves as the only places where it is possible to express, exhibit, and display ‘world standard’ cultural shows. In the global cultural field, they present themselves as one the rare places in the world where the works of these regions are brought together and where regional cultural discourses can emerge.

5. Negotiating “old” and “new” diversity in a globalising urban space

As we have seen in the previous section, cultural diversity plays a fundamental role in both cities’ strategies to position themselves as regional cultural hubs. It constitutes the basis of their claim that their cultural institutions gather and represent cultural influences from a much wider space than the city itself, and is therefore worth considering as a meaningful voice in the global cultural field. But how do these cities’ respective ambitions to promote themselves as cultural hubs relate to the way cultural difference is staged and experienced in the urban space? Both Singapore and Doha acknowledge migration as a central element of the city’s identity, while keeping a strict control on the way it is made visible, and the place it occupies within the urban landscape.

¹⁵ Daniel R. (2018) Reimagining Singapore: Placemaking through Arts and Culture *Ethos* <https://www.csc.gov.sg/articles/reimagining-singapore-placemaking-through-arts-and-culture>

¹⁶ Cited in Binlot, A. 2015 The National Gallery Singapore Opens, Exposing The World To Southeast Asian Art Forbes Dec 28, 2015 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/abinlot/2015/12/28/the-national-gallery-singapore-opens-exposing-the-world-to-southeast-asian-art/#5d6561e04787>

Figure 1: The spaces of Doha's cultural hub strategy

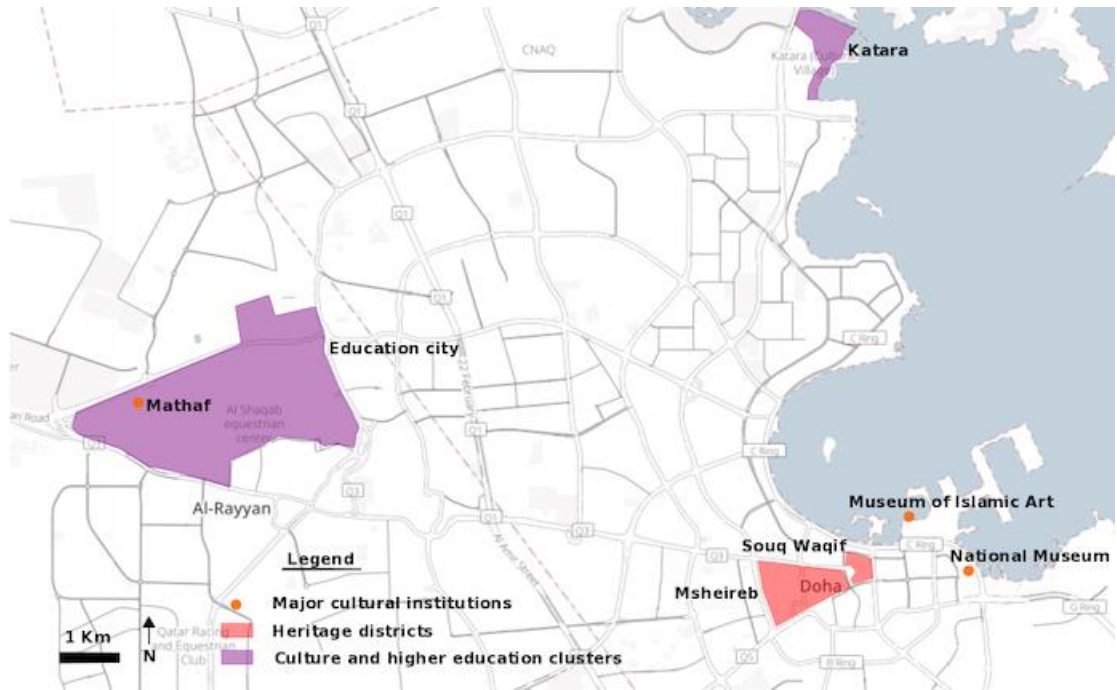
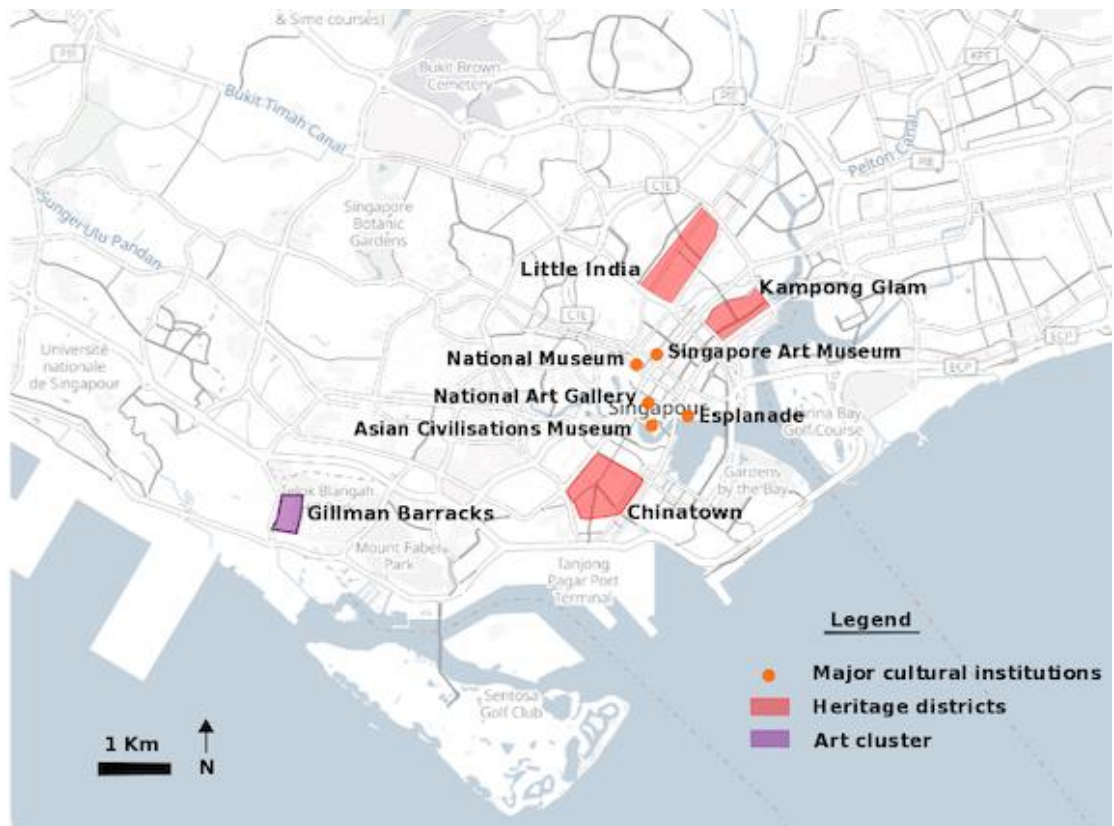


Figure 2: The spaces of Singapore's cultural hub strategy



There is a contrast, in both cities, between, on the one hand an increasing recognition of the city's "old" diversity, the celebration of the migration heritage within the urban space and on the other hand an increasing logic of exclusion of 'new' diversity, in particular low-skilled migrant workers.

Recognising "old diversity"

In both Doha and Singapore, the recognition of a plural past constitutes a complex process involving various actors. Diversity is the object of a range of stories that seem to contradict each other and provide differentiated readings of the cities' plural identities.

In both Singapore and Doha, the urban space has been used to showcase the multicultural nature of the city. They both stress the importance of migration in their history and mobility as a core element of their identities. In Singapore, in 1986, the touristic development plan devoted one billion Singaporean Dollars to the protection of natural areas and the rehabilitation of "ethnic" heritage neighbourhoods (Figure 2). The Park and Waterbodies Plan and the "Identity Plan", established spaces for leisure, and set up touristic trails, drawing on natural assets and local heritage (Henderson 2005). These led to the creation of ethnic heritage districts, intended to display the multicultural character of the Singaporean society. The three labelled districts, Chinatown, Kampong glam, and Little India, correspond to Singapore's three main ethnic groups: the Chinese the Malays and the Indians. While these neighbourhoods were historically points of concentration of these different communities, the housing policy that was launched after independence distributed these communities evenly throughout the island to prevent the formation of ethnic enclaves. These heritage districts constitute therefore both a nostalgic representation of Singapore's multicultural makeup and a way to promote the city as a vibrant city that provides a wide variety of cultural offers. This urban conservation policy also went along with an effort to erase elements that could associate Singapore with the image of a 'Third World country', by tearing down buildings in poor conditions and implementing strict norms to regulate public space in order to eliminate the impression of overpopulated and chaotic streets (Kwok and Low 2002). The creation of these heritage districts was therefore criticized for having generated a sanitized and simplified display of the city's cultural diversity (Yeoh and Kong 2012).

In Doha, the ambition to promote the city's heritage identity did not go through the emphasis on specific ethnic groups, but rather through the invisibilisation of difference and the telling of a uniform national story, modelled on the image of the Arab Bedouin (Potter 2017). Thus the former Persian Souq, which has been the object of a major conservation project in the 2000s, was renamed as "Souq Waqif" (Standing Souq). This reveals a general strategy to avoid referring explicitly to the cultural distinctions within the Qatari society. Likewise, the urban regeneration project developed in the historic Msheireb project emphasizes a willingness to promote traditional Qatari culture, tradition, architecture and planning methods. Most of the area has been redeveloped, and this discourse consists in the reinvention of an imagined common tradition, instead of emphasizing differences of lifestyle.

Thus, Singapore and Doha have developed different approaches, which reflect the contrast between their respective diversity management regimes. While Singapore is willing to package its multicultural makeup to promote itself as culturally rich, Doha projects a unitary discourse that erases internal differences. By tracing the discontinuities in the planning of heritage districts, one can stress local actors' capacity to challenge the visions promoted from above. In Singapore, cultural actors both within formal cultural institutions, and in the non-profit sector, try to go beyond the celebration of side-by-side multicultural heritage, which essentializes ethnic communities and denies internal differences. In Doha, they endeavour to excavate within the urban space, the traces of a plural heritage that would challenge the official unitary discourse.

In Singapore, the cultural institutions and art organisations that operate within the conserved ethnic heritage districts try to transgress the logic of self-exoticization and of perpetuation of the colonial imaginary that has characterised the planning of these districts. By stressing the complexities within each official ethnic category as well as the intense intercultural relations that were taking place in these

neighbourhoods, they intend to challenge the side-by-side multicultural heritage planning discourse. They highlight the proximity of the places of worship of different communities as well as the mixed cultural influences that can be observed in the architecture of Chinatown and Little India, challenging the image of segregated urban spaces. Artistic initiatives are also involved in pushing the boundaries of the official diversity management discourse essentializing cultural differences, as they mobilise diverse cultural traditions to deal with social issues, which affect all citizens, regardless of their cultural background. This is the case, for instance, of the Maya Dance Theatre, which benefitted from the Little India Arts Housing Scheme launched by the National Arts Council. Mixing Indian performing arts traditions with other Asian forms, they produce reflexive performances dealing with issues ranging from aging to domestic sexual violence. Another example is Dramabox, which is hosted by the Arts Housing Scheme in Chinatown. When approached by the Singapore Tourism Board to develop a project in the neighbourhood, they launched a promenade theatre initiative telling the story of Chinatown through the eyes of an Indian Sikh who had lived in the neighbourhood, in order to propose an alternative narrative.

In Doha, this effort to push the boundaries of the national identity discourse, towards an enhanced recognition of its diversity, can be found in the ongoing project of redevelopment of the Msheireb district, which includes an area with four conserved houses turned into museums. This project, as a whole, takes part in the conservation/redevelopment of the historical core through an imagined and unitary vision of Qatari heritage. However, the conservation of these heritage houses along with the conception of different museum projects taking into account the specific history of each house brought about the possibility to excavate the neighbourhood's diverse past. The history of each house determined the theme of the various exhibitions: the Company House, which was the base of the first Anglo-Persian company that initiated oil exploration has an exhibition on the history of oil extraction. The Wadhvani House, which was a family house that was progressively extended, has been dedicated to vernacular architecture. The Mohammad Bin Jassim House, which was a community space owned by the son of the founding ruler of Qatar is about the neighbourhood's history. Finally, the Bin Jelmood House, which used to be the property of a slave trader, is dedicated to the history of slavery. An Adhoc institution, Msheireb museums, has been charged with developing these museum projects. As Msheireb museums belongs to the Qatar foundation, the armed wing of Doha's higher education hub strategy, this institution benefits from a wide range of academic collaborations, including with the local branches of University College London and Georgetown. As the museology has been developed on the basis of the place's history, the team had to take into account the neighbourhood's diverse heritage. This process contrasts with that of the National Museum, inaugurated a few years after the country's independence, which proposed a romanticized national story focused on the ruling tribe, and on the dominant Bedouin identity (Exell & Rico 2013). The project that stands out the most is the Bin Jelmood House, which not only deals with the difficult past of slave trade, but also with modern slavery (Al Mulla 2017). It starts with a global outlook of slavery throughout the ages and geographies, then moves on to present the history of slave trade in the Indian Ocean and the Islamic world. Then, it focuses on the history slavery in Qatar, before displaying testimonies of Qataris of African decent. The final section deals with modern day slavery. Another example showing how Msheireb Museums, as a cultural institution under the Qatar Foundation, has been endeavouring to excavate the city's diversity, can be found at the Mohammad Bin Jassim House, which documents the presence and the culture of South Asians who lived in the neighbourhood.

In sum, both cities' diversity management regimes seem to evolve towards an enhanced recognition of their "old" diversity: In Singapore, the official discourse promoting a "side-by-side" approach to diversity heritage, projected through the establishment of three separate tourism oriented ethnic heritage neighbourhoods, gets questioned, sophisticated and altered by the cultural actors operating in these spaces. In Doha, the homogenizing Qatari identity discourse has been rendered more complex through the excavation of the diverse heritage of the Msheireb neighbourhood.

Isolating “new diversity”

The trend to recognise diversity as heritage contrasts with the increasing spatial exclusion of low-skilled migrant workers, who constitute the vast majority of the “new” migration-led diversity. The framework that structures the condition of low-skilled workers corresponds to what Castle (2002) calls “transient migration”, which goes along with a “differential exclusion”. While transient migrants are integrated in the labour market, they are de facto excluded from a certain number of regular welfare entitlements. The management of urban space is an important aspect of the exclusion of these migrant workers (Ye 2017). In both cities, initially, migrants were housed within the city, and were progressively subject to strategies aiming to isolate them from the national population. In Singapore, foreign workers used to be settled either on their workplace’s sites or in rented HDB flats. But as Singaporean nationals expressed reluctance towards their presence, they started being housed in separate dormitories. In 2008, eleven dormitories were planned to host 65 000 workers, and government buildings were converted into migrants housing. In 2013, the Urban Redevelopment Authority issued guidelines that recommended to locate workers’ dormitories “away from residential areas and areas where the use is likely to cause amenity problems”¹⁷. Due to the lack of services in these dormitories, Singapore seen the emergence of what Osterdag (2016) has called “transient community hubs”, where migrants gather for leisure and to access services such as remittances. The main transient community hub in Singapore is Little India, which on Sundays can attract up to 100 000 migrant workers (Goh 2014).

In Doha, historically, migrants settled in the historical centre, in buildings that were vacated along with modernisation and the construction of new neighbourhoods for Qataris citizens (Boussaa 2014). From the 2000s, the regeneration of the historical centre went along with the relocation of migrants in peripheral areas. The Msheireb project mentioned above is an example of this ambition to establish a cutting-edge district with upscale residences, modern malls to “regenerate” the historical centre and relocate migrant workers in dedicated areas in the outskirt. This exclusion process relies on the designation of migrant workers goes as “bachelors” (Mohammad and Sidaway 2016). As a minimum wage of 2000 dollars per month is compulsory to be able to bring one’s family, low-skilled migrant workers are *de facto* “bachelors”. As such, they are stigmatised collectively as a social threat for Qatari families¹⁸. In 2010, the family zone law excluded bachelors from most of the city, including the historical centre where they had historically settled. In addition, there have been reports on South Asian “bachelors” banned from mainstream public spaces such as Souq Waqif, the Corniche, Aspire, or malls¹⁹.

Thus Doha and Singapore have launched policies to isolate migrant workers both to respond to the demand of their national populations, and in order to gentrify their city centre. Paradoxically, this movement was further accentuated by the intense international coverage of the conditions of living of migrant workers that coincidentally took place at around the same time in both cities, at the end of 2013. In Doha, it resulted from the award of the 2022 world cup, which went along with an accelerated influx of migrant workers, increasing logics of exploitation and an enhanced scrutiny from the international community. In September 2013, the Guardian reported on “Qatar’s World Cup ‘slaves’”²⁰ while in

¹⁷ Urban Redevelopment Authority. 2013. Hotel Accommodation Facilities Guideline. Singapore: Urban Redevelopment Authority. <http://www.ura.gov.sg/circulars/text/dchbnr/hotelotheraccommodationfacilities-dchbnr.pdf>.

¹⁸ 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/>

¹⁹ Pattison, P. (2016) Qatar's 'families only' zones entrench segregation of migrant workers *The Guardian* 13 Apr 2016 <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2016/apr/13/qatar-families-only-zones-entrench-segregation-of-migrant-workers>

²⁰ Pattison, A. 2013. Revealed: Qatar’s World Cup “slaves.” *The Guardian* 25 September. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/25/revealed-qatars-world-cup-slaves>.

January 2014, the New York Times denounced “Qatar’s showcase of shame”.²¹ In Singapore, the riots that took place in Little India on 8 December 2013 and involved migrant workers, generated coverage in the international press on the poor living conditions of these transient migrant workers. The New York Times published an editorial on December 27th entitled “Singapore’s Angry Migrant Workers” calling for the city-state to “ensure that the millions of transient workers who contribute so much to the economy are not marginalized and abused.”²² On the following year, the Guardian published an article entitled “Singapore needs to address its treatment of migrant workers”²³.

In both Doha and Singapore, the consequences of this sudden international outcry were two-fold. On the one hand, there were some efforts to reassess the migration regulatory framework, and to take measures to tackle the most obvious human rights violations. In Qatar, A UN Special Rapporteur for human rights was appointed and issued recommendations to improve the living and working conditions of migrants²⁴, and the Qatar foundation established its own report on the issue²⁵. Likewise, the Singaporean government appointed an inquiry committee, which was charged with determining the conditions that had given rise to the riots. This committee put forward recommendations, which included measures to address migrant workers living conditions. On the other hand, there have been increasing policies to exclude and isolate these migrants. The construction of separate spaces dedicated to migrant workers accelerated, with a double aim: to showcase good living standards by building modern infrastructures, and to limit their presence in central and residential zones by creating specific recreation centres near their living areas.

In Singapore, the authorities endeavoured to reduce the presence of South Asian workers in Little India, by implementing tough security measures. They also started the planning of mega-dormitories able to host up to 25 000 workers, and comprising leisure facilities. For instance, the Tuas South Avenue 1, which opened in the summer of 2014 contains 16 800 beds, as well as a minimart, a food court, a 250 seat cinema and a cricket field²⁶. The creation of such recreation centres near the dormitories was viewed as a way to decongestion Little India²⁷. Along the same line, in 2016, the ministry of manpower launched an award dedicated to workers dormitories construction as well as a photo competition, addressed at migrant workers, who were invited to submit pictures of their daily life²⁸.

Doha’s policy was even more radical as migrant workers were relocated in specifically dedicated cities. Thus in 2015, Doha released a plan to build seven new cities to house 250 000 labour workers involved in the construction of the infrastructures planned for the 2022 world cup. These initiatives were presented as an attempt to upgrade their living conditions. One of them, initially named “Labour city”,

²¹ 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>.

²² The New York Times (2013) Singapore’s Angry Migrant Workers 27 December 2013 https://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/28/opinion/singapores-angry-migrant-workers.html?_r=0

²³ Malay M. (2014) “Singapore needs to address its treatment of migrant workers” The Guardian 21 April 2014 <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2014/apr/21/singapore-address-treatment-migrant-workers>

²⁴ <https://www.refworld.org/docid/53a29c184.html>

²⁵ 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.

²⁶ Tan, A., Toh, Y-C (2014) Cinema, cricket field at Singapore’s biggest dormitory *The Straits Times* August 10, 2014 <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/cinema-cricket-field-at-singapores-biggest-dormitory>

²⁷ Toh Y.-C. T (2014) Foreign workers to get four more recreation centres *The Straits Times* May 06, 2014 <https://www.asiaone.com/singapore/foreign-workers-get-four-more-recreation-centres>

²⁸ <https://www.mom.gov.sg/newsroom/press-releases/2016/1108-awards-for-factory-converted-dormitories-to-recognise-exemplary-efforts-in-foreign-worker-housing-and-well-being-management>

was later relabelled “Asian City”. On its website, the developer stresses that the goal of the project is to give good living conditions to workers: “Asian City is designed and developed to strategically meet the vision of Qatar 2022 World Cup assuring better living conditions for the workforce”²⁹. It adds that the city contains a “variety of excellent facilities including open spaces, gardens, gyms and recreation areas, thereby creating pleasing environment and positive outlook that, we believe, results in a happier and a more productive workforce”. This went along with the creation of a specific entertainment centre, initially called ‘West End Part’, and later on renamed “Asian Town”³⁰. It aims specifically at catering to the demand of South Asian workers. It contains a hypermarket, a mall, a 16 000 seats amphitheatre, a 13 000 seat Cricket stadium and four cinemas showing Bollywood movies. By providing them with such entertainments, it has been argued that Doha aims to facilitate their segregation³¹.

In sum, the globalisation of culture has contradictory impacts on Doha and Singapore’s diversity management regimes. Regarding “old” diversity, both cities seem to move in the direction of recognising their migration heritage. But as far as “new” diversity is concerned, spatial policies have progressively expelled migrant workers to reduce their presence and visibility within the urban landscape, and to prevent any form of proximity or interaction with the national population.

Conclusion

Doha and Singapore’s cultural hub strategies are more than just urban branding schemes. They are intended to re-engineer and reaffirm the national identity. The role of culture in globalising cities is generally associated with images of flagship museums, mega-events, and creative districts. The global city literature has contributed to the self-fulfilling prophecy of a homogenizing globalisation. This article has tried to move away from the world system perspective that shapes the general understanding of global cities. In line with the diagnosis formulated by Roy and Ong (2011), I argued that in spite of its explanatory benefits, this perspective does not allow for an understanding of the diverse configurations happening in cities throughout the world.

I have based this alternative approach on a comparative analysis of cities’ diversity management regimes. My comparison of Doha and Singapore looked successively at the outward-looking dimension of the diversity management regime, showing how Doha and Singapore negotiate their place within a hierarchized global cultural field, by mobilising regional networks and claiming a function of regional cultural hub, and the inward-looking dimension, looking at how Doha and Singapore planned their urban diversity. Due to their aspiration to rise as cultural hubs, both cities are willing to recognise and promote their diversity heritage. At the same time, they are increasingly exclusive towards low-skilled migrant workers. This logic of exclusion seems further accentuated by both cities’ willingness to showcase a positive image of their management of migrant workers on the world stage, in the context of an increasing international scrutiny. Thus inward-looking and outward-looking dimensions of cities’ diversity management regime are intertwined and generate multiple tensions and contradictions.

The global city, instead of being understood as the node of a world system that erases the nation-state, can be approached as the site where the dialectic tension between the global and the national is being played out. Singapore and Doha are both actively embracing globalisation and nationalism. These two dynamics are strongly intertwined. Globalisation is key to their national narratives. Both cities emphasize their past as trade ports, as sites of human and cultural exchanges. Their policies and national plans are geared towards openness to trade, migration and innovation. At the same time, both Singapore and Doha have a highly proactive nation-building and nation-branding strategies. They are active in

²⁹ <http://www.naaasgroup.com/asian-city>

³⁰ Kovessy P. (2015) More shops and cinemas coming to renamed ‘Asian Town’ in Qatar May 4, 2015 <https://dohanews.co/more-shops-and-cinemas-coming-to-renamed-asian-town-in-qatar/>

³¹ Facebook page presentation <https://www.facebook.com/asiantownqatar/>

promoting their national identity on the world stage, from UNESCO to the Venice biennial, or the FIFA World Cup.

To capture the global-national dialectic unfolding in global cities, the official cultural programmes and top-down urban strategies have to be confronted with the actions of cultural actors on the ground. These actors can challenge the official vision to generate more complexity. They have a central role in the pluralisation of the national discourse: when it comes to the development of international networks, they can go beyond the promotion of the nation's 'soft power' and try to develop transnational exchanges and regional identities. On a local scale, cultural actors can excavate diversity within the urban space, searching for the dissonant, the marginal, and the problematic, in order to challenge urban branding discourses.

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