BRANDING THE GLOBAL IMAGE: FILMMAKING AND COMPLICATING NATIONAL IDENTITY IN THE UAE

BY

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ABSTRACT

In the neoliberal era, many cities and countries have realised the great importance of culture for the soft power and a new strategy for branding place and shaping its identity to match their competitiveness in the global market. The United Arab Emirates, especially Dubai and Abu Dhabi, is working to prepare and take advantage of cultural products, especially cinema, to shape its image and increase its global standing as an emerging power.

This research centres on the film industries in Dubai and Abu Dhabi (as well as the UAE and the Middle East more widely); specifically, it investigates the relationship between place branding, soft power, and cinema, and how these relationships impact on local, regional and national identities in the context of Neoliberalism. This research draws upon the political and economic and cultural concepts to interrogate the relationship between the cultural image and identity in multiple aspects. It considers this from a standpoint of the neoliberal system in the region, and through the local institutions, political agency, and individual actors.

The flourishing film industry in the United Arab Emirates and the Arabian Gulf has been linked with cultural institutions and initiatives such as the Dubai International Film Festival, which have created an exceptional brand for the place. However, these branding processes create gaps between local, regional, and global identities. The thesis explores how place branding strategies deployed through cinema are used to increase regional and global standing, whilst also examining how local filmmakers use film as a field to experience, express, negotiate, represent and reflect on their identities as Emiratis while at the same time seeking a wide audience to satisfy the government's objectives.

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Digital Video Discs **Attached**

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCING THE RESEARCH

1.1 Introduction

It is the 2nd of December 2018, the National Day of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). People are out on the streets celebrating, dancing to local music broadcast on local radio stations. Streetlights reflect the red, white and green of the national colours and the nation's flag is flying outside every building. Television stations broadcast documentaries narrating the transformation of the lands from a Bedouin nation to a modernized country firmly part of the 21st century, proud of both its progress and its roots. After the exuberance, the next day life returns to normal and the national image returns to being dominated by international retailers and brands. People retreat from the streets back into the malls and their air-conditioned comfort. The malls form the heart of the community, places where people shop, watch movies, eat and just browse around. Multi-culturalism is self-evident and the feeling is of a major international airport where the world comes together in plush surroundings. The brands on display could be seen almost anywhere in the world, showing that this small Arab Muslim nation is firmly plugged in to the global consumer culture. Perhaps only the clothing worn by Emiratis, white Dishdashas or Kanduras for the Arab men and black abayas for women, remind us where we are.

According to Kotler, 'people and resources are increasingly mobile as a result of twenty-first century technology and globalization' (Kotler 2004, p. 12). This mobility has created competition between regions, cities and countries in the international market. In order to create attractiveness for them and find a place for them on the global map, many places have tended to manage their brand to attract visitors, companies and new residents (Gertner, 2011;

Kavaratzis, 2004). Many city officials and media producers have tended to use the cinema as a tool to brand the identity of the place globally (Chu 2013; Gkritzali et al. 2016).

The UAE is an ideal case in investigating the use of cinema for branding and soft power in the context of neoliberalism. A place brand is a distinction of a desired location or position in the neoliberal economic system that combines economy and culture (Ashworth and Kavaratzis 2009; Green et al. 2016; Hafeez et al. 2016). This soft power, through cinema, attracts tourists, companies, and new residents to the UAE, but it also encourages the projection of the UAE around the world as a desirable symbol of progress and modernity. The UAE is a country with a high level of government control over public space. This enables the government to work with western and internal investment in cinema not only as economic diversification, but as a strategy to remake what it means to be Emirati. Therefore, The UAE government or institutions rework the notion of Emirati identity not within the context of the local, but within the context of the international.

This doctoral thesis adopts an audio-visual approach, which has two elements: an audio-visual documentary and written defence to investigate the relationship between neoliberalism and cultural products as tools for place branding and the regional development of cities in the Middle East, with a particular focus on the film industry. The study applies the conceptual lens of neoliberalism. Using the case studies of Dubai and Abu Dhabi, the thesis will show how place branding strategies deployed through cinema are used to increase regional and global standing. It will also examine how local filmmakers use film as a field to experience, express, negotiate, represent and reflect on their identities as Emiratis, while at the same time seeking a wide audience to satisfy the government's objectives. Thirdly, it will shed light on

how the influence of globalized culture and foreign experts contribute to deepening the identity crisis, and its contradiction in the policy of building national cultures and strengthening the framework for building and developing national cadres in the local culture.

1.2 Structure of the Written Defence

This thesis comprises five chapters. The aim of this initial chapter is to introduce the context in which the research is set, namely Dubai and Abu Dhabi, and present the research aims and objectives. The research examines cultural production not only in terms of what is present in the neoliberal system, but also cultural production as a space of tension between the global and local and the individuals affected by this tension. In Chapter two, the methodology used for the study, the audio-visual project, is discussed and the steps taken by the researcher to realise the study. Chapter three reviews the literature on neoliberalism and culture, on national branding and soft power, and on place branding and city marketing, before turning to the role of the film industry. Chapter four presents and discusses the findings on place branding and soft power strategies that Dubai and Abu Dhabi have used to be global economic and cultural centers. Specifically, it considers two case studies representative of these strategies. It also discusses the conflict that neoliberal globalism has given rise to between the reach for global standing and the desire to retain an Emirati identity as experienced by local filmmakers. The main conclusions are presented in the fifth and final chapter.

1.3 Research context

Neoliberalism has become a hotly debated social and political perspective among scholars and researchers because it proposes new and sophisticated patterns and methods for ideological projects based on markets and the absolute freedom of movement of individuals, information,

and goods across borders. It also holds significance for the growing phenomenon of globalization at all levels of production, marketing, and technology, as well as for the emergence of new economic and political tools in the post-industrial era through the economic shift from a manufacturing base to one of knowledge, innovation, and creativity. Many global cities, especially emerging cities, have adopted economic innovation and creative industries, and the future role of public cultural institutions is that of an instrument in new neoliberal economy.

The transformations that took place in the post-modern era of multinational capitalism and globalization lead us to analyse the relationship between the economic and political transformation of states and cities and their cultural industries. These transformations are working with religious, ethnic and social pluralism within this new economic system. Therefore, culture become instrument to manage that pluralism.

The transformations that have taken place in the era of heavy industry have transformed the world into one of culture, and culture has become a real resource for states and cities. Cultural practices have organically become interrelated with the economic, political and historical elements of neoliberalism. Cultural instruments, including products such as those arising from art, film, literature, architecture, music and history, have become aesthetic commodities. Culture has become an economic, political, social and religious tool, important for managing and shaping religious, ethnic and social identity.

There are a number of cities and states in the developing world, including the Middle East and especially the oil-producing countries, that are working to diversify their economies, reduce

dependence on oil, and move towards a reliance on alternative income sources. This shift has drawn these cities and states towards knowledge-based industries such as cultural-product industries, and especially the film industry, to attract international audiences and foster reputations as global centres. Branding in this way helps to promote the positive aspects of neoliberalism, whilst control over the image itself can still be maintained by the authoritarian state regime, as in the case of the UAE.

According to Joseph Nye, soft power is 'the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. Soft power arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals and policies' (Nye, 2016, p.26). Soft power is considered one of the important assets in influencing others, not by using 'hard' military force, but through the power of attracting that goes beyond coercion or persuasion. Place branding is an aspect of soft power in which the economic and corporate dimension of branding intersects with a state's political projection of the geographic area. Just like a corporate brand tries to both embody and promote the essence of a product; place branding tries to embody and promote the image of the nation as the state pursues economic and political objectives. And just as image building in the corporate brand seeks to build up trust and customer satisfaction, place branding aspires to build up trust and satisfaction in the nation, a sentiment which is beyond the concrete markers of economic and political stability of the state through its institutions and activities.

Fan (2008) believes countries compete with each other for political power and loyalty in a competitive market in order to attract the trust, hearts, and minds of people at home and around the world in the same way that large firms fight over market dominance. In this

competition, place branding offers an advantage for “soft power”, as politicians try to position their country within the international community (Van Ham, 2008).

The relationship between the concepts of soft power and place branding is part of the discourse of soft power theorists such as Van Ham (2008) and Fan (2008). Both concepts are concerned with the nation's attractiveness and its impact on the local and international scene. This relationship concerns not just how to represent the country's image and improve its reputation, but rather how to be more attractive, as states must rely on sources other than coercive power such as culture, ideologies, and institutions. In this way, culture is one of the sources of attraction, awareness building and influence countries use to create attractiveness not only locally but globally.

The UAE is a small nation, in which the Emirati citizens comprise only 12% of the total population (UAE Population Statistics 2020). The multinational character of UAE society is beyond doubt and combined with globalization could be a potential threat to local identity. The exceptionally high migrant population has led to the state losing control of the local scene and global cultural output. Modern technology has enabled people to interact with each other and with the outside world. Therefore, in response the government aims to preserve the distinctive Emirati identity.

Because of the economic, political and social transformation of the twenty-first century, coinciding with the development of the knowledge-based economy and creative industries, and increased cross-boundary flows of resources, cities and states are trying to cover the economic gap left by the total reliance on heavy industries and manufacturing with creative

industries and the knowledge-based economy. To reap the benefits of a distinctive global image, cities and states employ a wide range of stakeholders, decision makers, cultural institutions, private investors and individuals in the community to work on the development of that image or brand through the cultural and creative industries. The cultural industry is a major field that includes many different components, such as museums, art, fashion and films. This study will focus on the film industry in particular.

Regarding emerging cities, most researchers of city branding through cinema have focused on the study of developed cities in developed countries (Chen and Shih, 2019; Dinardi, 2017; Wang and Zhang, 2019; Bonelli et al., 2019; D'Alessandro et al., 2015) but have neglected cities in emerging countries, especially in the Middle East. Thus, this research is an assessment of the use and effectiveness of cultural-product industries as instruments of city branding and regional growth. It also investigates the political and economic objectives of Middle Eastern cities that use cultural products such as the film industry and film festivals. Therefore, this research limits itself to looking at the city branding and cultural-product industries (the film industry in particular) of two Middle Eastern cities and seeks to fill this gap in understanding through an investigation of branding and the film industry in the UAE.

Among the seven other Emirates in the UAE, Abu Dhabi and Dubai are the major economic contributors. Dubai is the flagship brand even though Abu Dhabi is the capital. Dubai's decision-makers preceded their neighbour Abu Dhabi in diversifying their economies and reducing their dependence on oil and promoting other sectors like tourism, real estate, trade, hospitality, media, and telecommunications, which had become part of the city's gross local

product (Wigglesworth and Kerr 2008 cited in Buckley, 2013). Therefore, there is a need to equip and improve the national brand to serve its strategies (Dinnie, 2009).

1.2.1 Dubai

Dubai is the most densely populated and the second largest city in the UAE. It is located on the east coast of the Arabian Peninsula, in the south-western corner of the Arabian Gulf. Dubai has emerged as a leading global business destination and has enhanced its reputation as one of the leading economies in the Middle East and the world, and as a place that attracts people from around the world who want to live a luxurious life and achieve bourgeois satisfaction. Dubai has witnessed economic growth through its dynamic and diverse economic activity. In terms of its position as an economic centre, Dubai has an ideal location that links Asian countries with the Middle East and has close proximity to Africa. Dubai also has a strong infrastructure and its economic and political horizons have helped it to attract investors and businesses.

Dubai once relied on fishing, pearls, camel breeding and sea trade. In the nineteenth century, Dubai took advantage of the prevailing philosophy of economic liberalism that encouraged entrepreneurial activities. The then Persian government imposed government fees on traders working in Persian ports. In response, Dubai attracted trade and maritime traffic to its Jebel Ali port. As a result, Dubai became a commercial centre for the region's interior and the main port re-exporting goods from India. Dubai became a commercial port for cargo and long-haul trade (Leotta, 2015), which increased immigration to the city and contributed to the establishment of ethnic communities, such as Indian, Pakistani, Iranian and Arabian (Stephenson, 2014). Alongside this, development projects in different fields have helped to

promote Dubai's position as a commercial hub in the region (Kazim, 2007). Dubai is now considered an important trading port linking Asia, Africa and Europe (Dickinson, 2016).

Dubai was once a desert; it has grown quickly and become one of the major trade hubs and tourist destinations in the region. Dubai has promoted itself as a global city and commercial hub in the region by building modern infrastructure and a friendly business environment. It launched projects to boost trade (e.g. the Jabel Ali sea Port), transportation (e.g. Emirates Airlines and two large airports), tourism (e.g. more than 500 hotels and resorts), finance (e.g. Dubai International Financial Centre) and media (e.g. Dubai Media City) to attract the world's attention (Callen et al., 2014). Between 2000 and 2013, Dubai's economy grew by 9% a year, contributing to a reduction in its reliance on oil and its derivatives, which currently accounts for 5% of economic output (Callen et al., 2014).

Dubai took advantage of the prevailing philosophy of economic liberalism in the 20th century that encouraged entrepreneurial activities. These activities, especially cultural activities and particularly film production, were undertaken to activate and diversify Dubai's economy (Hudson, 2017). However, Dubai is a specific case in which you have rentier economy that is trying to diversify and no longer be dependent on oil. The oil process can be volatile, and oil is a finite resource that will at some point run out, so even while you can accrue a lot of wealth from the oil industry, it should not be relied upon for the provision of jobs and productivity across a whole country. Therefore, countries that are dependent on oil must expand their economies. In the 21st century, the desire to follow the trend of neoliberal economics obliged the UAE, and in turn Dubai, to diversify. At the same time, when we talk

about the diversification of Dubai's economy, we must also talk about the diversification of Dubai's image.

Dubai's desire for economic diversification was expressed by the government of Dubai through Dubai Holding, the Emirate's global investment holding company. This saw an increased focus on knowledge and technology by concentrating on cultural-products industries, investments, architecture, financial services, tourism, hospitality, media and telecommunications, which have become part of the city's gross local product (Kerr and Wigglesworth 2008 cited in Buckley, 2012).

Dubai is building an image – through its infrastructure, real estate, tourism, entertainment and trade – that will attract tourists, investors, service providers and labourers from around the world. Dubai is an attractive place to work, visit, invest in and live in, featuring safe living conditions and a modern environment (Lee and Jain, 2009). In addition, Dubai aims to be the centre of Arab cultural production in the region, especially in the film and media industries.[1] The Dubai government has recently set an ambitious goal of transforming the city into a global film production platform. Through remarkable investment in the media and film

[1] Culture has been at the heart of the Dubai brand: the city's brand was built around the economy, culture, urban renewal, and city promotion as a commercial and tourist hub, where it was established in the late 1980s (Laws, 1995). Tourism has become one of the main catalysts for economic growth. In 2008, the ruler of Dubai issued a law establishing the Dubai Culture and Arts Authority (DCAA), which was created within the framework of the Dubai Strategic Plan for 2015, "boost Dubai's position on the global cultural map, make the emirate a preferred international destination for cultural, creative, artistic and literary talent and support the growth of creative industries and enhance their contribution to the economy." (Dubai Culture, 2019).

industries, the Dubai government has established Dubai Media City (DMC) as the media hub of the Middle East. In 2005, Dubai Studio City (DSC) was built.[2]

Researchers have studied the image of Dubai and the effects of Dubai's branding as a city, including its urban infrastructure and how it is perceived by global audiences (Bagaeen, 2007; Balakrishnan, 2008; Coombe and Melki, 2012; Govers and Go, 2009; Govers and Go, 2016; Hafeez et al., 2016; Lee 2009; Lee and Jain, 2009). Dubai has been described as an 'instantly recognizable' global cityscape (Bagaeen, 2007, p.173) and a 'de facto place brand' (Govers and Go, 2016, p. 95). Increased investment in many commercial and creative projects has accelerated domestic development, developed human capability, encouraged economic diversification, and supported economic growth brought by knowledge, innovation and modern technological development. Like Paris, London and New York, Dubai exploits its sites, whether in the form of shopping malls, luxury hotels, the tallest tower in the world (the Burj Khalifa) or its skyscrapers and artificial islands (most notably The Palm Jumeirah and The World). In addition, Dubai creates an image that contributes to the marketing and promotion of the city as a dream city and a city of opportunities. Consequently, Dubai attracts filmmakers, labourers and tourists. In 2019, Dubai received 16.73 million overnight visitors (Government of Dubai Media Office, 2020).

[2] DSC was built as part of TECOM Group that is a member of Dubai Holding and a strategic element that contributes to fulfill Dubai's economic aspirations to create sector-focused societies, innovative business solutions, and creative spaces. DSC is a global and creative business industry created by the government of Dubai as a free economic zone based on the broadcasting, film production, TV, music and entertainment sectors.

Dubai has become a prestigious environment for rapidly growing businesses and a symbol of innovation, quality and luxury living. Dubai has been involved in building its image for decades through direct marketing and advertising campaigns. It has used different means to brand itself, including newspapers, magazines, social media, television news broadcasts (Coombe and Melki, 2012; Dinnie, 2015; Govers, 2012; Lee and Jain, 2009), online websites (Govers and Go, 2004), infrastructure development (development of the cityscape, most notably), investment in the Emirates airline (Bagaeen, 2007; Dickinson, 2016; Klingmann, 2007; Marathe, 2015) and sports events such as cricket and tennis tournaments (Marathe, 2015).

1.2.2 Abu Dhabi

Abu Dhabi is not only the capital; it is the largest and richest of the seven emirates that make up the UAE. It constitutes more than 87% of the total land area of the Emirates. In addition, Abu Dhabi reportedly has 90% of the UAE's oil and natural gas reserves, and it is ranked sixth among global oil exporters (Hazime, 2011).

As experienced in other countries in the region, notably Saudi Arabia, being heavily reliant on one natural resource can expose an economy to price shocks and consequent instability. The UAE has long been dependent on petroleum products for its income, and therefore there was an urgent need to devise new strategies to diversify the economy. Abu Dhabi followed the steps of Dubai in publishing a government vision, entitled Abu Dhabi Economic Vision 2030. Its main object is 'transformation of the emirate's economy, including a reduced reliance on the oil sector as a source of economic activity over time and a greater focus on knowledge-based industries in the future' (Abu Dhabi Government, 2019, para. 1). The government of

Abu Dhabi started strategic planning for a unique brand by establishing the Office of the Brand of Abu Dhabi OBAD (Hashim, 2012; Al-Owais, 2019).

As part of the continued development of branding, and in the response to the economic crisis and instability of the oil market, the government of the UAE has accelerated its drive to create attractions, build infrastructure, market attractions, and establish events for investment and increasing economic growth (Saberi et al., 2018). There has been a major effort to take Abu Dhabi beyond being a commercial hub towards projecting the place as a cultural icon or marketing icon through events, in the knowledge that a nation's brand has critical importance for developing countries and contributes to the process of development and prosperity (Anholt, 2006).

The year 1958 marked turning point for Abu Dhabi when oil was discovered. What was a Bedouin tribe living in tents with a simple life dependent on hunting and local agriculture in the interior oases would become one of the world's leading oil producers (Al-Owais, 2019). The emirate began to invest in infrastructure, education, healthcare, and other sectors for the advancement of the economy and its people. To read more about the transformations that the Emirati identity has undergone, see Appendix 1 on page 165

After the death of Sheikh Zayed in 2004, his son Sheikh Khalifa assumed power. Major changes were made to the city's regulations to revive the economy and attract more skilled workers and foreign investment. Abu Dhabi brand marketing tactics included promoting the place through huge advertising campaigns through marketing channels such as promotional videos, magazines, newspapers, billboards, and websites (Hashim, 2012; Al-Owais, 2019).

Abu Dhabi has worked on global marketing strategies to promote its brand to achieve competitive advantage in the region where it competes with the likes of Doha and Manama, alongside neighbouring Dubai (Krzyzaniak, 2018).[3]

The government in Abu Dhabi has paid attention to culture and the creative industry, especially filmmaking, not only as a platform for its soft power and a branding tool for its brand, but as an economic resource. Culture is one of the agendas and strategies set by the Emirates Vision 2030 and the Cultural Agenda 2031 and is part of building the attractiveness of the place regionally and globally.[4]

Abu Dhabi has sought to attract visitors through cultural activities such as festivals and events including sports activities like the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix. Abu Dhabi has invested in major football clubs around the world, perhaps most notably Manchester City of the English Premier League. In addition, government-owned companies of Abu Dhabi such as Etihad Airways have sponsoring sports clubs and other sports activities. These investments and sponsorships have brought huge gains in the soft power of the Emirates as well as building a national brand (Krzyzaniak, 2018).

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[3] According to Abu Dhabi's 2030 plan, the marketing plans of the brand aim to: empower women, create sustainable local resources, activate the growth of the neighbouring emirates' economies, as well as develop the infrastructure to attract foreign investment and coordinate activities and economic markets. Attention to the tourism sectors, transportation and logistics, and the knowledge-based economy (Al-Owais, 2019).

[4] In 2017, the UAE established a Council of Soft Power to promote and enhance the Emirates identity internationally through the humanitarian, economic, tourism, media, and scientific fields, to form the Emirates as a gateway and center in the region for culture and art, and to establish the reputation of the country as a modern, open, tolerant country. The Minister of Presidential Affairs Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan states that, 'The responsibility of the UAE's reputation is also the responsibility of any person and group in the UAE. Our goal is to build a strong reputation for the nation, through which we can achieve our developmental, economic, and cultural goals and ambitions ...The UAE is a regional and global platform that embraces Arab culture and global best practices; we are a global meeting point, an essential gateway to the Arab world, and offer a platform for a renaissance in the Arab world'. (The National, 2017)

Abu Dhabi considers a liberal culture one of the engines of its political and economic discourse, so cultural institutions such as the Louvre-Abu Dhabi exist as a lever for cultural openness and liberalism. Therefore, state cultural institutions tended to use culture as part the soft power of the state to reflect its political and economic trends internally and externally.

Tourism and culture are both important sectors economically and in enhancing the brand identity of the place. In 2004, the government established the Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority, headed by Sheikh Sultan bin Tahnoon Al-Nahyan, which commissioned senior experts from the UNESCO World Heritage Centre to develop cultural heritage sites in Abu Dhabi. In 2005, the Centre organized a forum to bring together tourism experts and senior UNESCO figures who witnessed the launch of the Abu Dhabi Cultural Heritage Management Strategy, a five-year plan to preserve and manage its cultural heritage. The Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage was a direct result of the application of the Abu Dhabi strategy for managing and preserving cultural heritage, enhancing the local identity, and developing Emirati arts, music, literature, and cinema.

From 2006 to 2012, the government's cultural and tourism strategies adopted cinema as a major component. Four institutions concerned with film and film policy were created in Abu Dhabi: The Middle East Film Festival in 2007; Abu Dhabi New York Film Academy in 2008; Image Nation Abu Dhabi in 2008; and Abu Dhabi Film Commission in 2009. The Middle East Film Festival in 2007 was renamed The Abu Dhabi Film Festival (ADFF) and was held as an annual event in Abu Dhabi city. From 2012 the festival was absorbed by the Abu Dhabi Media Zone Authority, specifically Media Zone Events and its partner company, Twofour54.

It was closed down in 2015 after eight editions. When the ADFF closed its doors the Emirates Film Competition, established in 2001 by the Abu Dhabi Cultural Foundation, also came to an end. It had been a component of the festival since 2008. The competition was open to all UAE residents and was aimed at encouraging both amateur and professional filmmakers to create short films on local themes that could be disseminated through television or other mass media (Gulf News, 2009).

In 2012, the government merged tourism and culture to form the Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority, which supervised the initiatives aimed to establish Abu Dhabi and the Emirates as a regional cultural centre. The government made significant investments, including international museums such as the Louvre Abu Dhabi, and Guggenheim Abu Dhabi located in the Island Cultural District of Saadiyat Island. Saadiyat Island is also home to New York University Abu Dhabi while Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi is located on neighbouring Reem Island. The chairman of Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture, Mohammed Al-Mubarak, is also the chairman of Image Nation, which works to adapt cultural tools to serve tourism.

The government in Abu Dhabi is working to take advantage of cultural tools including films to promote tourism, as Dubai has done. It is trying to bring Hollywood brands to Abu Dhabi through several initiatives, the latest of which is investing $1 billion with Warner Brothers to build a theme park to contribute to attracting tourists. According to Mohamed Al-Mubarak that the Warner Bros. project in Abu Dhabi is ‘going to enhance everything around us so whether it's the airline, whether it's the hotels, it's the infrastructure, it's the retail and the list goes on more than anything you know us as partners’: the goal is to attract investment to Abu Dhabi and Dubai and to be a hub like Dubai is for tourism (CNBC TV, 2018). A Sea World

and Ferrari World also operate on Yas Island. In addition, Yas Island has become a world-class entertainment destination, annually hosting the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, alongside luxury hotels, a luxury yacht marina, as well as international restaurants such as the Italian Cipriani Restaurant. Yas Island has become a media and entertainment hub after twofour54, the Media and Entertainment Free Zone in Abu Dhabi, moved there bringing all film and TV production companies to the new headquarters, which will include production studios in an area of a total area of 300 thousand square meters (ARABNEW, 2017). According to Sultan Al-Qassemi, the establishment of these institutions and initiatives related to culture and arts is one of the tools that contribute to enhancing the soft power, political diplomacy, and culture of the UAE and give it a global position of importance (Leech, 2015).

1.2.3 The twin problem of exceptionalisation and homogenisation

In considering the research context of the UAE and specifically Dubai and Abu Dhabi, it is important to recognise the distorting effects of two contrasting lenses through which these places are viewed: exceptionalisation and homogenisation.

Through the lens of exceptionalisation, the UAE and indeed the wider Gulf region, are viewed as inherently different places to the rest of the world that do not bear comparison with other places. This exceptionality is reinforced by ethnocentric media tropes which range from anti-Muslim 'clash of civilizations' rhetoric at times of geopolitical tension and conflict, which focusses on terrorism and religious oppression to stereotypes of nations whose place in the world is owed solely to fortuitous geology and the exploitation of migrant labour (Eid, 2014). Assigning an exceptional label to the states of the Gulf region inhibits learning from their experiences and undermines the value of research into these experiences in an unwarranted

manner. Applying simplistic labels invoking oil and Islam ignores the complexity of these societies and their social, political and economic challenges as well as the richness of their cultures.

An opposing yet equally unhelpful tendency is the homogenization of the emirates of the UAE. Through this lens, the diversity of the emirates, notably but not only the contrasts between Abu Dhabi and Dubai, is lost to a uniformed and blurred image. This homogenization overlooks the important differences within the emirates in terms of economic classes, families, urban/rural balance, cultural contributions etc. Not least, homogenization belies the fact that Dubai is an oil-poor city state with most of the UAE oil reserves found in Abu Dhabi (Hvidt, 2011). It also fails to recognize that the UAE is a 'young' country still developing its identity. Being established as recently as 1971, it is celebrating fifty years of existence in 2021. Furthermore, homogenization seems to exist on a superficial level or among those with little knowledge of the Gulf region. Research studies have demonstrated the ability of those with some knowledge or those who have visited to differentiate between the emirates and form distinct images of them, particularly between Dubai and Abu Dhabi (Gomba et al., 2018; Martens and Reiser, 2019; Valek and Williams, 2018).

The present research rejects both the exceptionalisation and the homogenization of the UAE and the wider Gulf region with the understanding that not only does the UAE offer significant contributions to our understanding of culture, place branding and neoliberalism but also that important differences and complexities exist in the UAE and require analytical unpacking if a valuable research contribution is to be made.

1.4 Research aim, objectives and questions

The overall aim of this research is to investigate the relationship between neoliberalism and cultural products as tools for place branding, shaping the identity of the place, and the regional development of cities in the Middle East with a particular focus on the film industry. This research draws upon the political, economic and cultural concepts to interrogate the relationship between the cultural image and identity in multiple aspects. It considers this from a standpoint of the neoliberal system in the region, and through the local institutions, political agency, and individual actors. To achieve this, the following objectives have been set:

- To examine the projected culture and identity image of the city by looking at the negotiation between institutions and actors within the neoliberal system.
- To examine place branding in the globalised era through the relationship between image culture and identity to interrogate and critically appraise this relationship. This will be done through consideration of the political and economic agencies, institutions, and individual actors.
- To understand how visual production, especially films, is more than a distributor and facilitator of ideology, being also an effective tool of communication with the power to enhance a place's brand.
- To explore the marketing efforts and activities of cultural institutions to negotiate the image of local identity, negotiate city stereotypes and create a positive image of Dubai and Abu Dhabi.
- To explore how Emirati filmmakers negotiate notions of their national identity and current forms of government representation. This negotiation is between the globalised culture that they grow up with, such as Hollywood and Bollywood films, as well as government visual production.

The research presented in this thesis will address three research questions:

1. How has the United Arab Emirates employed place branding strategies to increase its regional and global standing through cinema?
2. How do the examples of the Dubai International Film Festival and Image Nation Abu Dhabi contribute to the Emirates place branding strategy?
3. How does a neoliberal inspired place branding strategy create conflicts between the global and the local in the Emirati film industry?

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

This thesis applies an original approach by combining a critique of visual and cultural production not only through written analysis but also through an audio-visual documentary that works with tools of visual and cultural representation. This gives the researcher an additional dimension to negotiate issues such as neoliberalism, identity, and the position of the individual in the UAE.

Most researchers of city branding and the destination image through cinema have focused on cities in developed countries and have neglected cities in emerging countries, especially in the Middle East. This is an important gap that needs to be filled, as many of these places are becoming increasingly globally significant at the cultural level and their influence is spreading beyond the region. By examining how cities in the Middle East aim to reach their political and economic objectives through the use of cultural products such as the film industry and film festivals, this research will make a valuable contribution to existing understanding of this phenomenon. The research takes two cities, Dubai and Abu Dhabi, as case studies, enabling both commonalities and contrasts to be identified which will strengthen the robustness of the findings.

By adopting neoliberalism as a conceptual lens, the research also contributes to understanding how this economic philosophy can be applied to both cultural products and to the marketing and branding of place. Looking at these contradictions in a different way through film festivals, local films, and other types of presentation of the identity of the place. This

contribution not only sees what is presented to the audience on the screen, but it also recognises what is not seen on the screen.

The research also explores the relationship between neoliberalism and cultural production, especially cinema. Although the economic and political crises contribute to affecting the neoliberal system, the system's recovery is based on cultural production, including cinema. The UAE provides a rare example of a state-building project in the Middle East that has benefited from economic development mixed with the projection of soft power through cultural production, which is one of the important tools for it to recover in the face of the political and economic crises and challenges that the country has gone through during the past 12 years.

This second chapter aims to present and explain the methodological choices made by the researcher and to describe what was done to operationalise the research. The chapter can be broadly viewed as having two halves. In the first half, the research approach, its design and its definition are discussed. There are multiple components to this characterisation of the research. It is art-based research, it uses audio-visual project methodology (specifically observational and performative documentary filmmaking), it is ethnographic, and it applies a case study approach. Each of these characteristics is discussed. Moving to the second half, the chapter explains what the researcher did to achieve the research objectives and address the research questions. This includes detailing how the observations and interviews were conducted and who the participants were; the question of the dual role of researcher and filmmaker; and the use of content analysis. The chapter ends with a brief summary.

2.2 Research design

This research utilises ‘Art-based Research’, an approach to scholarship derived from Performative Social Science that is defined ‘as any social research or human inquiry that adapts the tenets of the creative arts as a part of the methodology. So, the arts may be used during data collection, analysis, interpretation and/or dissemination’ (Jones and Leavy, 2014, p. 1-2). McNiff (2008) defined this form of research as ‘the systematic use of the artistic process, the actual making of artistic expressions in all of the different forms of the arts, as a primary way of understanding and examining experience by both researchers and the people that they involve in their studies’ (p.29). To be more specific, the present study employs an audio-visual methodology, taking advantage of the critical opportunities generated by a shift away from a dependence on the written text (traditional written research) into more visual and creative areas of investigation, documentation and dissemination.

Ingraham (2000) notes that the advent of new technologies ‘may have significant implications for the way in which scholarly argument is constructed’. Therefore, there is a need to use research tools that contribute to the use of technology to reach communities, exploring relations between peoples and governments and the complexities of life. Moreover, such technological and digital tools can offer nuanced approaches that can be adapted to specific research projects (Ingraham, 2000). Nelson’s identification of the possible need for ‘a shift in the conception of what constitutes research, and even what constitutes knowledge’ (2006, p. 2) when it comes to practice-based research is closely aligned to Ingraham’s (2000) assertion that the new technologies and platforms for mediating scholarship ‘may have significant implications on the way in which scholarly argument is constructed’.

2.3 Audio-visual project methodology

This thesis applies audio-visual project methodology. Specifically, it comprises a documentary film that performs several functions simultaneously: data collection and representation, critical and creative interpretation, and the dissemination of the findings. Film offers visual researchers the opportunity to observe the behaviour of individuals within communities, and the relationship of individuals and communities with institutions, cities and polities. Therefore, this research adopts a range of documentary strategies (observational and reflexive techniques, formal interviews and archive materials) as audio-visual methods to deeply analyse and investigate the relationship between the polity of Dubai and Abu Dhabi and its film industry, how its government uses visual representations to create an image of itself and the impact of that image on the society and individuals. This research also explores the roles that stakeholders, decision makers, cultural institutions, private investors and individuals in the community play in the cultural industries' enactment of the destination branding of Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

The leaders of both Dubai and Abu Dhabi are deeply concerned with the images of these places: with the idea and story of itself that it projects locally, regionally and globally. The moving image has been heavily implicated in this process – whether in advertisement and enticement, news broadcasts or feature films. Audio-visual methodology enables the researcher to access and interrogate the story version of itself that Dubai and Abu Dhabi are looking to articulate, as that is the medium in which it tells its tale; such a methodology also enables the critical juxtaposition of dominant official narratives (through formal interviews and archive materials) with the individual stories (observational content) that are regularly rendered invisible by the power dynamics often at work in neoliberal global cities.

There is strong justification as to why this approach was chosen. The primary focus of this research study concerns the image, both literally and metaphorically, of Dubai and Abu Dhabi. Both these places have created and disseminated glossy presentations of themselves through media (such as in movies, news reports and advertising) and it is therefore logical to use film as a research medium in order to best show, engage with and interrogate those images. Thus, it would be appropriate to use a visual approach to research the composition of the brand or image of the two cities. Also, this approach helps in considering the role of stakeholders and cultural institutions in its construction and gaining an analytical understanding of what the two cities' agendas are the effects of its image. Therefore, the visual approaches empower researchers to perform a deeper investigation and investigate about what is made visible (Pink, 2013; Snyder, 2014; Jones and Leavy, 2014).

A narrative approach is also used in this research. This is necessary in order to unpack the images that we deal with, which have been distorted by neoliberalism; this is the effect that globalization and neoliberalism tend to have. The image of the neoliberal city presents the individual as a consumer or movable piece inside the global economic game. This is the case with the projected images of Dubai and Abu Dhabi – as evidenced by these cities' preoccupation with spectacular architecture, such as Dubai's boast of having the tallest tower in the world. However, these cities lack semiotic expressiveness and a sense of place. The image projected does not involve the people who built that tallest building, for instance. They are not interested in presenting these individual stories, particularly those of the ones who struggle in its society. The projected image often does not engage with negative criticism of the cities; however, when it does, they seek to fold that criticism back in to its own narrative, presenting the image of a responsive, pluralistic and democratic society.

2.3.1 Observational and performative documentary filmmaking

The specific research methodology that the research is applies consists of observational and performative documentary filmmaking, utilising approaches drawn from ethnographic practice. The aim of ethnography is to observe the life of a group of people within their community, individuals who work and live together as a social unit (Heath, 1982). The observational and ethnographic strategy registers and characterizes the undisguised, unambiguous, and explicit behaviours, values and tangible aspects of culture through the use of different techniques to observe individual and group life. According to Pink (2013), visual ethnographic methods of research and representation enable deep analysis of the subject through the possibilities offered by digital video and hypermedia. This helps researchers such as Jones (2012), who uses a visual ethnographic approach in his studies in social sciences, where he believes that digital video and hypermedia contribute to a deeper understanding of the communication and the complex social lives of humans. Therefore, this research approaches individuals who work and live together as part of this social unit, or who are attached to the social unit in some other way. Dubai and Abu Dhabi exist as both geographical places and as ideas of a place, and this project not only explores how these individuals navigate and interact with the city proper, but also how they navigate and interact with the city's image. This audio-visual thesis is interested in investigating how these different performances of the two places actually impact the individual, because it is the individual who observes these images and behaves accordingly.

The project applies an observational approach in terms of accessing these individual stories, but the overall structure is performative in the sense that it is looking to both describe the performance of Dubai and Abu Dhabi as an idea (the image of projection) and also to be an

articulation (in its form, style, and mode) of how such performance actually works, following Bruzzi's ideas on 'utterances in the performative documentary that simultaneously both describe and perform an action' (Bruzzi, 2000, p. 154).

The project predominantly adopts a performative mode, as this would mirror the way in which the two cities project their narrative to the world. Other images are hidden behind the manufactured and refined ones that these places intend to perform on the world stage. For instance, concealed behind the airbrushed depiction of glamour and luxury put forth are the thousands upon thousands of people who constructed these destinations under conditions comparable to slavery.[5]

Audio-visual research focuses on the variability and complexity of sensitive meanings created by social, political and economic practices, which allowed the researcher to observe and investigate the relationship between individuals and the city, including how these individuals engaged, communicated and interacted with both the reality and the performance of the cities. The ethnographic approach enabled an analysis of these individuals' norms, values, understandings and rules of behaviour (Rubin and Rubin, 2011, p. 28; McNamara, 2009, p. 164). Some of these things are easy to perform, while others are harder to perform; this all depends on nationality, religion, experience, skills and aspirations that the individuals attain and how the state deals with those individuals. In order to discover the impact of the city

[5] According to Bruzzi (2000), the use of film as a tool for delivering information to the viewer necessarily must have a performative element 'because it is given meaning by the interaction between performance and reality.' The performative mode is 'a mode which emphasizes – and indeed constructs a film around – the often hidden aspect of performance, whether on the part of the documentary subjects or the filmmakers' (Bruzzi, 2000, p. 153). These two Middle Eastern cities have two characters: One that is performed through its manufactured images, and the real one.

system on community members, this audio-visual project highlights Emirati and non-Emirati perceptions about Emirati impact on the construction of the Dubai and Abu Dhabi brands; furthermore, this project is designed to demonstrate how the marketing activities and branding efforts of the cities' film professionals avoid negative stereotypes and promote the positive image of the destinations.

Through interviews, document analysis and case studies in a documentary film form, the relationships of these individuals can be visualised, and the different narratives of Dubai investigated. This project aims to clarify the relationships between the individual people and the destination branding of the two cities and explores the roles that residents have played in the construction of the images they project.

The use of an audio-visual approach assists the researcher in focusing on the image and its use as a branding tool in political, economic, cultural and social contexts. The intersections between place, space, brand, identity and the relationship between citizen and state is also addressed. The central focus of this project is the relationship between the state and the creative industry, with the aim of developing an understanding of how a sense of belonging may be negotiated within the global neoliberal city context. The investigation and negotiation of the creative individuals, for whom creativity is a part of their identity, have different relationships and interactions with the city; these too are explored. Also, the practice of gathering interview responses that give the details of specific events gives us insights into the cultural environment of specific social groups within given institutional, social or historical contexts.

This project explores and critiques neoliberalism by looking at the image the two cities project in ways that situate that image in contexts that are uncomfortable for the image. The film projects the experience of those who live in the destination and is looking to access these individuals who are actively engaging with the construction of the cities from the bottom up. The film focuses on these individuals as characters, representing a critique of the two cities through the artistic, cultural, economic and social conditions they face. The film provides a sense of different communities, both cultural and economic, through the characters' lives. These characters were influenced by the images that the city produces through the media, so these are the images that we want to critique, and does so by using images as well, which lends a different type of power to the analysis.[6]

2.3.2 Ethnographic case study approach

This piece of research falls under the umbrella of ethnography. Perhaps the most commonly cited definition of ethnography is that proposed by Hammersley and Atkinson (1995, p.1),

> *[Ethnography is] a particular method or set of methods, which in its most characteristic form ... involves the ethnographer participating overtly or covertly in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said – asking questions, - in fact collecting*

[6] There are things that can be accessed and knowledge that can be gained that cannot be achieved via a written approach. Traditional research is limited to the reading of books and the interviewing of individuals; the traditional researcher is always trying to read between the lines. Practice-based research, such as film-based projects, allows researchers to get to places and manipulate the space between the lines. This study is concerned with the film industry and creative industry in general, as well as neoliberalism. One of the great forms of global capitalism is film. All that considered, then, a film is not just a nice way of presenting the information, but it is the most appropriate way of getting inside Dubai's projections and deconstructing them.

whatever data are available to shed light on the issues that are the focus of research.

Furthermore, this study is an example of ethnographic documentary filmmaking. Ethnographic filmmaking traces many of its roots to colonial usage where it was applied to create narratives of exotic 'others', an application that, unsurprisingly, has since been widely discredited (Eraso, 2006). While it is a relatively new method and has attracted a critique, this critique is not so different to that heard for other forms of qualitative research and often features questions regarding scholarly rigour (Fitzgerald and Lowe, 2020). Despite this, advocates point to the richness and depth of the visual data collected through the documentary approach, "The representations developed through images and sound can be far more evocative, immediate and in-depth than anything one would register through writing alone." (Eraso, 2006, p.2). Schuck and Kearney (2006) point to the sense of direct experience that can be evoked through a film documentary approach. Ellis (2012) adds that the documentary format has major advantages when used for research as it is relatable, accessible and familiar. This is particularly important within a practice-led research paradigm (Kerrigan & Callaghan, 2014).

Although ethnographic research has mainly been associated with written representations, visual alternatives are not new and have featured film, sketches, photography and paintings (Fitzgerald and Lowe, 2020). The possibilities offered by digital video seem likely to act as a driver of a new phase of visual data for both collection and dissemination (Walker and Boyer, 2018). No longer to ethnographers using film have to concern themselves with heavy equipment or the fragility of celluloid but instead can avail themselves of a vast array of hardware and software innovations (Torresan, n.d.). Documentary practice can now apply experimental, innovative approaches to capture the social world and as well as the ease of

capturing content, documentary makers can now avail themselves of a vast array of postproduction techniques (Hight, 2018).

The present research also applies a case study approach, with Dubai and Abu Dhabi as the two cases, which was chosen because of how it can help the researcher in grappling with the more complicated issues of the research (Flyybjerg, 2006). As Dubois and Gaddes (2017) point out, the objective of such research should be to capture the complexity of the subject being studied, and so an ethnographic field study was considered ideal. In addition, this approach seemed the most apt among the possible methodologies because the primary goal here is to research something extremely specific, and so the research methodology needed to optimise understanding of whatever phenomena the findings present (Ruddin, 2006). Moreover, such a methodology is effective in distinguishing patterns in given contexts (Bell, 1999), produces empirical results (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007) and gives a 'unique means of developing theory by utilizing in-depth insights of empirical phenomena and their contexts' (Dubois and Gadde, 2002, p. 555).

However, there is not a consensus on the effectiveness of the approach undertaken for the present study. Ruddin (2006), for instance, criticises case studies for being hard to generalise. Even so, there have been scholars (such as Flyybjerg 2001; 2006) who determine that generalisation upon the findings of a given case study is feasible, and that, in any case, propensity for generalisation is not a quality that a research methodology needs in order to be an effective one; 'the force – of example' is underestimated (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Ruddin, 2006). In addition, it has also been found to be the case that the findings from an in-depth analysis

can serve generalisation if necessary; this is particularly true when the case is especially individual and unique (Ginzburg, 2011, cited in Czarniawska, 2014).[7]

2.4 Operationalising the research

This research is based on a field study conducted via a practice-based research approach that draws inspiration from ethnography and observational documentary filmmaking. Thus, the study is qualitative, interpretative and reflexive in character. This type of field study through a documentary film approach is deemed suitable as it helps realise the aim of the study and answer the questions of the research. Using the case study approach, including such staples as observations, interviews and documentary analysis (data including audio-visual materials as well as traditional documents), allows the researcher to understand contemporary phenomena within their real setting in more depth.

The research process is summarised in Table 2-1.

Table 2-1: Summary of the research process

Event	Date	Note
Observation	November 2017- December 2019	
First round of interviews conducted	December 2017	During DIFF

[7] For each case there is an associated cultural institution/event and these are 1) the Dubai International Film Festival DIFF and 2) Image Nation Abu Dhabi. The DIFF and its cinematic initiatives were chosen to represent one of the levels of film festivals in the UAE and the region as an international cross-border festival. DIFF is a highly respected medium and an internationally recognized festival. It provides many programs, activities, and seminars contributing to support local filmmakers and to shaping the Emirati identity with its international template. Therefore, studying the case study approach and analysing its results can contribute to understanding the state of international festivals in the region, which is similar in the political and economic situation. Image Nation, meanwhile, is considered one of the most important governmental cultural institutions supervised by Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed and one of the governmental institutions that contribute to the formation of the cultural identity of the UAE (Grain, 2019). Studying this institution and analysing its results contributes to understanding the state of the cultural situation and its political and economic context in the country.

Summaries and memoranda written	December 2017	During DIFF
Further analyses of interview data	2017-2020	
Second round of interviews conducted	December 2018	During Image Nation
Summaries and memoranda written	December 2018	During Image Nation
Practice-Based method	December 2017 -May 2019	Interview and filming

2.4.1 Observations

Observations were conducted throughout the field work period. To delve deeper into the data, the researcher entered the field as an observer to start collecting data. Participant observations are often categorised along an involvement-detachment continuum ranging from total involvement as a complete participant to total detachment as a complete observer (Bryman, 2016). The researcher used an approach involving a high degree of involvement. It should be noted that the specific way in which the festival participants and their lives within the city are observed, activities and public life in the city are portrayed as a "complete observer", which is one of more than several different roles that can be employed (Baker, 2006, p. 174). The observations started in December 2017 at the DIFF and the city of Dubai. The focus was on DIFF and Dubai at the early stages of the research, and then switched to Abu Dhabi, the capital and the political and economic engine of the UAE. During the fieldwork the researcher participated in many festivals and cultural initiatives as part of the project.

The goal was to integrate and observe. For example, at the DIFF the researcher attended morning seminars and observed the production market, then in the evening shows and activities were observed. The researcher moved between the site of the festival that was dedicated to international activities in the Jumeirah area, and other sites that were dedicated to local and Arab activities in the Mall of the Emirates. At the Al Ain Film Festival in Al Ain and the Abu Dhabi Film Festival, the researcher attended and participated in a number of the festivals' activities. The researcher also joined the Creative Lab community of the twofour54 Abu Dhabi (Abu Dhabi's media free zone) an affiliate of the Abu Dhabi government, and other film initiatives in order to attend, participate and write notes on what was happening. Hence, this was participant observation rather than being on the outside looking in.

2.4.2 Interviews

The interview is one of the most widespread practices in human and social sciences that contribute to knowledge production. (Brinkmann, Jacobsen and Kristiansen, 2014). Interviewing has become the heart of most fieldwork that is conducted (O'Brien, 2006). Therefore, the interview is the primary data collection tool in the project. The interview on the one hand is a tool that gives voice to people to reflect their perspective. On the other hand, the interview has been accused of contributing to the building of an individualist subjectivity that contributes to the promotion of individual trends of neoliberalism (Alldred and Gillies, 2002). However, this approach helps the researcher to understand the complexity and connections between cultural-product industries and political, economic, and social debates and struggles. In applied studies, interviews contribute to a better understanding of the complexity of the subject by raising further questions in the context of the research (Brinkmann, Jacobsen and Kristiansen, 2014).

The interviews were conducted for the purposes of building an understanding of how people in Dubai and Abu Dhabi perceive the image of the cities and how they interact with them, as well as the methods used to project the image and the involvement of stakeholders in the process. The 17 interviewees were selected purposively using the researcher's judgement of the likelihood of obtaining informed and triangulated views, perceptions and interpretations of the real images of the two cities, and to gain an idea of how different groups perceive the cities. All participating Emirati and non-Emirati filmmakers live in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, all of them are well-known filmmakers in cultural initiatives in the UAE, some of them won prizes in DIFF. The non-Emirati local participants come from Pakistan, Canada, and Spain. They are English speakers and all of them had lived more than 10 years in the UAE while the Pakistani filmmaker Faisal was born in the UAE. The names nationalities and roles of the 14 filmmaker participants are listed in Table 2-2.

Table 2-2: Participant details

Participant	Country/city	Position
Abdullah Hassan	Emirati/Abu Dhabi	Filmmaker
Aisha Al Zaabi	Emirati/Abu Dhabi	Filmmaker
Hani Alshaibani	Emirati/Abu Dhabi	Filmmaker
Amer Almurry	Emirati/Abu Dhabi	Filmmaker/Director of Al Ain Film Festival
Rakan	Emirati/Abu Dhabi	Filmmaker/Abu Dhabi TV official
Maryam Al Serkal	Emirati/Abu Dhabi	Filmmaker/Abu Dhabi TV official
Nawaf Al Janahi	Emirati/Abu Dhabi	Filmmaker

Ali Al Marzooqi	Emirati/Abu Dhabi	Filmmaker
Hassan Kiyany	Emirati/Dubai	Filmmaker
Mohammed Harib	Emirati/Dubai	Filmmaker
Nahla Al Fahad	Emirati/Dubai	Filmmaker
Faisal Hashmi	Pakistani /Dubai	Filmmaker
Kirill Kripak	Canadian/Dubai	Filmmaker
Marc Pascaul	Spanish/Dubai	Filmmaker

Most of these filmmakers are dependent on self-employment in content making, where they work in the media industry in the UAE, whether films, TV series, or commercials. Therefore, when selecting research samples, it was decided to choose participants who have experience in producing content, with at least five years of experience in the field. In selecting the participants, it depended on well-known filmmakers and media industry at the level of the UAE and the region. As a filmmaker and researcher, it was felt that personal contacts and links within the institutions or community would give a sense of the "quality information" (Wellington, 2015, p. 117).

In addition to the filmmakers, 3 further interviews were conducted with officials of cultural institutions/events as listed in Table 2-3.

Table 2-3: Officials interviewed

Participant	Country/ City	Position
Masoud Amralla Al Ali	Emirati/Dubai	Art Director of DIFF

Habib Ghuloom	Emirati/Dubai	Consultant at the Ministry of Culture
Michael Garin	American/Abu Dhabi	Image Nation Abu Dhabi

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the two groups (filmmakers and officials of cultural institutions) using a different outline interview schedule for each group. This type of interview offers the researcher a good balance between structure and flexibility. Through the use of an interview schedule the researcher ensures that the desired ground is covered while at the same time giving latitude to pursue points of interest that arise. As the fieldwork progresses questions are reviewed and developed with the flexibility also meaning new questions can be added if required. This format also helps ensure that each participant makes a broadly similar input with interviews lasting a similar length of time (Gillham, 2005). Both interviews and filming took place in film studios, in workplaces, private homes and at the festival site. For the official representing cultural institutions, the interviews took place in their workplace offices.[8]

For clarity, the use of interviews and archival documents was viewed as an important way to achieve the goals of the research, because this type of investigation necessitates in-depth analysis and obtaining new data that contributes to the researcher gaining a better

[8] It was sometimes challenging to persuade the participants to agree to be interviewed. For example, while trying to interview the Art Director of DIFF, Masoud Al Ali, the researcher followed him in Dubai and then in Saudi Arabia, while he was attending the Saudi Film Festival in the city of Dammam, then in the city of Al Ain affiliated to Abu Dhabi while attending the Al Ain Film Festival, and after many attempts the researcher convinced him and did the interview with him in his room at the hotel.

understanding the interpretations, in addition to knowledge of changes and developments in the research topic (Welch, 2014). Through the interviews, the researcher hoped to gain a comprehensive understanding of the participant's experiences (McNamara, 1999) as well as insight into the issues that they realised were important and relevant (Bryman, 2012). It was anticipated that the interviews would generate more knowledge and give proximity to the participants on global perspectives. From the internal perspective, interviews would give access to the methods used by interviewees to build and represent their identities through the images they created or contributed to making (Kvale and Brinkman, 2009; Coiro et al., 2014). The interview on one hand is a tool that gives voice to people to reflect their perspective and gives them the freedom to speak (Troudi and Alwan, 2010, p. 112). It also enabled the researcher to know more about the participants and understand them as professionals through professional interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Seidman, 2006 in Takahashi, 2011).

2.4.3 Reflexivity and Positionality of Researcher as filmmaker

In the context of research, reflexivity is an awareness of your own self while in the research situation and the role that self takes on when constructing this situation. To demonstrate reflexivity a researcher actively acknowledges that their position can and likely will affect both the research process and the interpretation of the outcomes (Stronach et al., 2007). It is much debated whether reflexivity represents a threat to the reliability of the study or an opportunity. In the latter camp, Sweet (2020) posits that correctly processed self-reflexivity can enable the researcher to theorize the social world in relational ways and reach a more nuanced understanding. Also, importantly, self-reflexivity is not a one-off evaluation but an ongoing inner dialogue that the researcher maintains throughout the course of their work (Berger, 2015).

The first step for self-reflexivity is taken by a researcher when reflecting on their positionality. A researcher's positionality refers to their position, beliefs, standpoint, and values and these are considered in the light of what effect they may have on the people and the setting being studied and the data being interpreted (Berger, 2015). I recognised that the most salient aspect of my positionality was my status as a Saudi citizen who grew up in this region and who was part of a family which had a history of moving between Saudi Arabia and the Emirates. In comparison to many researchers whose knowledge of the setting was second-hand, and indeed to many of the people involved in the study, I was an insider. And yet my Saudi nationality meant I could also take a semi-detached view of the issues being investigated such as the Emirati national identity. As suggested by Sweet (2020) I took this nuanced positionality to be an advantage.

Negotiating a position as an external researcher and filmmaker who is also an integral part of the film community is an interesting challenge. Like the interlocutor and observer in the film industry environment, whether it is in the film festival or in the cultural production institutions for films, it was important to invest and build this relationship well with filmmakers, festival staff and cultural institutions during the observation, conducting interviews and observing their lives and the environment as a whole. Being from the industrial environment and being a Saudi living in the UAE for intermittent long periods, this unique experience generated opportunities and access, which enriched my position as both filmmaker and researcher in observations and analyses in the research chapter. As Gubrium and Holstein state, 'the complex relationships among field settings, significant social actors, the practical accomplishment of the research, and the researcher-self are increasingly recognised as significant to all those who engage in research of a qualitative nature' (2003, p.120).

The researcher's participation at the Dubai International Film Festival as a media guest provided the opportunity to interview many local and international filmmakers and the festival organizers to learn more about the details and mystery of the festival. In addition, the balance between this negotiation of the internal and external positions of the researcher created the opportunity to critically analyse the festival and the film initiatives and negotiate with them.

2.4.4 Content Analysis

A further component of the research was content analysis, specifically content analysis of corporate videos, news reports, archival materials, movie and advertising footage and observational and ethnographic content. The content analysis involves material of state domain (such as reports and government documents), which is the best way to understand the relationship between the state (policymakers, stakeholders and the government at large) and cultural industries. In addition, content analysis saves time as the data is, to an extent, already collected for the researcher. Also, the film presents an extensive analysis of archival materials, which is evaluated alongside interviews to produce a critical juxtaposition for the purposes of the research.

As it 'attempts to apply a rigorous and structured analysis to what are difficult, contentious, and usually subjective cultural objects' (Pritchard and Morgan 2001, p. 172), content analysis has been selected as the primary technique for gathering the data to substantiate this research. Good content analysis relies upon the development of verifiable classifications for the content being analysed.

Hall (1997, p. 42) would have us discern the ‘meanings’ behind representations and, more importantly, to interpret those meanings from a variety of angles. Therefore, ‘language, meaning and representation do not exist as isolated concepts but are entwined in a circuit of production, representation, identity, consumption and regulation’ (Amoamo and Thompson 2010 p.40). This research provides data that guides the final stage of the study, which is an interview, to verify that the data that has been researched and analysed is valid.

Furthermore, the research is not just about evaluating the content divorced of any wider context; the analysis the research undertakes in grounded in the context of neoliberalism and postmodernism. The research focuses on analysing content and data with an awareness of the conceptual framework of neoliberalism and will critique the relationship between the branding of a neoliberal city and the film industry. The research will examine the concept of neoliberalism and its relation to art and marketing in the post-globalization era and will examine neoliberalism’s relationship with other sciences and its role in the developments of politics and economics.

2.5 Producing the film documentary

The film directs the researcher to make decisions that have multiple dimensions, which are related to the filming locations and shooting method, the choice of frame angles (wide, close up footage), and camera position (visible or hidden). These decisions in pre-production, during production, or after production during the editing of the film and the selection of materials, are subject to cultural bias and personal factors, especially because of the personality being interviewed and its relationship to the topic.

This typically requires creating rules to optimise the elimination of the filmmaker's physical presence during the production, so that life goes on as though the camera is not there. This applies even to the editing stage, which is the representation of "rushes" or everyday images in order to reduce the signatures. This part explains the method used by the researcher in the stages of documentary film production, some of the research filming problems encountered and the practices that have been adopted during production.

2.5.1 Research – pre-production

Visual approaches empower researchers to perform a deeper investigation and investigate what is made visible (Pink, 2013; Snyder, 2014; Jones & Leavy, 2014). At the beginning of this research in 2017, literary references of academics and other researchers were examined. Subsequently, the visual image of Dubai and Abu Dhabi in the media, movies, and visual advertisements were examined. The researcher was then able to build local networks of communication with many local filmmakers and officials of cultural institutions in the Emirates. Dubai International Film Festival is considered the most important cultural event for cinema, and the researcher began to document the event.

2.5.2 Production

During the months that followed, it became clear that the film was more than just a tool for observation and recording. It had the role of the principal investigator, investigating a cultural and cinematic project that works to change the local identity and create a global image, as the film was a tool that contributed to the excitement of many participants: by sharing, speaking and reflecting on the effects of this great flashiness, that hides much suffering, many of the local filmmakers have taken the initiative to uncover the complexities of the society.

According to Shrum et al., the film becomes an investigative tool for researchers to uncover the intricacies of ‘what they witness in interactions’ (2005, p.7; Secrist et al., 2002, para. 20).

Occasionally I followed my main participants, the filmmakers, in different places inside the city, their movements during the event inside and outside the festival, and throughout the city in an attempt to record all the small details. Although in the beginning it was easy to take notes, when I filmed with my own camera for the documentary it became difficult, especially as I faced a ban from filming in many places at the festival and in the city. In addition to that, appearing on-screen sometimes could be an additional challenge and obstacle for interviewees. The participants set limits to the researcher. Filmmakers did not want to enter into the details of their lives and their homes. For the ethics of the research and professional ethics, their desires were respected.

2.5.3 Post-production

During filming in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, the focus was on many technical and artistic dimensions related to photography, shot sizes and camera movement. The aim was for the camera to be hand-held for ease of movement during observation and recording and to rely on the shaky image to give realism to the observations. Hang (2018) states that it inherits the film's tradition of realism by holding the camera on the shoulder and the shaky image that creates a sense of everyday normality. As well as relying on fixed and close up shots when the goal was to obtain interviews with the participants and officials, it also gave a sense of the movement and the excessive development witnessed by the cities in the UAE.

At the editing stage, the task was not only to edit the mix of clips and sound in the form of a documentary film, but also to analyse and create actual links between events and facts and use the voiceover to contribute to the creation of a narration. According to Nichols (2017), voiceover is considered one of the most important characteristics of a documentary film, which works to link the events of the documentary and its sequence. Therefore, in the post-production stage, the researcher focused on the use of voiceover and linked it to the rhythmic sequence of the film's events.

2.6 Summary

The film points to a wide range of issues, including the city's brand strategy, the globalized culture that has overwhelmed society, as well as the neoliberal strategy that controls society. This chapter set out to describe and discuss both the type of research being undertaken and the steps taken by the researcher to bring it to fruition. The research was described as art-based research, using audio-visual project methodology (specifically observational and performative documentary filmmaking). It was further identified as ethnographic and applying a case study approach. The research design can claim to be innovative as while film/ video is quite commonly used to collect visual data, its use in dissemination is still a relatively new practice (Walker and Boyer, 2018) to which the current research contributes.

Then the chapter described how the study was operationalised. This included explaining how the observations and interviews were conducted and who the interview participants were. The issue of the dual role of researcher and filmmaker was considered as was the use of content analysis. In addition, the three stages of pre-production, production and post-production were explained.

All that depends on the critical methodology of using the ideas around neoliberalism and branding as a conceptual lens in both the audio-visual element and the written element to analyse how these work for these particular cities, beginning with general ideas about neoliberalism and place branding, but first the research must be grounded in that area with a literature review of those ideas.

CHAPTER THREE: NEOLIBERALISM, CULTURE, AND PLACE BRANDING

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of a literature review is to 'build a theoretical foundation upon which the research is based on reviewing the literature to identify research issues which are worth addressing because they have not been answered by previous researchers' (Perry, 1994, p.5). In the present research, the review is also conducted to establish what is known of the relations between the concepts of neoliberalism, culture, cultural products – particularly those of the film industry – and place branding. The chapter starts by considering the cultural dimension of neoliberalism, explaining how what is at its core an economic philosophy overflows into politics, policy and cultural output. The cultural product industry is discussed in the context of neoliberalism. After this, the practice and objectives of place branding are reviewed and contrasts between the developed and developing world are highlighted. The final substantive section considers the role of cultural institutions in place branding with a particular emphasis on the film industry and related mass events. The chapter is then briefly summarised.

Neoliberalism embodies a return to the mid-nineteenth century economic and political thought that called for free trade and reduced governmental control (Nasser, 2003). The comparison between the mid-nineteenth century and the current global economies reveals similarities: both are distinguished as a period of innovation and technology with the tremendous growth of globalized markets, relying on dogmatic advocates assuring the world that their faith is the correct and only way to advance and grow (Helleiner, 2003). Hence, neoliberalism is not

considered new. Rather, it represents the post- Second World War renewal of capital's efforts to strengthen and define society and its cumulative drive by aligning its interests with those of individuals (Duménil and Lévy 2011). Since the nineteenth century, neoliberalism has spread and has become a prominent position as a strategic policy in response to economic recession and has become the focus of scientific research in the past decade (Brenner and Theodore, 2002).

Scholars have explored the concept of neoliberalism since at least the 1980s including the question of cultural production within the neoliberal context and its developmental, urban, and economic contributions (Jameson, 1991; Harvey, 2005). Despite this, there is a gap in the critique of neoliberalism in developing countries, including those of the Arab world of the Middle East. This gap is significant because neoliberalism does not necessarily operate in the same way in these countries as elsewhere, particularly in western nations. The countries of the Middle East are engaged in a process of defining their identities against the backdrop of globalisation and the consequent intense competition between nations, politically and economically.

3.2 Neoliberalism and culture

In the past few decades, the world has experienced rapid and continual global change. The world has transformed from discrete nations and markets into a global village where intense competition results from a new global political and economic order, accelerated by the communications and information technology revolution. Culture has become one of the major drivers of urban development and urbanisation, particularly in emerging cities. The globalisation and technological development of many countries and cities came through the

political and economic transformations of capitalism after the Second World War (Jameson, 1991). These transformations have created a strong relationship between culture, economy and politics. The world has become one market, and changes in the world order have led to the spread of a new concept: the concept of neoliberalism, postmodernism or globalisation. Although the phenomenon is old, some authors believe that neoliberalism is 'the dominant ideology shaping our world today', and that we live in an 'age of neoliberalism' (Johnston and Saad-Filho, 2005, p. 1). Neoliberalism is a system that projects itself as not just an economic process but a way of life at all levels: local, regional, and global. It is a 'ubiquitous and omnipresent' force (Brown, 2015, p.48).

Culture has become a major feature of prosperity in some global cities, such as Hong Kong and Beijing. Culture in the neoliberal era seems to have a vital role to play in the economic wealth of cities around the world. Culture is the way that ideology is created and presented. It transcends the economic sphere and influences the way we live. It was inevitable that aesthetic production would become integrated with commodity production to give birth to cultural commodities, such as Andy Warhol's Coca-Cola artwork (1962). Art and culture became intertwined with the economy through financial support and sponsorship. Cultural products are transformed into commercial products as part of the neoliberal economic system. Neoliberal cultural trends have been influenced by the arrival of new patterns and methods that are suited to economic developments in post-industrial society, where culture and arts have been transformed into commercial tools and commodities (Jameson, 1991).

Neoliberalism is an ideology and policy model that emphasises the value of competition in the free market. Even though there is debate over the specific features of neoliberal theory and

practice, we can say that neoliberalism is characterized by its belief in the virtues of economic growth, economic liberalisation, free trade, privatisation, deregulation, decreases in government spending, more active involvement of the private sector in the economy and society and a small government whose role is restricted to light-touch regulation of the market. As a result, advocates argue for the privatisation of government institutions and responsibilities, including education and health, alongside greater involvement of multinational corporations in society (Klein, 2007). Along the same lines, neoliberalism also emphasises the need for limited government interference in the economy, advocating individualism and self-regulation of the free market instead (Thorsen, 2010; Klein, 2007).[9]

However, given the emphasis on individualism and market freedom, neoliberalism succeeds in securing the wealth of the economic elite, who benefit most from policies and practices based on deregulation and financial speculation (Barnett, 2005).

An emerging body of literature has started to focus on the ways that non-Western pathways – particularly those from post-Socialist states – shape and affect the technologies and consequences of neoliberal policies (Smith, 2007; Rochovská et al., 2011; Wu, 2008; Hudson,

[9] According to David Harvey, 'Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. The state has to guarantee, for example, the quality and integrity of money. It must also set up those military, defence, police and legal structures and functions required to secure private property rights and to guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of markets. Furthermore, if markets do not exist (in areas such as land, water, education, health care, social security, or environmental pollution) then they must be created, by state action if necessary. But beyond these tasks the state should not venture. State interventions in markets (once created) must be kept to a bare minimum because, according to the theory, the state cannot possibly possess enough information to second-guess market signals (prices) and because powerful interest groups will inevitably distort and bias state interventions (particularly in democracies) for their own benefit' (2005, p. 2).

2017). This work has broadened the scope of neoliberal thought and theory, which, until recently, had focused almost exclusively on post-1970 economic reconstruction in Europe and the USA (Ong, 2007; Kanna, 2011).

For nearly five decades, neoliberalism has been the dominant ideology in the developed world. Contemporary economic, political, cultural and social literature has discussed the rise of neoliberalism in most countries. However, the developing world has adopted a different approach when implementing neoliberal policies by using top-down government structures. Many developing countries have embarked on economic reforms that involve privatization, deregulation, labour and financial reforms, free trade, reductions in government control and increases in the role of the private sector in the economy and society (Harvey, 2005).

The world is experiencing the emergence of a new wave of globalisation, and neoliberalism has become a method for developing countries to gain a foothold in global markets and compete for attention on the world stage. Some researchers argue that reduction of government control will encourage private enterprise, drive up consumer choice and reward entrepreneurship. It is posited that this will raise the level of cultural, social and economic prosperity, and finally, democracy (Harvey, 2005). However, others argue that the authority of the state leads to a more effective implementation of neoliberalism (Purcell, 2007; Struxness, 2013).

Neoliberalism calls for limiting government authority, whereas in practice, authority and power are used to maintain order (Navarro, 2007). As Springer (2009) points out, the global free market in capitalism needs a powerful democratic or authoritarian state, which

contradicts the tenets of this theory. According to Struxness (2013), in practice, only a strong government can make the application of neoliberalism a political reality. This makes it a rational policy for authoritarian states to embrace and apply neoliberalism in order to better their global status. Many developing countries try to implement neoliberal reforms to pursue development in their country and to be able to compete globally (Mirgani, 2020). However, state intervention in developing countries, especially in the Middle East, aims to create an economic climate that contributes to the strengthening of city economies and the creation of economic instruments for the market, especially in the post-industrial age. The neoliberal era depends on the modern, technological and cultural sectors of the economy. In addition, there is a special emphasis on approaches to city economic development that are based on place marketing and associated initiatives through cultural-product industries. Middle Eastern countries, including the UAE, may have underestimated the value of nation and place branding while oil flowed in abundance and demand was growing, but successive oil price shocks and the realisation that at some point oil reserves would be depleted has brought into sharp focus the role of such branding in developing other sectors (Zeineddine, 2017).

3.2.1 Neoliberalism and cultural-product industries

Developments in technology and communication, as well as the consideration of the cultural-product industries as a driving force in society, have the power to influence society a great deal. The term "cultural industry" has its roots in the neo-Marxist philosophy and is most closely associated with the Frankfurt School of Adorno, Horkheimer and Noeri who theorised that popular culture resembles a factory producing standardised cultural goods (Horkheimer et al., 2002). The rise and prevalence of cultural production in the post-industrial period of the

early 20th century is still seen as "capitalist lifestyle" and "class rule" (Edgar and Sedgwick, 2007).

Cultural products have a clear impact on society and human emotions and play a big part in determining the social system, as well as the communication of culture. Cultural-product industries have the capacity to develop people's awareness toward collective views and information, as well as the attitudes of people towards certain issues, and increase their knowledge and aspirations. Cultural products are tools that play a vital role in shaping the awareness of people about many political, social and economic issues, and influencing individuals' perceptions of states, attitudes, issues and events globally. Therefore, it is culture that shapes these things and not necessarily economic determinants alone. Culture shapes basic common values, behaviour, and needs of the people in a given society, including the values of people with respect to work, education, frugality and community. Neoliberalism is trying to project itself as not just an economic process but a way of life. The monopoly of states and multinational companies have benefitted from the soft power of influence and economic control (Jameson, 1991).

Neoliberalism operates on the premise of a strong relationship between culture, economy and politics. Culture is part of this because culture is the way that ideology is created and presented; not only in the economy but also in the way we live. It is characteristic that aesthetic production has become integrated with commodity production to become culture commodity with itself. Art and culture have become properties as part of neoliberal economics in post-industrial society. However, I would argue that it is a two-way process: just as cultural products are transformed into commercial tools, so too are commercial commodities transformed into cultural instruments. Jameson (1991), argues that commodity

production used to represent culture is not a one-way process. It is a revolving process. For example, a culture of freedom, speech and mobility produces a car, and a car can become a formula one car and formula one racing can become a cultural event that further enforces the desire for speed, progress and luxury.

The technological development of the place came through the political and economic transformations of capitalism after the Second World War. There were three fundamental moments of capitalism: market capitalism, monopoly or imperialism, and post-industrial capitalism (Habib, 1995). The global neoliberalism has arrived with a wider set of current changes in political, economic, and social life. The global cities and states are trying to cover the economic gap left by the total reliance on heavy industries and manufacturing by shifting to the post-industry which relies on new industries that extend to technology and knowledge. This is especially the case in western cities such as Manchester in the United Kingdom or Detroit in the United States of America, whose economies were dominated by heavy industry and manufacturing.

As Harvey and others tell us, the increase of neoliberal economic growth depends on the value of culture and the urban structure of cities more than it does on human capital or decaying industrial infrastructure (Harvey, 2005). The revival of an economy, according to neoliberalism, can be achieved only through multinational companies that are not restricted to the interests of the state and local stakeholders. Economic revival can also be achieved by opening up global markets and transcending borders. Capitalism's influence has expanded throughout the world. Therefore, we have been in a period of transition in economic systems, where economies have been moving from heavy industrial systems in some cases to high-tech

services systems. Furthermore, oil-based economies are increasingly trying to diversify and move away from oil as a source of economy. When an economy changes and shifts, culture shifts with it, representing and rationalising the shift that is taking place, though the precise causality of this is debated (Jones, 1995).

Over recent decades, neoliberalism and culture have been major features of the prosperity that some global cities such as Hong Kong and Beijing have enjoyed (Ren, 2010). Culture in the neoliberal era seems to play a vital role in the economic wealth of cities around the world. The cultural economy is now one of the main borders of growth when it comes to output and employment. The transformational events that come from culture have the impact of opening a new economy. Generally, in contemporary capitalism, the term "new economy" means a collection of services and manufacturing sectors whose operational features involve a high level of organisational and technological flexibility, lots of dealings and relations with multinational corporations, an emphasis on business and financial services and a focus on high-tech manufacturing sectors. A cultural economy also fits this description (Scott 2000a; Healy, 2002), and so what such economies have to offer is currently subject to intense scrutiny, with people attempting to assess their capacity for local economic development, their growth potential and their ability to reach markets and destinations beyond national borders.

Cultural industries can be identified as sectors that produce goods and services based on text, symbols and images that offer entertainment (as with films, museums and music) or manufactured products (as with fashion, such as clothing or jewellery); there are also the new industries of software and video games (Santos Vieira de Jesus and Kamlot, 2017).

Neoliberalism has accompanied the development of the media. The visual image has become a semiotic sign of the development of neoliberalism. Language is no longer the only regulator of human life; the image is now the main engine of knowledge acquisition. The image has become a representative tool that has an impact on public perception and is now an influential tool in building the political and economic image of the city and the state. A new colonial era has come about through media and advertising. This has been helped by the emergence of technologies that can simulate reality and reproduce and disseminate images, such as cameras, televisions and more recently smartphones.

Thus, because of transitions in technology development, as well as economic transformation and globalisation, cultural-product industries are significantly on the rise of late, and they have remarkably become drivers of local economic development in many different places, and especially in global cities. Cultural-product industries such as the film industry act as economic tools that have a purely utilitarian use for the state and the city, as do other emerging activities that indirectly contribute to production and promotion such as planning and marketing (Bell, 1999). There is a series of sectors whose output depends entirely on cultural materials from cars to kitchen utensils. Moreover, cultural production in neoliberalism tends to benefit from the visual image in creating brands and propaganda that align with political aims to change a reality that serves a certain interest and the current or state policy (Jameson, 1991).

Making society more culturally diverse is perhaps the primary goal of most public policy concerning the creative industries. Cultural diversity is generally regarded as the peaceful coexistence of different cultures. On a national level, the cultures must be equal, and on an

international level, each national culture must be seen to have its place in the world preserved. State cultural policy tends to put a great deal of emphasis on the promotion of cultural diversity. This is essentially the attempt of the state to secure positions for cultural groups in the global market of commodities (whether ideas or products).

On a societal level, unless particular measures are put in place, minority cultures can often find themselves damaged by attempts at cultural diversity; this damage can manifest itself in total elimination from or total assimilation into the majority culture-dominated society. As such, the state needs to make special efforts to prevent such things from happening, lest there be serious consequences for the economic status and general social health of those minority cultures. If successful in these endeavours, the state will find itself enjoying the benefits of cultural democracy, including society-wide access to cultural events (Reis, 2006). However, neoliberal economics fosters economic inequality within a society, but also engenders cultural inequality. Creative industries aim to promote cultural diversity and the coexistence of different cultures (Florida, 2003). We can question, however, whether Dubai and Abu Dhabi are presented the way they are for the preservation of national culture and heritage or just because they desire to emulate or surpass the West.

3.3 Place Branding and The Neoliberal City

Global neoliberalism has arrived with a wider set of current changes in political, economic, and social life. Cities and states are trying to cover the economic gap left by the total reliance upon older areas, such as the manufacturing industry, by shifting to a reliance on new industries that are more concerned with new technology and knowledge (Cooke, 2008, p. 27). As Harvey and others tell us, the increase of neoliberal economic growth depends on the

value of culture and the urban structure of cities more than it does on human capital or the decay of industrial infrastructure (Harvey, 2005). The rise of neoliberal ideology has caused an increase in competition between cities globally, which has forced cities to change their management strategies and practices. According to Short (2013), ‘as the world flattens, cities in many different countries are brought into greater international competition, whether it be attracting corporate power and financial concentrations, encouraging manufacturing, or promoting tourism’ (p. 41).

Neoliberal philosophy creates competition between cities, causing not only the reshaping of existing cities in order to make them more attractive, but also creating a new generation of cities such as Dubai, Singapore and Hong Kong, which are classified as new global cities (Marcuse and Kempen, 2000). Encouraging cities to invest and develop (Springer, 2009, p. 273) in areas such as cultural-product industries, the real-estate sector and business investment powers the economic engine of the neoliberal world (Haila, 2000; Evans, 2003; Smith, 2002).

Many cities are using cultural resources as a political economic tool with which to promote local economic growth. A number of cultural institutions, government organisations, private sectors and individuals in the cultural industries are creating promotional images of the city such that it may compete with other cities for resources and attract multinational companies, investors and tourists, strengthening its competitive position with other cities in the process. Over the past couple of decades, the emergence of place branding and connected cultural-industry activities for local economic growth have been much in support with entrepreneurial municipal governments (Harvey, 1989).

The concept of brands is not new, since its historical roots date back to the late 19th century, with technological developments and the development of known brand products (Ritchie et al., 2005). This conception includes the creation and management of brands (Keller, 2002). Branding and brands have emerged through firms that want to create their own identity to achieve profits, improve their services and gain credibility and fame to attract customers and target audiences (Kotler and Gertner, 2002). The achievements and benefits of branding have promoted the spread of its use for various types of content and in various contexts (Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2002). Place branding has been defined as the 'idea of discovering or creating some uniqueness, which differentiates one place from others in order to gain a competitive brand value' (Ashworth, 2009, p. 9). Kotler and Gertner (2002) posit that place branding is important because people are not thorough in their cognitive processing of information: 'Country images, or knowledge structures related to places, or place schemata, are commonly used as shortcuts for information processing and consumer decision heuristics' (p.43).

Nowadays, many places from cities to states compete with one another for resources and to attract multinational companies, investors and tourists (Balakrishnan, 2009; Che-Ha et al., 2016; Foroudi et al, 2016). There has been strong competition between different countries and different cities to attract tourists and visitors; over 1 billion people travel internationally for pleasure each year and international tourism revenue has grown to over $1 trillion (UNWTO, 2015). This has contributed to the creation of a competitive global environment between cities and countries, where each seek to differentiate themselves and present themselves in a positive way that highlights their urban infrastructures and unique attractions (Anholt, 2011; Pride, 2002). In addition, city branding gives the ability to attract tourists, investors, and a

talented workforce, creating a great impact on products and places associated to specific economic activities such as tourism (Zeineddine and Nicolescu, 2018). Branding has been a major contributing factor for the prosperity of some global cities. These global destinations have a brand that has been developed as a kind of evolutionary process that develops step by step through the exploitation of culture products, infrastructure or tourist sites and other attractive characteristics of these cities, such as New York, London and Beijing.

The idea of branding a place as a destination has long been a part of the wider concept of branding. It has always been considered as an important subject in many disciplines, including economics and political and administrative sciences (Hankinson, 2007). However, researchers and practitioners have become increasingly interested in the subject, and many scientific articles and books have been issued on the topic recently (Saraniemi, 2011; Saraniemi and Ahonen, 2008). Even so, in spite of the proliferation of these researches, some researchers believe that our understanding of the issue is still in its early stages and that there are yet many essential aspects of the destination brand that need to be discussed further (Pike, 2010).

Academic research on city branding and cultural industries has grown considerably as scholars have increasingly noted how countries, regions and cities could benefit from good destination branding, which could promote jobs, develop urbanisation via a free market, increase tourism, present attractive benefits to global companies, create a better business environment, raise living conditions and help to communicate a cultural identity (Govers and Go, 2009; Morgan et al, 2003, 2011; Cardinale et al, 2016; Hafeez et al., 2016 Anholt, 2016; Anttiroiko, 2015; Warnaby and Medway, 2013; Kaplan et al, 2010; Karabağ, Yavuz and

Berggren, 2011; Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2002). The optimism that surrounds destination branding today is reminiscent of the optimism that surrounded the technology revolution throughout the late 20th century, where anything high-tech was seen as a cure-all for all economic development woes.

Over the last two decades, media and marketing experts as well as academics have shown a growing attention to city or destination branding (Busby and O'Neill, 2006; Foroudi et al., 2016; Hafeez et al., 2016). City branding or place branding has become an increasingly important topic of analysis for researchers across disciplines (Hankinson, 2001). This can be seen in the fields of marketing, tourism and travel, urban planning and geography and strategic development (Hankinson, 2005).

Destination branding involves a focus on the location and highlights the values of the given place (Huertas and Mariné-Roig, 2015; Ritchie et al, 2005). Therefore, cities have an impact on the feelings of residents and visitors through the creation of an attractive image with which the destination aspires to communicate their identity and showcase their brand by focusing on their cultural values (Govers and Go, 2009; Morgan et al, 2003). Moreover, place branding creates a positive image in order to attract international investment and develop urbanisation in a particular place through a free market, promotion of jobs, tourism, attractive benefits for global companies, better business environments and better living conditions (Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2002; Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2008; Balakrishnan, 2009; Kaplan et al., 2010; Karabağ et al., 2011; Che-Ha et al., 2016; Foroudi et al., 2016; Anholt, 2016).

Others argue that place branding is simply the application of commercial marketing strategies and ideas to the field of places such as cities, countries and nations (Hafeez et al, 2016; Morgan et al., 2011; Cardinale et al., 2016; Warnaby and Medway, 2013). Globalisation is becoming increasingly prolific and affects social, political, economic, technological and cultural relations (Kesic and Pavlić, 2011). It has also left a major imprint not only on tourism, but also on the economy and international relations. With cross-border relations and free trade, as well as tourism and increased flows of resources across borders, governments have a new responsibility to adjust to the economic changes that have taken place (Anttiroiko, 2015; Sassen, 2018; Chien, 2008; Kresl and Fry, 2005; Savitch and Kantor, 2003).

When attempting to define city branding, attention has focused on different factors, such as the city's position and status, including its general recognition and reputation; its delivery of specific living environments, including the standards and levels of cleanliness of its urban spaces and attractions; the city's architecture and urban solutions; economic freedom in the city; living conditions; health; education; transport; recreation and sports and the city's business potential (Anholt, 2006). All these factors reflect the quality of the living and working environments that the city offers, as well as the place's culture and the speed of development in urban infrastructure (Pompe, 2017). In turn, these factors influence the positive image of the city and help to attract visitors.

Place branding practices are designed to create an image of cities, nations or countries through different methods. Some researchers believe that the cultural-product industries and their practices, such as mega-events, are vanguards of neoliberalism that signpost a place's adherence to the fundamental principles of capitalism and postmodern urbanism, especially in

developing countries (Kanna, 2010; Kolamo and Vuolteenaho, 2013), and that the film industry is a key tool for the promotion of a destination (Sharma, 2017). Others believe that attempts at place branding by governments in the developing world are too interventionist (Shoaib and Keivani, 2015). However, the intervention of authority contributes to an acceleration in production and the implementation process of projects' execution.

City branding entails 'building brand equity in relation to national, regional and/or local (or city) identity' (Govers and Go, 2009, p. 16). Historically, this process was only witnessed in developed countries, but today this process occurs in many emerging and developing countries, which are dedicating large budgets to the creation of positive and attractive images (Herstein, 2012). However, cities need to find the right strategies for branding themselves, and success depends on the effectiveness of the strategy and the characteristics of the city. Implementing a branding strategy effectively is a major challenge for cities in third-world countries particularly. These places must regularly deal with the negative prejudices of their target audiences and misrepresentation by the media (Liu, 2015).

Governments pay attention to internationally oriented city branding (Anttiroiko, 2015). The growing competition between world cities when it comes to tourism, business and international relations pushes them to develop optimal development strategies to deal with changing contexts and to find optimal ways of attracting investors and creative people. They do so by using government policies to create a suitable environment (Kotler and Gertner, 2002).

Many developed countries have succeeded in using place branding to promote their destinations and cities (Björner, 2014), while the developing world faces difficulties in implementing these strategies (Wen and Sui, 2014; Govers and Go., 2009). Wei et al. (2006) and Björner (2014) posit that city branding in the developing world is complicated by top-down government structures and a lack of cooperation between the state and private sectors.

Developed countries do not use a top-down approach for their strategies, instead encouraging public involvement in order to drive development. Place-branding strategies can have long-term effects on development in cities, such as stimulation of investment and development of urban areas and infrastructure services. As part of these strategies, cities promote creative industries such as the film industry through mega-events to encourage further flows of tourists and talented people. There are not just short-term effects; they have the enduring effect of urban regeneration or investment, positively impacting the local economy and social, cultural and political life (Ferrari and Guala, 2017).

In the developing world, authoritarian governments are able to use their regimes to implement neoliberalism. Cities are becoming more aware of themselves, their image and their reputation, meaning that they face increased competition as they all start to brand themselves in order to distinguish themselves from competitors. As cultural-product industries have become important promotional tools for city brands and important economic tools for contributing to a suitable economic environment for the city, decision-makers and stakeholders have begun to pay great attention to the powerful effects of the cultural-product industries and the way that they can affect economic, political and behaviours and attitudes in the tourism sector and promote safety and sustainable development. Consequently, many

global cities such as Dubai and Singapore benefit culturally and economically from their authoritarian neoliberal systems, and use cultural-product industries, especially the film industry, as tools to promote their destinations and enhance the local economy.

Place branding is a consequence of the complex interplay of cognitive, affective and behavioural constituents. It is typically accompanied by cultural products such as concrete, visual symbols (monuments, landmarks, etc.) or 'flagship projects' (films, events, etc.) (Bianchini et al., 1992). Producing films or hosting important events can affirm the positive image or create one where one doesn't exist. It can also serve to transform the city from, say, an industrial area to a tourist destination and a city that is much more modern. Neoliberalism prescribes the promotion of the "global destination" image as the path to development. Neoliberal policies for development are aimed primarily at the promotion of privatisation, increased flexibility of regulatory frameworks that might hinder free market values and the creation of a destination image that is based on liberal values.

The destination image has been discussed in a number of studies, most notably in the tourism field. There are many researchers who argue that tourism is one of the main factors that contributes to the branding and image of the city (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Martin and Beerli, 2004; Pike, 2002; Kaur et al., 2016). The image of a city is universally recognized, and it affects the perceptions and subsequent behaviours of its audience, including whether that audience perceives the city as a destination because of its image (Allameh et al., 2015; Chung and Shin, 2004; Saura et al., 2002). Cities have promoted their image in many different ways throughout history in order to attract more visitors from around the world. Some of these places are still well known and popular, while others have become unknown or have been

influenced by negative stereotypes, despite efforts and funds provided for marketing and branding by governments and the private sector.

Some scholars have tended to focus on film and television tourism (also known as screen tourism) as a phenomenon in the promotion of a destination (Ţuclea and Nistoreanu, 2011). During the past decade, tourism caused by film has been of great importance to academics, some of whom have focused on the way that film stimulates tourism (Croy, 2011), whereas others have researched its impact on tourist behaviour (Carl et al., 2007). Some have focused on determining how the city presents itself and how visitors perceive that image; developing and implementing marketing and development techniques to adjust the image of the city and assessing whether proposed changes to the destination's image have been enacted. Thus, there is a need for research on 'the image of the destination', especially given that tourism has become an important topic (Saura et al., 2002; d'Astous and Li, 2009; Kaur et al., 2016).

Studies that focus on the destination image often assume that cities' images are the major factor affecting a visitors' choice when it comes to picking a destination (Hanlan and Kelly, 2005). Globally, choice of travel destination has become a lifestyle symbol (see Morgan et al., 2007), and competition between cities to attract customers has thus become remarkable (Saraniemi, 2009). Along with technological developments there have been changes in the marketplace and in competition and, with these changes, calls for a 'new kind of thinking' to market the city in modern and different ways in order to create the desired image or to differentiate the brand's offering (Saraniemi, 2009).

Most common city-branding practices include the use of cultural products such as logos, movies, hosting events, advertising and landmarks (Kavaratzis et al., 2005; Langer, 2001). This is in addition to launching propaganda campaigns through the media in order to improve the attractiveness of their image (Martin and Beerli, 2004, p. 667; Govers et al., 2007). Therefore, global cities execute neoliberal strategies that employ their cultural commodities in the creation of an image of a liberal city, in order to be attractive as a global hub. As a result, the destination itself is often turned into a commodity, and urban landscapes become the city's global image (Zukin, 2009; Joo and Seo, 2017). Place branding is therefore seen as a neoliberal idea based on capitalist ideology that, as Joo and Seo (2017) point out, 'prioritizes the market-oriented growth ideologies' (p.240).

3.3.1 The role of cultural institutions in place branding

Some scholars believe that cultural-product industries and cultural institutions are vanguards of neoliberalism that signpost a place's adherence to the fundamental principles of capitalism and postmodern urbanism, especially in developing countries (Kanna, 2010; Kolamo and Vuolteenaho, 2013). However, cities need to find the right strategies for branding themselves, and success depends on the effectiveness of the strategy and the characteristics of the city. Implementing a branding strategy effectively is a major challenge for cities in third-world countries particularly. These places must regularly deal with the negative prejudices of their target audiences and misrepresentation by the media (Liu, 2015). There are some studies that explore the impact of elements of the cultural industry, such as tourism, upon the brand of a city, especially in emerging countries (Foroudi et al., 2016; Melewar et al., 2010). For Foroudi et al. (2016) the two main determinants of place branding were national culture and

infrastructure, while five factors moderated the outcomes of this branding: news and social media, political perception, the tourism experience, place association and place awareness.

3.3.1.1 Film industry and place branding

Some cities have tended to define themselves using solid and soft productive inputs. The most known hard factors are the power of firm and capital on the one hand and knowledge and technology on the other; while soft power is concentrated on business, professional services, culture and entertainment, such as the film industry. There are many cities that brand themselves through the film industry, film production and mega-events, as the films' activity directly and indirectly promotes locations and the characteristics of the city, and creates an attractive image of the destination (Connell, 2012). Film has become more important in the marketing of the destination image than other media (Bolan and Williams, 2008). As an attractive cultural medium with a large and diverse international audience, film has become an economic instrument for the city and a key component of city branding, given its ability to promote and enhance the image of the cities. This is especially the case for emerging cities that are facing competition from cities in the developed world, as well as cities with a negative image.

Thus, film has become a notable concern for destination-marketing organizations and economic-development organizations around the world. A number of high-profile tourist destinations take advantage of the industry in their ongoing marketing campaigns, most

notably those in Britain, New Zealand, Hong Kong and Australia. However, emerging cities such as Dubai are still in the first stages of taking advantage of the film industry fully.[10]

Films continue to draw visitors; the *Lord of the Rings* films were produced in New Zealand, and according to the New Zealand Tourism Board, have become a promotional piece for the state's image as a destination. *Lord of the Rings* attracts both tourist attention and financial gain, drawing in more than $41 million based on different assumptions regarding the attendance of visitors and tourists (Hudson and Ritchie, 2006, p. 388). Another film franchise that has been hugely successful is the *Harry Potter* series, which caused an increase in tourist interest in Britain (Grihault, 2003). Therefore, we can say that New Zealand and Britain use films as a marketing tool to brand their image and the beauty of their destinations. Also, it can be said that the film industry can serve as an effective tool for promoting the brand of a place and drawing tourist attention through film production, film festivals and other mega-events, the attraction of famous filmmakers and film stars, and the hosting of different film industry activities.

3.3.1.2 Mega-events (film festivals)

Global cities aim to distinguish themselves by the particular characteristics of their locations. In a post-modern world, cities provide an attractive culture and lifestyle for citizens and visitors. The city's development methods include infrastructure and architecture development,

[10] The phenomenon of place branding through film has become particularly prevalent in the UK. In 1996, film formed a key component of the Visit Britain campaign, which created its first 'movie map', featuring the locations of more than 200 film and television locations in Britain that can be visited (Grihault, 2003). Visitor spending there estimated that yearly for roughly £1.9 billion, with about 10% of that being related to film tourism (Connell, 2012).

remodelling transport centres and communication networks, improving the business climate, and encouraging culture and tourist destinations (Short, 2014, p.114). A mega-event is a cultural product and an economic tool for the city; an instrument to promote the image of a city, a form of destination branding that attracts global media attention and raises awareness of the city locally and globally (Ferrari and Guala, 2017). These days, place branding through mega-events has the power to enhance the city's products and services internationally with astonishing ease.

Cultural events such as film events are another method that contribute to the creation of a destination image. The branding is achieved through various activities that involve the film industry, celebrities, and the nightlife of the city (Ashworth and Voogd, 1994). The international place-product market is another way to brand the place and create an image for the city, as it helps to attract talented people, workers, tourists and investment (Morgan and Pritchard, 2004; Wilson and Richards, 2007).

Events and festivals exist as products and promotional tools that brand destinations. Moreover, successful events and festivals tend to increase a destination's appeal to visitors and further enhance the attractiveness of the city's image (Felsenstein and Fleischer, 2003). Hall (1989) points out that these events have different political and economic impacts on societies. Hall (1992) also argues that stakeholders focus more on the economic impact of these festivals than they do on their social functions (such as their ability to preserve historical and cultural heritage or their entertainment value).

As mentioned previously, hosting a mega-event has long-term effects on a city, given that it attracts investment, improves quality of life and develops infrastructure in the city. It also has a positive impact on the economy and increases the number of visitor arrivals (Hiller, 2006). However, mega-events also have an intangible legacy. There are social, cultural and political effects – both positive and negative – that are difficult to measure and determine. However, events enhance the social fabric, traditions and community values and improve the reputation of the host. In addition, engaging the local community in sporting and artistic activities, for example, creates innovative ideas and fosters a greater sense of societal spirit.

In recent years, the rise in the organisation of events and mega-events has led to increased competition between destinations to host these events, which has led to efforts to study the impact of events and mega-events on the city and the state in general (Dansero and Puttilli, 2010), in order to understand their positive and negative impacts (Getz, 2012; Gold and Gold, 2013; Veitch, 2013; Guala and Ferrari, 2017).

Cultural events such as film festivals, the Olympic Games and Formula One races do not just attract visitors and tourists, but also attract film businesses and promote the images of cities (Harmaakorpi et al., 2008; Ooi and Pedersen, 2009). Festivals are now a worldwide cultural phenomenon and a factor involved in the development and promotion of cities (Prentice and Andersen, 2003). These events attract global attention, visitors, international media organisations and businesses. In so doing, as Ooi and Pedersen point out, ‘the city also demonstrates that it is efficient in handling big events, is culturally vibrant and is respected internationally’ (2009, p. 11). There are many reasons behind the branding of cities, such as the desire to sell more products (Olins, 2002; Nebenzahl and Jaffe, 2001). Therefore, cities

seek to organise cultural events and engage with media platforms that promote interest and create a positive image of the city. Citizens of the city believe that these activities are likely to improve the quality of life and promote the regional values and traditions, and that they even might lead to cultural understanding between the citizen and visitor (Hall, 1989).

Richards and Palmer (2012) point out that 'cultural events can contribute to the quality of life of local communities in a number of ways, such as giving the local community a feeling of ownership, giving different groups in the community a platform to express their own culture, making sure that different groups have access to events, and ensuring that events contribute to a sense of place for local residents' (p. 401). Therefore, global cities are increasingly competing for the use of the film industry and associated events as a platform for industrial and economic development (Kang, 2017), with governments ready to spend lots of money to organize events that support the film industry in order to reap the economic benefits that increased tourism and business investment can have on GNP and employment (Burgan and Mules, 2000).

Film festivals contribute to several types of promotion, including the increase of tourism and the revival of cultural heritage of the host city. As such, they help to develop the quality of life for the city's inhabitants (Rouba, 2012; Yolal et al., 2015). Film locations, film festivals and sites associated with film can become main attractions (Yilmaz and Yolal, 2008; Han and Lee, 2008). Festivals offer cities the potential to achieve the cultural, economic and social aims of the society within those cities (Yolal et al., 2015). In addition, film festivals have the ability to allow audiences from all around the world to meet talented people and can serve as a

bridge that links culture, tourism and entertainment (McKercher et al., 2006; Yolal et al., 2015).

Film festivals offer a great chance for local filmmakers to collaborate in international projects. These events also contribute to the initiation of international co-production of films. Film festivals play an important role in providing opportunities that allow filmmakers to meet professional experts and to develop global collaboration opportunities (Ruling and Pedersen, 2010). These events are opportunities for new filmmakers, including independent young professionals. As Ruling (2009) points out, film festivals can be a chance for young filmmakers to network with professionals and have thus become a lifeline for young, low-budget or independent filmmakers for securing distribution in the global market (Ruling and Pedersen, 2010; Falicov, 2010). They are a great chance to become better known by audiences, media and production companies, and thus they allow filmmakers to build their reputations. So, festivals are a bridge that allow for the creation of opportunities and the building of international networks.

Economically, festivals have benefits for the host community; for example, Yolal et al. (2015) point out that Asheville Film Festival in North Carolina led to additional tax revenues, provided chances for local businesses to profit and led to a rise in tourism in the region. Stringer (2001) – who drew inspiration from Saskia Sassen's theory on the role of global cities in financial markets – talks about the locations in which festivals are held as being 'nodal points' in a broader festival network. Collectively, film festivals compete in what he refers to as a 'global space economy'. This global space economy manifests itself in two ways: either through a festival's need to be become similar to its competitors because of the

power of globalisation, or because of their need to retain some sense of ‘novelty’ and play up local specificities. Paradoxically, festivals market both their similarities to other festivals and their own local peculiarities. Cities thus need to create a ‘festival image’ that will allow them to situate themselves within this global space economy.

Film festivals are also sources of funding and can raise cultural appreciation of film in different countries, especially those with small and virtually non-existent film industries. For example, there are cultural politics related to colonial legacies that continue to affect film funding in countries in Africa (Falicov, 2010). Events such as film festivals help filmmakers to obtain funding; for example, Amsterdam’s International Documentary Film Festival (IDFA) supports filmmakers through its Jan Vrijman Fund (Macnab, 2007). Similarly, the World Cinema Fund was launched at the 2004 Berlin International Film Festival to support filmmakers (Falicov, 2010). It also aims to increase the cultural diversity in German cinema. Likewise, the Dubai and Abu Dhabi International Film Festivals support filmmakers by providing $542 million in film financing (Barber, 2007, cited in Falicov, 2010). These programs work to develop and support the film industry and filmmakers. In addition, film festivals typically provide grants and co-production forums to fund and support filmmakers.

These events compete by having different programs that distinguish them from other global, local and regional film festivals. Thus, directors and organisers of these events try to be innovative in their showcases and programs in order to be distinct from others. According to Gupta and Marchessault (2007), most of the world’s film festivals thrive on competition for prominence, as it necessitates the creation of different programs and new attempts to support filmmakers and the film industry. Therefore, the film industry and film festivals have become

a platform for multinational companies wishing to invest in, distribute, or showcase films across borders. The swift growth of Dubai's economic and cultural landscape in recent years was accompanied by great development in the domestic film market. The main question is how these mega-events and films, as cultural products, contribute to the economy of this authoritarian city and how they can serve as a promotional tool for a city affected by a negative image and reputation.

3.4 Summary

The aim of this chapter was to review the leading contributions to our understanding of neoliberalism, culture, place branding and the role of cultural institutions, in particular the film industry. Neoliberalism is not just an economic system that has reinforced the idea that neoliberalism is a way of life. It is a system that enhances the values and ideas of global competition in a global free market. It is a system that extends well beyond the economic sphere, linking culture and cultural institutions firmly with overarching state level political and economic objectives. Within this context of obtaining a position within the global economic concept such as branding, cultural concepts, or concept that markets space and identity. Therefore, the mission of this paper is to take what is already written but go further to gain appreciation through neoliberalism and the culture around the tension between the global and the local, especially in the Middle East.

Place and city branding in developing countries has become an important policy domain and research field as the cities of these emerging economies find themselves in intense regional competition, something thoroughly exemplified in the Middle East. The film industry, including mass events, has long been used as a source of soft power in developed countries, with Hollywood at the heart of American soft power projection. Bollywood is perhaps the foremost example of film being used to generate soft power for an emerging economy based on neoliberalism (Thussu, 2013). However, it is important to go beyond these already well-studied examples to broaden our understanding. Unsurprisingly, as the emerging cities of the Middle East strive towards their developmental goals, film products, institutions and events are an important component of the place branding strategy. While place branding is an important research domain, there is insufficient literature available to draw a clear

understanding of the use of the film industry in the place branding efforts being intensively undertaken by Middle Eastern governments. The present study aims to help address this gap. In the following chapter the methods used to investigate this component are presented and justified.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present the findings of the research and discuss them in the context of soft power and place branding in the UAE through a neoliberalist conceptual lens. The content and organization of the chapter is informed by the three research questions presented in the first chapter. This chapter examines the role cultural institutions have played in promoting the brand by building the attraction of place in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, how the identity of the UAE has shifted or been reconstructed, and whether this is a recent phenomenon or has been built over several years. The chapter looks at the Dubai International Film Festival (DIFF) and Image Nation as case studies. It positions the role and development of cultural institutions on place branding as a soft power approach. The domination of a few players over cultural institutions and private government-owned enterprises serves as a means for governments to structure the process of city branding through the cinema in line with the changing economic and political agendas. Throughout, this study aims to understand the role of the film festival (DIFF) and state-owned enterprises (Image Nation) to implement the city branding strategies by using films and how these institutions reconstruct or represent the identity of the attractive place, especially since Dubai and Abu Dhabi's' brand applications are different from the rest of the world in that the top-down government structure contributes to the acceleration of the brand's implementation of the place (Ong, 2006).

The UAE has relied on soft power to foster economic and political growth in the context of neoliberal policies and the pressures of globalization over the past three decades. Therefore, the National Vision 2021 includes investment in the cultural sector, especially creative

industries and film in the UAE. This is more than a strategy to diversify the economy; it is a broader strategy of which culture is a part, and which aims to sell the country in terms of its attractiveness both at home and abroad. In particular, Abu Dhabi and Dubai, the Emirates that contribute most to the economy of the country, most interact with the brand of the UAE, given that Abu Dhabi is the capital and political hub and Dubai is the economic hub. These cities sell the place through cultural objects, especially film which portrays the city's most tourist-friendly neighbourhoods, or other cultural activities that reflect the attractiveness of the place.

4.2 The Dubai International Film Festival

This section considers the first of two case studies, the Dubai International Film Festival. The DIFF is considered one of the most important cultural cinematic initiatives working to promote Dubai to the world and act as a bridge to reach a global audience. The DIFF was established in 2004 and took place annually for 14 years until 2017. In 2018, the DIFF was cancelled but there was also an intention stated that the DIFF would return in a biannual form starting in 2019 but this did not come to pass (Ritman, 2018). As stated by the Artistic Director of DIFF, Al-Ali (2019), from its inception, the marketing strategy was obvious from the festival slogan ‘bridging cultures, meeting minds’, acting as a cultural platform that promotes the place.

The interviews conducted with policymakers and event organizers in DIFF were also important in interpreting the positive impact of activities of the event on the image of the city. The DIFF provides different activities that have some positive impact on the image of the

city, as a multicultural city, a working city, a tourism city, its global orientation, and its dynamism.

According to Al-Ali, ‘The festival does not only have a role in supporting the cinematic movement but also activates the film market, and the spread of cinematic culture through the publishing of books, the marketing of films, cultural and artistic seminars’. He added that at the same time they were reflecting the mixed culture of the city (2019). DIFF is a soft power institution exporting the image of the place and its culture in the minds of international tourists and visitors through the city's distinctive ‘multi-culture’ of desert, falcons and beauty, as well as focusing on depicting luxury, glass towers and golden beaches that enabled the continuation of a form of neoliberal urbanisation geared towards globalisation.

Since the 2004 establishment of DIFF, the branding strategies focused on promoting Dubai to tourists as a cultural city. The name of the festival was associated with the name of the city, as with other international festivals, to promote it. Therefore, the association of the festival’s name with the city has branding connotations which are used to promote Dubai. When establishing DIFF, decision-makers at the Dubai festival used international events such as the Toronto International Film Festival as marketing tools to promote DIFF and raise awareness of the city. This is where DIFF formally announced its first edition in 2004. It also participated annually at the Cannes Film Festival.

Location is an important factor that attracts attention to an event (Gkritzali et al. 2016). There is a strong relationship between the venue and the organization of events or festivals. Many cities tend to choose places that have links with the direction of the festival and the city. The

organization of film festivals can be done differently depending on perspective, and specific locations are chosen based on the purpose and aim of the event. As explained here, we need cultural components that reflect the nature, beauty and characteristics of Dubai, and the coexistence and harmony of these different cultures in one place (Al-Ali, 2019).

In general, cities that have hosted festivals would either use a historical location to highlight the cultural and historical identity of the place and city, a luxurious location that contributes to the creation of an image of the place and city that is attractive, a temporary location that changes and is rebuilt each year, or a permanent location (Davis, 2006; Wang and Zhang, 2019). These historical or contemporary places that are built to reflect a modern style are important destinations outside of the festival periods and contribute to serving the cinema culture in the city. Therefore, the festival has long-term goals which extend beyond the promotion of cinematic culture, and are linked to the enhancement of economic, cultural, and tourism aspects in these areas. As mentioned by Al-Ali, 'The festival strategy was concerned with the trends and issues of the state and society.' (2019).

Therefore, the establishment of the DIFF is considered one of the strategies for the Emirates, and the Dubai Emirate in particular, satisfying the need for a cultural platform that contributes to exporting the image of the Emirates and Dubai to change the negative impression and differentiate itself from other Arab countries. Al-Ali (2019) states that the DIFF strategy stemmed from the fact that after 9/11, Dubai needed an international platform to correct the stereotype of its image and project it with a logic that the West understands, not the logic that is promoted in the media, and to enable distinction between countries in the Middle East.

The global spread of neoliberal deregulation, coinciding with the development of information technology, has resulted in restrictions being imposed by nation-states on the state of culture in the transnational movement. This consists of the flows of people, goods, communications, ideas and the opening of a new era of global economic integration (Appadurai, 1996; Held and McGrew, 2007; Kim, 2009; Lecler, 2019).

Neoliberalism and globalisation converted a contemporary economic and cultural flow into a change of global power: developing countries believed to be culturally and economically disadvantaged became bastions or hubs of regional or global power and offered new forms of global interdependence. Globalisation opens the borders in terms of culture and economic interaction. These developing countries respond to the West while creating cultural and economic tools and means of communication within their borders. These channels of interaction contribute to the confirmation of a particular type of system in the UAE; a system that is constructed in a way to attract western investment, human resources and money flowing through economic and cultural networks locally, regionally, and internationally. Therefore, in this system, there is a conscious representation of 'Arab' as a 'good Arab' and a distinction of the UAE as a 'nice Arab'. Al-Ali believes that, 'We were trying, through DIFF, to re-represent our image to correct the stereotype and differentiate ourselves from other countries in the Middle East' (2019).

In the early 2000s, the UAE's political and cultural landscape changed. The UAE and its neighbours Qatar and Saudi Arabia competed as regional and global players in investing income derived from abundant natural resources to build influence on a global scale through these activities. When looking at the local culture in Dubai, it is clear that there is a

contradiction in the festival's tendencies to separate this from the economic, social and political life. It also distinguishes between the local culture that the festival hopes to provide and activities and events aimed at contributing to the enhancement of the local Emirati image and culture. The festival offers competitions for local films (Muhr Emirates) and competitions for Arab films (Muhr Al-Arabia) to try to promote the Emirates identity and Arab culture. These competitions offer a variety of short and long films, a set of issues and stories about the reality of life in the Arab region. Al-Ali explains that 'since the beginning of DIFF, our goal has been that Arab and local films are the most important and at the forefront of our concerns' (2019).

The UAE through DIFF recognises the interaction between local, Arab, and global and they try to work through that tension by offering workshops, a film market, generous scholarships through Sanad and Enjaz film funds, seminars, and networking events. Dubai Film Connection DFC is one of the activities that contributes to supporting local and Arab cinema and provides generous support to Arab films. DFC provides generous support of more than $60,000, through a group of supportive companies in the region such as the Centre National du Cinema (CNC), the Arab Radio and Television (ART), Hideaway Entertainment, and others.[11]

[11] On this topic DFC director Jane Williams states, "The Dubai Film Connection plays a central part in supporting regional filmmakers from the Arab world by helping them bring their projects from a working title to the big screen ... By giving crucial funding and access to industry professionals from around the world, it helps new and established filmmakers realise their projects and be inspired to create new and innovative films. We are very thankful for the support provided by our generous partners that contributes to the development of the region's thriving film industry." (Goodfellow, 2017).

Since the beginning of the millennium, this generous support and investment through these contemporary technical institutions and organizations in particular has been considered desirable for the transfer of local and Arab identity and global belonging at the same time. Integration into a global cultural movement, such as the DIFF, conveys modernity in a hidden but wise way. To be part of the global cinema world is to be part of the global elite.

In the context of the growing cultural diversity in Dubai, the festival's orientation in the event through these initiatives is to preserve and enhance the national identity. In addition, the festival is trying to use its cultural role in promoting Arab international relations, especially during this period in which the region is witnessing crises that have an impact on both the Emirati and the Arab stereotype. However, at the same time, the festival works toward achieving the economic and political interests of the city and the country through these activities and luxurious places, lifestyles, trade names, and images presented through them to form a multicultural environment to excite both tourists and consumers.

The festival aims to create networks and connections between local, Khaleeji and Arab filmmakers, and international filmmakers, producers, distributors, production companies. However, it separates the local filmmakers from the official event site which includes the Film Market, seminars, and other potentially beneficial activities, leading most of the local and Gulf filmmakers to feel that they are separated from the festival. Hani Al-Shaibani, Amer Al-Murry, and Aisha Al-Zaabi agree, stating that they felt completely separated from the festival (Al-Shaibani, 2019; Al-Murry, 2019; Al-Zaabi, 2018).

Most activities of the Emiratis at the festival were held in a different location to the main site of the festival in the Mall of Emirates, and it was restricted to Emiratis, Arabs, and locals, which created a feeling of exclusion and isolation for themselves. Aisha Al-Zaabi has a negative opinion about these initiatives and activities, stating,

> *At the festival, we feel that if we do not participate, we will be marginalised. At the festival we as Emiratis, we only compete with each other. We did not compete either Gulf or Arab, the Emirati competition prize has only 8 Emirati filmmakers, who compete with each other. Whoever enters our films is only our family and friends (2019).*

The growing interest in the image and marketing of tourism in Dubai, Hollywood's monopoly of cinema, and the festival's focus on stars and celebrities, has negatively impacted local filmmakers. There is a lack of attention given to the local filmmaker, in whose country the festival is hosted. As pointed out by Aisha Al-Zaabi, a filmmaker herself, the DIFF focuses on providing luxury hospitality to foreign guests, including where they stay and what kind of food they eat, whereas the local filmmaker does not receive any attention (2019). As a cultural-creative event, DIFF has contributed to developing the city's brand image, promoting the local culture globally. This is precisely what the Dubai government has worked to achieve through the festival, thereby yielding long-term benefits.

With the strategic changes that took place in DIFF over time and the increase in the festival's scale, interest has shifted to international products and guests, using them to promote the city and tourism. Hani Al- Shaibani, an Emirati filmmaker, asserts,

> *When the scale of DIFF has become bigger and its goal has become international, the goal of the festival has shifted to be more with a branding objective for the city. The fund that was specialized for Emirati filmmakers gone and we were lost in the crowd (2019).*

Al-Zaabi also commented, 'I strive to participate every year because if I did not participate, I would be marginalised. The focus was on celebrities and models, world-class filmmakers and well-dressed people, while no one knows about us.' (2019).

Clearly, the impression left with these filmmakers is that supporting the locals was not a primary goal of these activities, but rather promoting the global image and the global economy was the top priority, leaving the locals as secondary goals who disappeared over time.

4.2.1 #SupportArabCinema and Emirati Filmmakers

The same interaction and dynamic of reconstruction of the image is also present in the #SupportArabCinema campaign. The implication of this branding, with the same dynamic between projecting international and supporting local, is not implicit but explicit through social media. The dynamic is not just cinema but also social media, which developed after the start of the festival. In 2015, DIFF and Image Nation launched a campaign to support Arab films and the Emirati film industry. To promote the local and Arab identity and spread Arab culture among the public, the campaign also targeted actors, filmmakers, celebrities and the public by activating the campaign #SupportArabCinema through social media, offline media, and other platforms. Garin and Juma agreed that the #SupportArabCinema campaign supported the film industry in the UAE and the region, to reflect efforts to support the local

and Arab film industry and to raise the profile of Arab cinema on the world stage (Image Nation, 2015).

It must be noted that the support and funding is limited to Emiratis and Arabs; local non-Emirati or international individuals are not entitled to the funds. During the interviews, it became clear that many local non-Emirati filmmakers are concerned that most of the support is directed towards Emiratis and other Arabs, despite the director of the festival stating that the support is for Emiratis, Gulf nationals, other Arabs and internationals (Al-Ali, 2019). Faisal Hashimi, a Pakistani filmmaker who was born and is living in Dubai, has attended the Dubai International Film Festival since 2009. He feels dissatisfied with restricting support to Emiratis, Gulf nationals and other Arabs without considering locals other than Emiratis. Hashmi has participated in all of the festival sessions and received a number of prizes. However, he did not receive any support. He explains,

> *If you are Emirate or Arab, there is some small support from DIFF. For me, these options are not for me. We (as local international filmmakers) have to do it by ourselves. There are no places to support financially. If you want to make movie you have to make it from your own money (2019).*

The DIFF funds programs such as Enjaaz, while cultural institutions provide other funds that focus more on supporting Emirati, Khaleeji and Arab cinema. According to Al-Ali, 'We are supporting Emirate filmmakers, but if there is no good Emirate content to win the fund, the funding goes to Khaleeji or Arab filmmakers. If not, it goes to the international filmmakers.' (2019).

Some of the Emirati filmmakers feel this funding and support is limited and not for everyone. Al-Zaabi believes that 'There was no significant support as you can imagine, the support was intended for specific people' (2019). This supports the notion that the festival focused on specific people in exporting the identity and image that it desires, so DIFF focuses on supporting its brand ambassadors[12]. Al-Shebani states that 'When the festival grew and became global, there was less interest and support for the local filmmaker' (2019).
This creates a huge discrepancy between the goals of the festival and Image Nation, which aim to enhance the image of the Arab identity by supporting Arab and local films and cinematic activities. At the same time, these cultural institutions promote the place as a global entity by attracting celebrities, Hollywood films, and other international films. The 2011 DIFF featured Tom Cruise walking on the red carpet with Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, the ruler of Dubai. Therefore, global economic and political goals are their primary objective.[13]

However, this support for local activities and national products decreased with changing strategies in support of national products that contribute to enhancing national identity and promote belonging to the place. Strategies were orientated towards attracting foreign products

[12] Brand ambassadors, as talented in art and culture, have an important role in contributing effectively to reflecting the brand's values of the place (Dinnie, 2015, p.72). These ambassadors are creating a modern Emirati image through which they can communicate and influence effectively the target audiences of the festival and the brand of the city locally and regionally. The United Arab Emirates government invests in individuals who can make an impact and implement its strategies (Salisbury, 2020).

[13] According to Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, the Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE, and ruler of the Emirate of Dubai, the Arab world is still engaging in the Arab dream, Arab unity, and the common Arab market. The world has changed and has become an interconnected world. Therefore, he argued, they should leave the Arab dream and the common Arab market and proceed to the open market and open world (World Government Summit, 2017).

and foreign experts who in turn contributed to the promotion of the brand on a wider global scale. Maryam Al-Serkal, a filmmaker and former head of production at Creative Lab in TwoFour54 Abu Dhabi, believes that initiatives had tended to support talent, but had regrettably changed to focus on Hollywood and Bollywood films at the expense of local talent (2019).

It became clear that in the case of Dubai, the city's branding is affected by the city's images, where there is a great contradiction in the identity of Dubai between images of modernity and the city of dreams e.g. luxury hotels, modern architecture (Govers and Go, 2009; Govers, 2012). This contrasted with the traditional culture, an Arab Islamic culture, desert, camels, hawks, giving Dubai a type of split personality.

Al-Ali confirmed that the motivations behind DIFF were not limited to developing the film sector:

> *Since the beginning of DIFF, it has had a major tourist objective, and I believe that the purpose of organising a festival would be negated if it does not have a goal to highlight the name and the landmarks of the city. Thus, it is not possible to organise a film festival for the sake of only gathering filmmakers, as they regularly interact and meet in different places. (2019)*

Therefore, the focus was on hosting the festival in tourist places such as the luxurious city of Jumeirah and its adjacent areas, such as luxury hotels in which festival guests stay. DIFF has used different marketing strategies to attract attention to Dubai, whose identity centers around partying, celebration, pleasure, sightseeing, shopping, relaxation, exploration, and discovery. This goal reflects the 'modernity of the tourist city' through the features and services provided to guests and film makers. As Kotler and Gertner (2002) believe, in the era of neoliberalism,

cities work to enhance their brand and gain credibility and fame to attract their customers, which is what Dubai is working on in presenting itself as commodity and promoting itself on a global level as an attractive destination that has a distinctive lifestyle through its space and job opportunities. So, the city becomes, as Turner believes, ‘something that is consumed or consumable, like any other kind of goods’ (2007, p. 91).

4.3 Image Nation

Abu Dhabi has realized the importance of media and film production and is a powerful tool that contributes to enhancing the image of society globally. Because of the media presence and film production, there are opportunities for employment for the local population and a global value in promoting Abu Dhabi and the Emirates. In 2007, Abu Dhabi Media Zone Authority (TwoFour54), a free zone media city to attract international channels and production companies, opened offices in the Emirate. In 2008, Abu Dhabi Media Company (ADMC) established Image Nation Abu Dhabi to develop the media and film industry in Abu Dhabi and the UAE with a billion-dollar budget for training and funding the local production and co-production with Hollywood and Bollywood.

The goal is not only to develop and support the local industry but also to brand Abu Dhabi globally through co-production with global production companies like Warner Bros, Participant Media, and others. According to the CEO of Image Nation, Garin, ‘there are a lot of companies that commission content, and they want to help professionalise that so that they can have a positive impact on the industry and on the place’ (2019).

It is clear that the relationship between the Abu Dhabi government and Warner Bros and Hyde Park Entertainment, with a US$1 billion through Image Nation (Leotta, 2014), had more goals than developing the industry, as it carried out many brand strategies that the government of Abu Dhabi pursues for promoting its brand including tourism projects such as Warner Bros Theme Park, as well as many cultural projects that have tourist objectives: the Guggenheim Museum Abu Dhabi, the first Louvre Abu Dhabi museum, and sports and cultural events aimed at stimulating tourism in the city.

As a result of the crisis and conflict in the region, the goal of Image Nation in Abu Dhabi and DIFF in Dubai through their strategies was not only filmmaking and building the industry. The goal went beyond these as the Emirates believe that these initiatives are a good opportunity to erase the negative image of Arabs and show their neoliberal face, as well as to differentiate them from others in the region.

Image Nation focused on creating content that promotes the UAE. The company logo contains the name of the company ‘Image Nation’ written in English, with the name Abu Dhabi below which links the company to the place. It also reflects the true meaning of what the company believes which is branding the nation of Emirate Abu Dhabi "Image" and "Nation" that combined with the name of the place "Abu Dhabi". Garin states,

> *The name of the company is really imagination. I changed the logo to Image Nation Abu Dhabi. To me, Abu Dhabi is more important than imagination. The Abu Dhabi name has been seen now more than 200 million times in the United States alone. Image Nation could be in India. It could be in China. It*

could be in England. It could be anywhere. But Abu Dhabi is only Abu Dhabi. (2019).

The Image Nation logo appears at the beginning of all the films and content that the company produces or co-produces. Image Nation produced much local content through which it works on strategies that are not only tourism-related, but also promotional for the culture of the place. It builds Emirati images and stories that reflect Emirati symbols that contributed to the construction of the Emirates and its history, such as Sheikh Zayed Al Nahyan, and the story of the desert, Bedouins, and other stories that build the Emirati fabric such as 'Lest We Forget', a collective of short documentary films that reflect how old Emirati customs and traditions almost fade away in this society, as it transfers to a more liberal and modern life.

One of the main strategies of the re-imagination of the nation was to promote the image of the Emirates globally. Especially after the events of September 9-11, following which the image of the Arabs became distorted. Garin believes that,

Image Nation's mission is to promote local culture globally. Image Nation has done more to change the perception about our part of the world than anybody else. But we haven't created anything to do that. It is in creating the things that we do, because, you know, whether it's a road trip movie like 'From A to B', Zinzanah, Rashid and Rajab. People are expecting to see those kinds of movies from our part of the world. And so because what people do know and read about are part of the world; terrorism, bombs blowing up, wars, people fighting... When they see these everyday programs, it changes attitudes towards us. So, it's not that that this is propaganda. This is actually

> *our everyday life. It's just that they don't understand that we live like them. Husbands and wives fight. Parents worry about their children. You know, boys fall in love with girls. (2019)*

Image Nation becomes part of a whole global network. The soft power of Image Nation depends on the perspective of the target audience of the host place, ultimately, they are the deciders of what attracts them or not.

Recent years, the UAE has witnessed a major growth in cultural projects and the film industry. Abu Dhabi put the field of creative industry and media issues high on its agenda. The city invested in the Louvre Abu Dhabi and the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, as part of the Cultural Center on Saadiyat Island (Ouroussoff, 2010; Shadid, 2012; Ajana, 2015). In the cinema sector, Abu Dhabi through Image Nation and the Abu Dhabi Film Commission has relied on foreign experts and investment in infrastructure to attract international companies and international studios from Hollywood and Bollywood to produce on its soil by providing financial incentives. Foreign experts were relied on to craft the modern brand identity of the place. Garin, the CEO of Image Nation, states that

> *... there is an industry that doesn't exist here... people in the industry are unprofessional and do not understand the real industry. We worked to create the infrastructure and bring talent and international companies, we brought companies from Denmark and the United States. It's not just on the creative side that we're bringing, you know, professionalism, but it's also on the production, production services and ultimately on the distribution and marketing of the films as well. (2019)*

Garin's mission was greater than setting up the film industry in Abu Dhabi, it was to contribute to reshaping the brand of the place. Garin argued,

> *What imagination is, is why we're here. There's a misconception of our role, because there really isn't another organization anywhere in the world like us. We are in business to help build an industry, and I always tell people I'm not here to build imagination. I'm here to build the nation. (2019)*

Abu Dhabi is investing, through Image Nation, in co-production films with big studios in Hollywood and Bollywood, with a capital of one billion US dollars with international studios such as Warner Bros. Image Nation participated in co-production for blockbuster movies such as *The Help* (2011), *Roman J. Israel, ESQ* (2017) and *The Circle* (2017). In addition, Abu Dhabi has hosted many Hollywood and Bollywood movies such as *Star Wars VII* (2014) and *Fast & Furious 7* (2015). Image Nation has worked to take advantage of the profits of these successful films to support local production and to provide training programs for Emirati filmmakers and support their projects. Besides the economic benefits of these films, Dubai has been promoting its brand globally. Al-Ali and Garin agree that these activities project a positive image of place through cultural products, as well as bringing tourism benefits. The Emirates name is now stamped on Hollywood films, Palestinian films, and Lebanese films, through co-production.

Among the initiatives that enhance the image of Abu Dhabi and the UAE through talent, Image Nation has opened the Arab Film Studio (AFS), which is a cultural platform for talented Emiratis and non-Emiratis in the region. These are platforms to reflect the voice of the Emirates and enhance its image. The AFS provides opportunities for growth and

exploration for any talented individual, regardless of nationality, in movies, television, publishing, music, games, animation, or illustrations. Image Nation works on creating a talent pool or innovative societies to serve creative individuals or the talented class, which is considered an engine of innovation, economic source, and progress in cities. This demonstrates the work of these institutions to develop and attract filmmakers, whether they are Emirati or local non-Emirati, to contribute to the development of local filmmakers. Garin believes that 'Image Nation is committed to developing Abu Dhabi and the wider UAE as a filmmaking hub, seeking to attract local, regional and international film talent and productions' (The National, 2013).

It is evident that Image Nation has worked to employ brand ambassadors in order to enhance the reputation and image of the place. It has brought together local talent with major Hollywood producers to develop them. Besides involving these talented people in the Hollywood and Bollywood big-budget films that are produced in Abu Dhabi, as Dubai has done, Garin declares that 'we need are the mechanisms to teach them the technical skills, the creative skills and the business disciplines that are necessary to create a sustainable industry.' (2019).

It is clear that Image Nation has focused on a number of filmmakers who are prominent figures in society and have an open culture and are creative, English speakers, some of whom have been educated abroad. They are giving full attention to support and develop them as well as surround them with a more professional crew. Image Nation is engaging these talents to work on set in Hollywood and Bollywood film productions that are being filmed in the UAE.

One of these characters is Mohammed Harab, who is from a family that holds high government positions. He is a son of Saeed Harab who was Vice-Chairman of the General Authority of Sports and Board member since 2014 and now is the Secretary-General of Dubai Sports Council (DSC). He also graduated from Northeastern University, majoring in general arts and animation, and is considered one of the first animation makers in the Middle East. All this gives Mohammad a place in society and he is considered an important figure. According to Garin,

> *Mohammed is a local hero ... we went to Mohammed because we saw the talent that he had. We promised him full support to film his project "Rashid & Rajab, 2019", we surrounded him with professional filmmakers and crew, and we provided all the help he needs. (2019).*

This explains how Image Nation tends to build its own talents who are carefully chosen to be their ambassadors and promotes the country through these recognized filmmakers in the region. Those who are chosen to contribute to forming or shaping the image of Emirati as an open society through their films.

However, according to Garin, talented Emirati filmmakers are considered to be in short supply and they still have not reached the professional stage and nor maturity in the industry. This is reflected by these courses and programmes having strategies to develop the process of building the brand image. Therefore, Image Nation seeks the help and benefit of foreign experts or foreign brand ambassadors.

At Image Nation, stakeholders agreed that foreign labour is necessary for the growth of a sustainable film industry and economic growth in the UAE. Al-Ali and Garin commented that there is an urgent need for a foreign workforce to contribute to building the industry. The goal is to develop the industry by bringing high skilled talents (2019). The employees were a combination of Arab and Western. The Arab employees knew more about local culture than Western manpower. However, foreign experts control most jobs and positions in cultural institutions. The ultimate goal was to mix local filmmakers and manpower with foreigners to benefit and gain skills for future dependence.

A number of questions were raised among those interviewed about the region's reliance on foreign labour, Garin believes that 'we have limited talent, limited resources, and, you know, this is at the end of the day that the entertainment industry is a mass industry trying to appeal to the largest number of people' (2019). He added that Image Nation wanted to build a film industry and that requires a large number of foreigners because local people are not yet professional. Therefore, retaining a large foreign workforce is part of the region's economy and cultural strategy for a future after oil. Relying on citizens alone will not serve the production process and build a sustainable industry. Garin argued,

> *We needed to have experts in roles where there were no Emiratis is qualified to fill them and because we have managed to find the right people who brought both the skills and the talents... We want to put people in jobs because they're Emirati and they're qualified for the position. (2019).*

It is clear that Image Nation is aiming to attract highly skilled foreigners in developing the industry, but that this will contribute to reducing dependence on local filmmakers. In Garin's

view, citizens are less experienced and lack the practical qualifications, specialisation and skills that make them able to compete against their (highly skilled) foreign counterparts for their work. Consequently, the neoliberal trend towards the market reflects and coincides with how Kanna (2010) described Dubai in the neoliberal era, that has direction to a neoliberal free-market economy. Where the 'city-corporation' provides a pool of highly skilled labour and takes advantage of free zones and low taxes in order to provide an attractive job market environment, Dubai and Abu Dhabi work to embody the central principles of neoliberal urbanism, such as marketing the city's image through stunning views, the centrality of foreign investment as healthy, and thus they become homes of this high-skilled creativity.

4.3.1 Image Nation and its Partnerships

Since its beginning, Image Nation in Abu Dhabi has built many partnerships with regional and global content makers and companies, with the aim of developing the film industry in Abu Dhabi and the UAE. There are a series of partnerships being established between Hollywood studios and Image Nation Abu Dhabi, such as Warner Brothers, Hyde Park Entertainment, Futurism Studios and other international production companies, content makers and regional partners such as MBC Studios. Image Nation has partnered with American companies, including with Warner Brothers who signed a $1.6 billion partnership to build a theme park in Abu Dhabi (Yunis, 2014). This means that partnership decisions with Hollywood brands are part of trade policy and part of foreign policy. Al-Ali (2019) believes that partnerships with Hollywood benefit the reputation of the place and the reputation of the country. Besides the economic goals for Image Nation through these partnerships, Image Nation promotes training and development through the AFS, as well as providing places for these Emirati or non-Emirati trainees to participate in the production of works that Image

Nation produces with its partners. It is also working on training some filmmakers and providing them with support in producing local content, including Ali Mostafa who is considered one of the most famous Emirati movie makers and who graduated from London Film School and received great attention and support from both the government and Image Nation.

In 2014, Mostafa made his film *From A to B* that was produced by TwoFour54 and Image Nation. It adopts a Hollywood format and a storyline that reflects a road trip adventure of three expatriate friends on a trip from Abu Dhabi to Beirut, to commemorate their lost friend who was killed during the 2006 Lebanon War. These three friends were strongly influenced by American consumerism and popular culture. They face many difficulties on their way to their destination, which brings them closer to each other.

The film reflects the modernity and development of Abu Dhabi. Mostafa shows the difficulties that characters face on their way through the Arab countries to reach Lebanon. The film shows how modern Abu Dhabi is perfectly developed with skyscrapers, luxury cars and houses, while the moral corruption and underdevelopment in other countries is widespread. The goal goes beyond making films and developing the local film industry to brand the UAE at the international level through co-production and producing commercial films, which brands the country internationally.

Countries and cities need constant investment in human capital in order to take advantage of the creative class who contribute to achieving their marketing strategies and meeting global competition. Image Nation and DIFF have recognized the relevance of talented filmmakers as

branding ambassadors in attracting, engaging, and retaining talent. These institutions develop and support these creators, whether they are local or Western, to achieve their economic, cultural, and political development goals. Focusing on local filmmakers to be ambassadors of the modern Emirati national brand through their work sets an example for young local filmmakers, preparing them to be their interface for the media, the local and global community. Therefore, these institutions provide a suitable environment and partnerships with international companies and institutions to attract these talents and develop them to achieve their goals. This is what Bagaeen (2007) and Lee and Jain (2009) believe that the UAE in the neoliberal era, is investing in the knowledge-driven economy, enhancing economic diversification activities and preparing environmental conditions for business, making it an attractive place to live and work in. According to Alsharif, 'we created a lot of jobs where we created a lot of talents and that is important to the industry... So, the Creative industries have contributed a lot into GDP' (City7 News, 2013).

In summary, the transformation of the nascent nation that is the UAE into a globally recognised exemplar of neoliberal values and policy has occurred at a remarkable speed. Place branding literature has established film and film institutions as central to effective global projection of cities on the world stage (Ashworth and Voogd, 1994; Bolan and Williams, 2008; Connell, 2012). It is unsurprising then that the current research has confirmed this understanding. In particular, film festivals are known to be effective in grabbing global media attention by attracting celebrities and providing a spectacular attraction (Ferrari and Guala, 2017). The literature has confirmed the status of film festivals as primary place branding tools in multiple contexts including Copenhagen (Ooi, and Pedersen, 2010), Izmir, Turkey (Pirnar et al., 2019), the Cannes and Berlin Film Festivals (Mezias et al., 2008) and

the Toronto Film Festival (Cervenan, 2017) to name just a small sample. The present study adds Abu Dhabi and Dubai to the list of cases examined.

4.4 Neoliberalism and local identity

4.4.1 The emirates as Neoliberal exemplar

Academic interest in neoliberalism in the Middle East was also bolstered by the uprisings characterised as the Arab Spring which are viewed by some as resistant responses to neoliberalism in the region (Armbrust, 2011; Bogaert, 2013; Kaboub, 2013). This neoliberalism had replaced to varying degrees state-led economic development that had dominated since the 1960s (Kaboub, 2013). Part of the reason for this shift was that the region's rulers faced with both international and domestic pressure to integrate their markets into the global economy from their starting point as one of the most protectionist regions of the world (Monroe, 2019). Indeed, Samier (2013) refers to this pressure as the "internationally networked recolonization of the UAE" (p. 211).

In Dubai's case what happened was particularly remarkable for an oil-poor city state. It became "one of the purest incarnations of neoliberalism on the planet" (Walonen, 2016, p. 107). It was a classic example of neoliberal urban transformation. While a small vastly wealthy elite may be most commonly identified with Dubai's neoliberalism and its meteoric rise to global prominence, Dubai's reliance on migrant labour is also firmly part of the neoliberal narrative with South Asian workers exercising their own entrepreneurialism and self-invention to overcome the considerable barriers of economic disadvantage they face in their home countries (Kathiravelu, 2016). In addition to these workers a "transnational

neoliberal class" of migrants have been attracted to the emirates to take advantage of its many entrepreneurial and employment opportunities (Gray, 2016).

In the case of Abu Dhabi, oil wealth may have watered down the urgency of neoliberal transformation but certainly did not remove it altogether. Having kept a relatively low profile in global terms but since the early 2000s growing oil wealth, foreign investment urban development has seen its trajectory more closely match Dubai's (Elsheshtawy, 2008). Many of the hallmarks of Dubai's transformation can be seen there as well. This includes the attraction of transnational human resources and capital, the transforming of the urban landscape and, most significantly for this thesis, the use of cultural institutions for place (re)branding.

4.4.2 UAE film industry in the neoliberal landscape

The government of the UAE has two national goals that conflict with one another. The Emirati government is working to localise its functions in order to preserve the national identity, but this strategy contradicts its goal of economic and cultural prosperity in the post-oil phase. Therefore, the goal of Emiratization contrasts with its strategic goal of building its soft power through cultural strength and a knowledge-based economy. In order to build the Emirates brand, attract foreign investment, and boost the film industry, the UAE relied on the hands of skilled workers, which contravenes its strategies to localise jobs and increase the role of Emiratis.

Dubai and Abu Dhabi preferred the goals that brought economic benefits. However, it appears that Emirati manpower has decreased, and the state is directed to take advantage of the film sector as a tool in building its brand and its soft power, changing its strategies for its political

and economic goal. Among the contradictions that affect the application of state strategies in settlement and economic diversification is the sponsorship policy, which greatly affects filmmakers.

The UAE is a special case in the production of films. It is a country with a small population and no knowledge or history of filmmaking. Nevertheless, since 2004 with the establishment of the DIFF it has worked hard to become a film Mecca and film production hub in the region. This raises the question of whether there is sufficient space for filmmakers to represent and express the UAE identity.

These film initiatives, including the DIFF, revolutionised film infrastructure in the UAE, creating, in theory, the space for the local identity to be developed. Whether this has occurred in practice is a matter of debate. Some would argue that the DIFF and other cultural production aimed right from the start to become a global place and create space for Western concepts; a space for international corporations, partnerships, and international talents to be in the UAE, which marginalises local filmmakers and local identity.

Film is understood to be an important part of creating a space for self-expression and at the same time is a tool for promoting local identity (Gleissner, 2012). Independent cinema not only seeks profit but also promotes formation and representation. It cultivates societies, as seen in France and Italy, something reflected in Arab cinema (Gleissner, 2012). These countries developed local filmmaking and the output was used to develop and support local identity. Movie clubs, short films, and screening events brought this output to a wide audience, promoting the place, its policies, and orientations (Gleissner, 2012).

Such conditions described above did not exist in the UAE, leaving the question of whether they could be generated through the interaction of cultural institutions, events and individual filmmakers. Cultural institutions supported several films and have taken many cultural initiatives that have succeeded in providing the country with a diverse and vibrant cinematic culture that gives the country a positive image in the minds of the public.

The UAE was able to rapidly establish a film industry through its cultural institutions (Image Nation 2008, TwoFour54) and initiatives such as the DIFF. These institutions provided the infrastructure and the support services needed to attract international interest from both the media and filmmakers. This ensured the development of a local identity; however, it did bring with it the issue of diversity and public accessibility to the global cultural products. Habermas (1999) posits that this kind of institution shapes the public domain and creates a dialogue between government and the people in which public opinion and the social identity of society is formed. This can be seen in the UAE where the government has created cultural platforms on which this dialogue takes place.

The establishment of the Abu Dhabi Media Authority in 2007 enabled the creation of a media city similar to Dubai's to attract media and global production companies. In 2008, the launch of Image Nation contributed to a major change in the marketing strategies of the place, as well as creating a more professional production environment. Image Nation aims to invest in the production of Hollywood and Bollywood films, work to develop the local film industry, and train local filmmakers, but this strategy has not been accepted by local filmmakers.

Cultural institutions can work through this development in the globalised economy to coordinate the city's branding efforts that positively affect their city's business and cultural economies. Dubai has taken great steps in reshaping its identity through cultural products and in distinguishing itself from other places in the region through cultural industries, particularly through film industries (Hafeez et al., 2016). In 2014, Dubai established the Dubai Creative Clusters Authority (DCCA), which was renamed the Dubai Development Authority in 2018. The Authority has undertaken many initiatives in Dubai, including the Dubai International Film Festival, strengthening cooperation with foreign partnerships, and developing cultural products to enhance its brand in the global market. Abdulhamid Juma, the Chairman of Dubai International Film Festival, states,

> *We have become the one window, or the single platform for Arab cinema in terms of the end-production of showing the films, or also to start the nurturing and supporting these films [sic] and take them outside the boundaries of the Arab world. Our motto when we started was 'bridging cultures, meeting minds.' One of these bridges is to bring the best films. But bridges are two ways. We also need to export good films about [us]—especially in this time when this region is looked at as a terrible region, a region that has a lot of problems and issues. So, we have to produce more films, better films, and a vehicle to take those films to people outside of this region* (cited in Chen and Shih, 2019, p.517).

Besides the goals of these initiatives and activities to provide spaces for different audiences and for dialogue and negotiation to enhance the local identity; they also contribute to the creation of a space for local filmmakers to contribute to the formulation and narration of the

local identity as approved by the government. Cultural institutions assist the local film industry by supporting filmmakers and their films to contribute to the formation and representation of images that meet the needs of the institution and are in line with its government-inspired ideology. Funds are used to support film production and earn the loyalty of filmmakers, bringing them closer to government-affiliated institutions. It also enables these institutions to establish a monopoly in the production scene.

These cultural institutions effectively impose top-down city branding with government-determined messaging and images used to promote the identity they deem appropriate. The aim is to promote the globalised culture of the place to achieve political and economic goals. The Emirates, especially Dubai, are suffering from a decline in local Emirati identity not least because Emiratis make up a minority of the population. This may be exacerbated by many of the UAE's cultural products, which emphasise the multicultural nature of the place and promote openness and harmony between different identities. For an example, we can consider a film titled *City of Life* (2009). It is the first Emirati feature film produced in the UAE and the first one formally screened in the UAE (Yunis and Picherit-Duthler, 2011). The director, Ali Mustafa, became a local hero. The film received strong support from the UAE government, especially from the ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid, and from government institutions and bodies.

City of Life is a multi-lingual Emirati film that shows multicultural stories in the international city that is Dubai. As a prototype for the unique Emirati film style, *City of Life* can be critiqued for its attempt to implement a global narration and its copying of Hollywood style. In short, it is a representation of the city through the government's perspective. The film

includes different storylines involving the Emiratis and Westerners living in the UAE, as well as the Indian working class. The film creates conflicts between these nationalities in a separate form. What brings them together is the place, Dubai. These nationalities are separate from the indigenous population. They live in the same city, but their conflicts are among their demographic group and not with other ethnicities and nationalities. However, these different nationalities live in complete harmony within the city and every person seeks to fulfil his dream, within the city of dreams.

In the Emirati storyline, Faisal and Khalfan act as if they are the protagonists of an American street gang, but they wear traditional kandura clothing and speak Arabic and English. They wander around in the modern and youthful city, but as they return home they return to their original lives. They drive luxury cars, attend parties and listen to foreign songs, a delightful mobile phone, and a mix of Arabic and English speaking. But when they return to their Emirati lives, Umm Khalfan and his sister stick to their traditional clothes. Faisal's dialogue with his father (the original Emirati father) always reminds him of values, customs, traditions and an interest in religious and Emirati values. The father is a strict figure who mocks the typical Emirati youth, whose identity depends mostly on material things. Although it is implied that, after Faisal’s dialogue with his father, he will return to his multicultural Dubai lifestyle, it is clear that the experience has improved his character, especially after the death of his friend Khalfan.

The film reflects the struggle presented in Dubai's effort to represent itself as a modern and global city while preserving the touches of local identity. There are many scenes through films that send the same messages that are frequently imposed on the films, reflecting the old

values and inherited customs in harmony with modern developments and the integration of local culture with international cultures. The film depicts luxury cars driven in the desert and cities by young Bedouin Emiratis who wear traditional clothing. These young people combine English and Arabic and wear traditional clothes, while leading international companies and interacting with businessmen in suits. According to Mohammed Hareb,

> *Our identity is developing with the development of the city. I always try to show the Emirati people are modern and can speak different languages and wear brands ... We are one of the societies open to the world and developed. Here you find the person has the freedom to go to the mosque or the bar. It is up to you. We provide you with all these things and you are free to choose (2019).*

Transforming the local culture into a representative image that the global audience understands must become a negotiable subject between conflicting interests. *City of Life* created symbols and met expectations not only towards the storyline but also to the image of people and local culture. Therefore, the film dealt with social stereotypes that the West understands; a society that is drowning in consumption and facing the danger of foreign culture, especially American. Society loses its privacy and becomes influenced by global culture. The stereotypes of Emirati youth who are driven by luxurious lifestyles, sport and luxurious cars, and parties. This negotiation can be accepted by the global audience that previously possesses stereotypes and by the local audience who sees its reality. Thus, the stereotype becomes the "correct way" to represent Emirati society. Therefore, *City of Life* meets the global demand for recognition of the stereotype and at the same time corrects the negative image. The film offers recognition that there is a homogeneous and overlapping

Emirati identity, especially as there are people who feel excluded from media and cinematic discourse to be heard and seen by a different global audience.

There are independent filmmakers in the Emirates who want to represent what it is really like to be Emirati in the place. However, they face difficulties in creating professional films outside of the institutions that are supported by the state. As a result, the Emirati identity and social stories are reconfigured to be acceptable for mass viewing and filmmakers who are not on board with this approach become marginalised.

In light of this cultural revolution and creative initiatives of the brand through the film industry, these institutions worked to reshape the identity through the cinema and rely on foreign experts, foreign labour and foreign partners on the pretext that Emirati filmmakers do not have the experience to formulate the Emirati identity. Garin says,

> *Emiratization was one of the government's strategies, But Mohamed Al Mubarak was able to convince the leadership that we needed to have expats in roles where there were no Emiratis qualified to fill them. And because we have managed to find the right people who brought both the skills and the talents, but also the cultural ability to work in this region to be firm, but not off-putting and offensive. So, we didn't compromise our standards, but we imposed that rigour in a way that didn't cause people to, you know, go complain and saying I'm being mistreated. (2019)*

Cultural institutions such as Image Nation work in exceptional ways in representing a positive impact on reshaping the local identity in a global nature through the global platforms of Hollywood and Bollywood and the use of foreign experts, who attract global production teams to create attractiveness in a global style to achieve global economic development and prosperity. Filmmaking in the UAE has been characterized by fragility and vulnerability. These foreign experts were used to help build the image of the UAE while marginalising the role of citizens in shaping the local identity, which negatively affected the results and created a conflicted local identity. For example, a film like *City of Life* depicts Emiratis in a sophisticated manner. There are scenes in the film that send the same imposed messages, reflecting ancient values and inherited customs, in line with recent developments and the integration of local culture with global cultures. Pictures of Bedouin Emirati youth driving luxury cars in the desert and cities, wearing traditional clothes and suits, and young people who combine English, Arabic, and French.

Therefore, these cultural institutions work to take advantage of their foreign partnerships with international cultural institutions, to support filmmakers with a foreign workforce that contributes to raising the level of production to reach a more professional level and a more influential product. Garin states that they support local filmmakers by surrounding them with a number of professional experts, to work with these young directors (2019).

Globalised and market-driven cultural expressions produce reception patterns characterised by what Beck described as ‘vulgar globalism’: the ‘cosmic’ experience inherent in daily life (Beck, 2002). Globalised cultural products contribute to controlling outreach and influence the global audience as Hollywood films do. Cultural and economic globalisation includes

flows of information, perceptions, goods, services, and capital across the borders that accompany market exchange. The flow of experts, manpower, and multinational companies contributes to controlling the markets in developing countries. As a result, imported experts come to dominate the local cultural products and the locals are marginalised.

Local filmmakers perceive that the film industry in the UAE and the projected image of their stories is weak, and that it lacks visual representation of the true Emirate identity. The lack of attractive content was due to this being a new industry and government censorship, but many filmmakers were convinced that the film industry in the UAE suffers from weakness and that foreigners are in control of the industry. Since foreign experts are behind the scenes, film production cannot reflect the Emirati identity and culture (Rakan, 2019).
Cinema in the UAE has relied on foreign experience from the outset. Foreign experts participate in all aspects of production, and are highly influential over the end product, contributing to its lack of authenticity. These foreign experts employ local filmmakers to perform a service or are commissioned to provide global images of local culture, meaning these filmmakers lack autonomy in those situations.

Most Emirati filmmakers interviewed for this research consider these foreigners as invaders that deprive Emirati citizens of employment opportunities and force them to formulate certain images. Al-Zaabi states that ‘They try to change locations to film in specific famous places, and change actor to bring famous actor so-and-so’. ‘Thus, I am away from work with Image Nation because I do not like anyone interfering in my work’ (2019). Garin justifies that the intervention is to develop the production: ‘This is why I call them spoiled children.

Supervision is not interfering. We try to guide them. We surround them with all the other professionals that they need. They're there to support them, not to control them' (2019).

It seems that the image of Dubai as it appears through movies such as *From A to B* (Mostafa, 2014), *City of Life* (Mostapha, 2009), and *Rashid & Rajab* (Harib, 2019) or through events such as the Dubai International Film Festival reflects and matches what (Kotler and Gertner, 2002; Kanna, 2010; Govers, 2011; Bagaeen 2007) believe is the description of the UAE's identity in the neoliberal era. The identity of the UAE is motivated by the idea that UAE is a business, a corporation, a corporate body driven by cultural and creative means and government sponsorship. The main objective of these films is to present Dubai and Abu Dhabi as the headquarters of a number of international companies and an economic and global centre for skilled immigrant audiences. Therefore, being a resident of Dubai and the UAE means that you have a distinguished and prestigious position.

Thus, this research and the accompanying documentary film find that neoliberalism drives the search for a place on the global stage and comes at a cost in terms of local identity. For the filmmakers of the UAE, the desire to accelerate place branding by importing expertise has led to a reduction in opportunities. Most Emirati filmmakers who have been interviewed believe that their marginalisation by cultural institutions will certainly contribute to marginalisation of the local identity.

These cultural institutions aim to craft an image and identity that these institutions desire, and that contribute to the achievement of their goals. However, according to Abdullah, 'Image Nation has no concern to support Emirati cinema. It does not believe in the society and what

we have. These institutions bring foreign experts to build our image, they will build an image that they desire, not our image because these foreign experts do not believe in us. They have the power and money to build their own image. They are totally separated from us' (2019).

These cultural institutions have worked extensively on the issue of representation in attempts to distinguish themselves in a positive way that highlights the urban infrastructure and unique attractions, and to create an attractive image of the city (Balakrishnan, 2009; Pride, 2002; Anholt, 2011; Che-Ha et al., 2016; Foroudi et al, 2016). In creating the Ella Shohat concept 'burden of acting' defines the pressure that has been faced to develop a positive and distinctive image. Thus, discouraging the deviation of the individual from the ideal image in favour of this image. Focusing on this ideal image hinders the development of the local film industry, which is what cultural institutions seek. Instead of allowing space for experimentation and development, global filmmakers, foreign experts, and global labour's hands are hired to compete with established filmmaking industries such as Bollywood and Hollywood. Thus, local narratives and their symbols are adapted in an effort to re-review them in a global style to a global audience. Thus, the internal dialogue between images and idealised and practically built forms within society becomes a self-limiting expression.

4.5 Summary

The rise of neoliberal ideology has caused an increase in competition between cities globally. Cities have been forced to change their management strategies and practices. According to Short (2013), under neoliberal-based globalisation 'the world flattens, cities in many different countries are brought into greater international competition, whether it be attracting corporate power and financial concentrations, encouraging manufacturing, or promoting tourism' (p. 41).

Neoliberal philosophy creates competition between cities, causing not only the reshaping of existing cities to make them more attractive, but also creating a new generation of cities such as Dubai, Singapore and Hong Kong, which are classified as new global cities (Marcuse and Kempen, 2000). The philosophy encourages cities to invest and develop (Springer, 2009) in areas such as cultural-product industries, the real-estate sector and business investment, which is the economic engine of the neoliberal world (Haila, 2000; Evans, 2005; Smith, 2002). Many cities are using cultural resources as a political-economic tool with which to promote local economic growth. A number of cultural institutions, government organisations, the private sector, and individuals in cultural industries are creating promotional images of the city such that it may compete with other cities for resources and attract multinational companies, investors, human capital, and tourists, strengthening its competitive position among other cities in the process.

This is not just a movement of resources, nor just a transfer of money and people across borders, but rather a reshaping of the image and identity of institutions at the local and global levels (Jin, 2006). Therefore, the neoliberal system through economy and culture creates a

tension between local identity and projection of locality beyond locality, as many countries try to use culture and identity for an international vision and excellence.

Through intercity competition to strengthen its position globally, culture has become a major driver of urban economic development for cities and a firm feature of the neoliberal political agenda. Cultural features have become not only entertainment tools and a way of life, but also a tool to attract human capital and tourists. Film and its associated activities are at the centre of these cultural products and act as a window for a visual reconstruction of the place. The film plays a vital role in shaping people's awareness of political, social and economic issues, and influencing individual perceptions of countries, situations, issues, and global events (Dudo et al., 2011).

The UAE has used and energised film as a branding tool to gain a prominent place on the global map. Dubai is an economic hub, and Abu Dhabi is the political hub of the UAE. Films and cultural activities have played a key role in reshaping the Bedouin Emirati identity in the context of cultural globalization. Abu Dhabi and Dubai are trying to differentiate themselves, compete with cities in the region, and confront political and national ideologies in the region to maintain its internal and external policy.

These cultural activities and initiatives are happening at the expense of local identity, which causes a deepening of the identity crisis and contradiction in the policy of building national cultures and enhancing the framework for building national cadres and cultivating them in the local culture and environment. Hans-Ulrich Oberst, the artistic director at the Serpentine Galleries, London, argues that there is a danger from ‘the power of homogenisation’ of

globalisation. He summarizes that ‘things start to look the same. Local voices disappear if [culture is] just an import.’ However, he also argues that ‘if there’s a hybridisation it could be fascinating’ (cited in Batty 2012, p.2). But the Emirate is not seeking the hybridisation, they are seeking the replication by putting millions of dollars into initiatives to emulate the art scenes found in New York and London (Farhat in McClellan 2012, p. 287). As Wrenn (2014, p. 506) argues,

> *Globalisation and neoliberalism are ambivalently invoked, as opportunities to attract, expand the domains of power, economy, and local influence of the nation-state, or on the contrary, as threats to cultural values and the basic local and societal identity in the shadow of ideologies and assimilative processes of the free market.*

This cross-border opening up has contributed to creating economic and political opportunities for cultural institutions that have worked to reshape the nation's cultural production. The government of the UAE has provided the infrastructure for cultural production, media cities, and media-free zones in a number of cities in Abu Dhabi and Dubai, and financial and logistical resources have been provided, however most of these services are provided to the global film industry which contributes to the marginalisation of local filmmakers who have no platforms and means. Therefore, images and identity have been formed by outsider expatriates to suit the orientations of the cultural institutions in the globalised market.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

This thesis and the accompanying documentary film have proven that in the context of interactions with global markets and regulatory institutions, cities, regions, and countries seek to gain competitiveness around the world. In the era of neoliberalism, many cities tend to reshape their culture and identity to match their competitiveness in the global market. Many of the impediments to globalisation associated with the formation of an open economy, cross-border flows, foreign investments, and creative innovations are the basic supports of innovative strategies that must be realised and effectively implemented to promote and sustain the economy by leading countries.

Through the competition between cities to consolidate their position on a global scale, culture has become a major driver of urban economic development of cities and an entrenched feature of the neoliberal political agenda. The film industry and its activities are central to these cultural products and serve as a window to the visual reconstruction of a place. The industry and its activities play a vital role in shaping the awareness of political, economic, and social issues, and they influence individuals' perceptions of states, attitudes, issues, and global events (Dudo et al., 2011). They also protect cultural sovereignty, despite the fact that transnational neoliberal phenomena overwhelm the nation-state. Investors see film and the media as promotional tools to differentiate themselves from competitors because they represent the place and its features. Cultural products are part of subsuming the local and regional. They are part of this interaction and reconfiguration between local, regional and global. Cultural products no longer represent, as it were, the inherent output of people or groups of communities (Treffry-Goatley, 2010). These products are shaped to give a global

face to a specific nation or community. The cultural products are the way that ideology is created and presented; not only in the economy but also in the way we live.

The UAE is an ideal case in investigating the use of cinema for branding and soft power in the context of neoliberalism. This soft power, through cinema, attracts tourists, international investment, and new residents to the UAE, but also encourages the projection of the UAE around the world as a desirable symbol of progress and modernity. The UAE is a country with a high level of government control over public spaces. This enables the government to work with inward-looking Western investment in cinema not only as economic diversification, but as a strategy to reshape what it means to be an Emirati. Therefore, the Emirati government or institutions re-work the concept of the Emirati identity not within the local context, but in the international context.

Neoliberal ideology serves as a useful conceptual lens through which to understand and analyse the naturalness of Emirati cultural products that have characterized Dubai and Abu Dhabi as a trademark over the past decade. The concept of cultural neoliberalism may have wide applications in the field of cultural studies, but there is a gap in criticism of neoliberalism or recognition of its specific area in developing countries such as the Arabian Gulf in the Middle East. Neoliberalism does not necessarily work the same way in the Arabian Gulf in the Middle East as it does in Western economics and society, although these societies in the Middle East are trying to define who they are and how they can be part of this global competition economically and politically.

This research attempted to address the gap in transcending the idealistic examples that much prior research focused on in the place branding in developed countries, with Hollywood as American soft power and brand. However, this research concluded that investing in place branding as a soft power through cinema in emerging cities in the Middle East and the Arabian Gulf, like Dubai and Abu Dhabi, is to reinvent and represent city images, not only to promote places but to achieve political and economic goals that are appropriate to countries' orientations.

Although many cultural initiatives and cultural products characterised Dubai and Abu Dhabi in the cultural field, especially the film industry, the changes and crises that the UAE underwent during the twenty-first century contributed to a major event. It is hard to imagine that the neoliberal philosophy that has distinguished Abu Dhabi and Dubai over the past decade will remain with the same confidence in the future. From the global economic crisis in 2008 until the Covid-19 pandemic, these crises have not left Dubai and Abu Dhabi unscathed. Things seem to be in a messy state of change, with seemingly contradictory assurances coming out regularly from government institutions.

However, after what I have been arguing within this research and the accompanying film, the current consensus of belief in the neoliberal order and cultural institutions building the Emirati identity and culture is not surprising. These institutions have always allied themselves with global interests at the expense of local interests, and they have adopted an ideology of global culture. The economic crisis threatens this neoliberal system and pressures the UAE state to find solutions to review its global image and improve its reputation. These institutions can be expected to double in the use of film co-production as a means of recovering from the

crisis. In the near future at least, the films presented in this research and the accompanying film are likely to remain important to the interests of Emirati cultural institutions and will continue to fit the archaeological elements of neoliberal ideology into their identity.

In this research my argument proceeds from the latest developments in the analysis of neoliberalism from an anthropological perspective. Theories based on neoliberalism have been confounded in recent decades by the different ways that the different parts of the global economy have responded to major challenges through a 'package of policies, ideologies, and political interests' (Hoffman et al, 2006, p. 9). Instead of focusing on the meaning of neoliberalism, as some studies tend, it is better to look at the way in which this ideology affects local structures and symbolic contexts. How do 'local filmmakers' negotiate within neoliberal regimes in developing countries? Few scholars look at neoliberalism in emerging nations. Aihwa Ong (2007), who focuses most of his research on East Asian countries, considers that states such as Singapore or Dubai are liberal states par excellence that contributed to using their flexible citizens in their transformation and building their identities and cultural dependencies on neoliberal foundations. However, the UAE and the Arab Gulf states, including Dubai and Abu Dhabi, differ in their economic and political nature.

The overriding concern of the leadership of the UAE and the Gulf states is to differentiate themselves from the rest of the world, and thus the focus was on developing the use of the neoliberal system in line with political and economic trends. It gained its distinction not because of its Arab and Islamic background but gained its importance as a central economy due to the importance of oil. Thus, the focus on the efforts of the place brand vision for these states was to define themselves internationally as ideal models for a new brand of

authoritarian state capitalism, supported by state-owned entities and led by profit in the neoliberal market. The reliable economic image that decision makers in these institutions wish to represent and expand the range of potential clients from investors is very important to their economies. Therefore, these cities are trying to distinguish their brand even though they are located in an arid environment and in a harsh climate of difficult geopolitics.

The United Arab Emirates and the Gulf states have limited resources excluding hydrocarbon, and thus they compete strongly in the field of economic diversification. As a result, this competition is reflected in the attempt to differentiate themselves through cultural production 'cinema' and create a competitive identity. As Anholt states (2007), these cities create 'a combination of brand' management and diplomacy that is related to trade, tourism, investment and export promotion (p.22).

Therefore, this study can be applied to Arabian Gulf cities as the region is similar in its social, economic and political fabric. They are not only similar in their trends of modernisation, they are unique in their unique geographical context, history, influence of traditional Arab, Islamic and cultural heritage, resistance to colonialism, and also in the unprecedented importance of oil. All these countries and cities in the Arabian Gulf enter a competition to change their branding management strategies and practices in the neoliberal market to become nationally or internationally recognised. According to Short (2013), in light of globalisation based on neoliberalism, 'As the world flattens, cities in many different countries enter into greater international competition, whether they attract corporate power and financial focus, encourage industrialization, or boost tourism' (p. 41). Doha, like other Gulf cities, exploits the cultural sector, such as film festivals, and international film co-production, hosting the World Cup

2022, and invests in global sport clubs. Therefore, these cities and countries in the Arabian Gulf view the place branding as a national plan that contributes to shaping their identity and culture and interacts with its neoliberal strategy.

There is a lack of studies focusing on the relationship between cultural production and identity in the Arab region and especially in the Arabian Gulf countries, particularly studies on film festivals, a topic that requires more attention from researchers. More research should be carried out, not only to understand them but also to analyse their impact and role in the development of cultural production and filmmaking in the Arab region. The question of identity through cultural production and the challenge of that identity because of globalisation and neoliberalism are among the topics that need a great focus from researchers in film studies. It is a reassessment of the relationship between identity and filmmaking and the study of filmmaking in the context of neoliberalism. This approach to the Emiratis is relevant to Saudi Arabia, which is rebranding itself through vision 2030 in all areas including political, economic, military, and socially, but doing so with emphasis in the neoliberal system. This approach is also appropriate for Qatar, which has always been proud of being a pioneer in Gulf cultural production through Al-Jazeera and hosting the 2022 World Cup but finds itself in a conflicting political situation and political crisis with its neighbours the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

5.1 Postscript: a reflection on the issues raised

Reading *The Clash of Civilizations*, 1993, and how Samuel P. Huntington argues that future wars will not be between nations, but between cultures remined me of some of the issues raised in this research. The conflict between "West versus the rest" (Said Clash, p. 366) and

how the cultural conflict between human beings will be between eastern and western especially after 9/11. While looking at the cultural changes in the last decade and with the rapid acceleration in the economic development of the Gulf countries and the changes that the region is witnessing culturally, culture has become a concern of governments in the Arab Gulf, especially in the United Arab Emirates, with the spread of cultural competition shaping the cultural identity of the place. Through events, festivals, and unlimited governmental support for cultural activities, the government spent the accumulated wealth from the hydrocarbon industries, to create a set of educational and cultural infrastructures charged with working to achieve the required developmental milestones, in the end, building national identity and culture (Mirgani, 2020). Cultural production has become one of the most important pillars of the Emirati economic and political vision for the year 2030.

Through focusing on “reflexive ethnography”, I tried to position myself as a researcher, while at the same time using the lens of the "filmmaker" to understand these phenomena and variables. On reflection, the challenges facing the United Arab Emirates in the 21st Century become clear. These range from national identity, religious tensions, existentialism, ethnicity, and gender; social factors such as tribal and local customs; the relationship between the government, the sponsor, and the client; religious and cultural tolerance. This is a foreboding list for such a young nation.

I also reflect on the important role of cultural production in shaping the national identity and implementing the agenda of the government. Cultural production, especially filmmaking and media production, has greatly influenced the daily life and politics in the United Arab Emirates and its neighbours in the Gulf states (Foley 2010), as these products contribute to

building imaginary societies that contribute to rapid economic and political growth. Cultural production forced the government to face various cultural, environmental, political, and economic changes in the 21st Century. Government-owned cultural institutions worked to implement government visions by shaping films, television programs, and other cultural products that fit these aspirations for the social and cultural change of the place.

The national identity is a source of concern for the Emirati government and Emirati citizens in light of the accelerating modernity in the region, in schools the Emirati flag and national anthem are raised, the pictures of rulers in public spaces, offices, and advertisements on highways. The political structure of the UAE means the cultural institutions monopolize the production of identity discourse work to produce television and radio advertisements and glorify the nation's achievements and its accelerated modernity. Outdoor and television ads presenting Bedouin, camels and falcons are juxtaposed with glassy towers and luxury cars. Television and cinema in the UAE are both dominated by imported visual content, with the former broadcasting Egyptian programming and the latter being dominated by Hollywood, Bollywood, and Egyptian movies. In markets and malls, the visual identity of clothes and distinctive symbols are influenced by international cultures, the kandura is replaced by jeans, and the design of women's abaya has acquired various formal changes. Local films and daily series do not tell stories from within the Emirati community, as the visual content raises awkward questions as to whether there is a social connection to the local Emirati identity.

In completing this research, I could clearly see a clash of contrasting identities between a heterogeneous local culture and inflows of workers and capital and the attendant conflict between Arab, Islamic, or global neoliberal identities. The great economic and cultural growth

and social change have led to the emergence of questions about the effects of these conflicts on the local identity and how Emirati filmmakers who participate indirectly in this cultural formation of the place, the restrictions and difficulties they face in shaping their local image and identity in the face of the governmental cultural institutions they run Foreigners, and the effect this has on formulating their local stories. They are the implementers or narrator of the official government narrative. Hence, they create a story that represents and reflects their understanding of the Emirati identity. I can foresee that the gulf between an idealised national identity and the official narratives emerging from government will continue to be evident through the experiences of the filmmakers active in the UAE.

It seems that the cultural institutions responsible for shaping the local narrative are all isolated to create an identity as if it were a kind of trademark that keeps pace with this modernity and openness. The institution determines the culture and the ruling elite what the national identity is supposed to be. The success of this national identity is only complete with the participation of members of society and filmmakers. Consequently, those who are collaborating in drafting this narrative must be supported to form an ideal national identity, and those who do not conform to this narrative must be marginalized through government censorship of content or their incompatibility with financial support allocated to the local content industry in festivals.

Finally, it is interesting to reflect on how the phenomena examined in this dissertation, particularly the central issue of the role of film in place branding in a neoliberal context, would develop under different circumstances. Specifically, I ask myself, in circumstances where the UAE did not have the geological ‘blessing’ that has seen it awash with petro-dollars for sixty years, how would this branding and the cultural infrastructure that supports it, be

possible? Should we ask, what will happen when the oil (and gas) runs out? In fact, this is probably the wrong question to be asking. It is certainly true that there has been a major investment in cultural infrastructure that has accelerated place branding strategies but there are two main reasons to conclude that current trends and policies are likely to continue. Firstly, and not least, the UAE is set to continue to be a significant net exporter of oil and gas for perhaps another 150 years. Secondly, as Dubai has shown, the creation of thriving city destinations is possible without reliance on a huge oil sector.

In fact, recent history has already shown the likely effect of economic pressures on place branding and the neoliberal project in the UAE and wider Gulf Region. In particular, the UAE is particularly vulnerable to changes in the price of oil. Moribund oil demand/prices could easily lead to UAE exporting oil at below fiscal break even (The Economist, 2020) starving the country of its funds for continued investment. The global economy could see reduced demand as importing economies switch away from fossil fuels to achieve their climate change obligations and take increasing advantage of their green energy infrastructure (The Economist, 2020). The UAE has already experienced fluctuating oil revenues notably in 2016 and while government expenditure may need to be periodically reigned in, recent experience is that non-oil GDP growth tends to be unaffected (Mahmah & Kandil, 2019). My sense is that the rapid pace of investment and innovation may have peaked but having reached many of its original objectives in an unusually short period, the general trends and direction of travel will remain the same.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

The Emirati Identity before 2000

The original UAE identity comes from the notion of nomadic leadership. It is a form of social organisation that preceded the state, as it guaranteed the social and political organisation of people distributed across the vast lands required for the nomadic nomads, as these tribes are spread in a wide range of geographical environments such as the Arab peoples in North Africa and the Arab peninsula (Alshawi and Gardner, 2013).

The Emirati identity has since undergone many changes and events that have contributed greatly to its reshaping in the face of changing political, economic, and cultural formations in the region and the world under the pressures of globalisation and neoliberalism. The 1950s and 1960s were a period of negotiating change in the region as the Trucial tribes sought to form a nation under Bedouin leadership.

In the context of the Gulf societies, Bedouin tribes are often distinguished as a class within society where their roots go back to centuries past. The relationship between rulers and people is part of the policy of spreading tribal powers by making them part of the government system and relying on it; often Bedouin tribes have a distinction of class within society (Gause, 1994; Gleissner, 2012). The history of the states is seen as tribal because those who come from a Bedouin family are closer to the ruling class. Since the founding of the Emirates, the rulers were nomads, and their tribes were considered indigenous. (Gleissner, 2012). Anh Nga Longva notes that in the national context, tribes have loyalty to rulers and the state (2006),

Since the tribal system is decided by alliances between tribes, not by blood ties (Dale Eickelman, 1981). Gause (1994) writes that rulers of the Gulf States,

> *... encourage their subjects to think of themselves as tribesmen in a political system whose chain of loyalties culminates in the king, amir, or sultan. They dispense patronage through tribal leaders, according them a place of influence in the political system and reinforcing tribal identification among those who eventually receive that patronage. (p.26.)*

This reflects the national ideology that reinforces the belief that the ruling classes are legitimate because of their nomadic tribal background. This includes genealogy purity, based on their mere tribal idea. Gause argues

> *... the ruling families and inherently the tribes they belonged to initially used the tribal connections to justify their rule, and then made sure to neutralize the influences of tribes. Through the constitution and government institutions they ensured that the future of the Federation depended on their families. (cited in Gleissner, 2012, p. 43).*

Therefore, the future of the federation in the Emirates depended on their families. The rulers of the Emirates confirmed their claim by building cultural infrastructure, media and cinema, health, education, and other sponsorship benefits that ensured the prosperity of the citizens of the United Arab Emirates based on a tribal local identity.

There was an interaction between self and different notions; the interaction with the Arab identity that was promoted by Nasserism, and with the British presence. There was the growing factor of American "imperialism" and hegemony and the competing political

pressures through interaction with Saudi politics. All these factors came to reshape the economic, political, and cultural identity of the United Arab Emirates alongside the discovery of oil and its economic changes.

The reconfiguration of the UAE was also driven by globalisation and adhered to the principles of neoliberalism. Within this reconfiguration cultural products became part of the negotiations. Cultural products, cultural institutions and individuals use the creative process to visually represent and give meaning to the newly evolved identity and brand of the place.

Arab Nationalism and colonial influences

Certainly, the prevailing social discourse cannot be examined without the political and economic context that resulted from it, especially since this is necessary to communicate with those outside the borders. Therefore, the UAE was greatly affected by competing ideologies in the region through the media and cultural agents.

Cultural initiatives in the late 1950s in the Gulf, were an attempt to forge a pan-Arab nationalism. This attempt had a political goal to unite Arab states into a single entity and was led by Gamal Abdel Nasser, the Egyptian president. This political ambition envisaged a single identity built around the Arab language and on the representation of Arabs. Arab media, notably Egyptian cinema, promoted concepts and ideology for a Pan Arab entity behind national borders. Cultural products played an important role in the dialogue between the concepts of the self and the different societies, through the conflict between tribal society affected by British policy and Arab nationalism. The Trucial States and other states in the gulf had no cultural production such as local media to impose a dominant ideology, and the media

was imported - often from Egypt. Egypt had the political and economic power and desire to dominate the region through cultural products. Through cinema, and media such as newspapers and radio broadcasts, Nasserism became the dominant discourse.

Until 1971 the Trucial states were protectorates of British India, even using the rupee as the de facto currency until 1969. This status gave a relatively high degree of independence and administration was left to the ruling families. With British encouragement hereditary sheikdoms were consolidated. These sheikdoms depended on the colonial power for the development of infrastructure the political system and the economy. To protect their interests in the Trucial States during the 1950s and 1960s, British agents worked to strengthen the position of the Trucial States and their administrative bodies to secure the position of the rulers. In turn, the rulers worked to establish a united country, especially after the discovery of oil at the end of the 1950s. It became one of the largest oil producers in the Middle East. This newly discovered oil wealth enabled the states and the rulers to work toward independence from the British. Therefore, the states allied to establish the United Arab Emirates creating a single political and economic entity.

Regional threats

During the first decades as a nation-state, the United Arab Emirates worked on a policy of preserving its national security and external relations to ensure its safety and the survival of its domestic and foreign policy, especially with regard to its Saudi neighbours and Iran, who pose a threat to its unity. UAE had a border dispute with Saudi Arabia with lead to the latter trying to block the newly-formed UAE's attempts to join the Arab League the United Nations. Ultimately, Saudi Arabia recognised the UAE at the end of 1974, which was an important step to consolidate foreign political relations with the countries of the region.

Iran also posed a serious threat to the UAE, and in 1971 Iran seized the Abu Musa Islands and the Tunb Islands after the British Empire's garrison forces left these areas in the same year (Al-Mazrouei, 2015). The Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, and the takeover of the Grand Mosque in Mecca in the same year, led to a threat to the Gulf states and their rulers (Salisbury, 2020). There has been an ongoing threat from Iran through a number of attacks on UAE, Saudi, and international oil tankers in the Gulf waters.

These threats were not confined to neighbouring countries, but also through religious and national ideological threats by Arab and socialist nationalism that fought in previous decades, and from political Islam (Sadjadpour, 2011). At the same time, efforts within the Gulf focused on the tribal concepts of society seeking integration into a single set of institutions. This Arab movement was not focused on a pan-Arab identity, but the ideas of tribe promoted by government and institutions.

Perhaps the most significant difference towards foreign and internal affairs of the UAE between its early years led by Sheikh Zayed Al Nahyan, and its current position led by Khalifa bin Zayed and his brother, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed, which is a feeling of self-confidence and the ambition to competitive global market of a new generation living in a very troubled region.