Cities of the Persian Gulf display themselves as exceptional in cosmopolitanism, architectural reach, and futuristic capacities. Critics, in turn, stress environmental backwardness, radical inequality and cultural dependence. The aim of this international seminar (and of the edited book from which it springs) is to show what Gulf cities can substantively teach: how world places connect to one another through new patterns of real estate investment, design, and human migration. Experts, problems, and putative solutions circulate to the Gulf and out of it. We can learn by attending to such Gulf trends that – for better or worse, and however inconsistent with prior analytic paradigms – are now ascendant in other world regions.

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