

National Pavilion UAE's exhibition at the 2018 Venice Biennale will explore the interplay of architecture and social life across four UAE urban landscapes

- *Lifescapes Beyond Bigness* will delve into the relationship between the built environment and everyday life in "human-scale" UAE landscapes
- The exhibition examines four typologies: residential neighborhoods; networks of streets and sikkak (alleyways); urban blocks; and natural spaces
- It will feature a series of photographs, typological maps, graphs of behavioural data, architectural drawings, case studies, and three-dimensional models
- The accompanying publication includes research materials and essays from eight scholars and professionals
- Curator Dr. Khaled Alawadi is an Emirati architect and urban planner, and Assistant Professor of Sustainable Urbanism at Abu Dhabi's Masdar Institute

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Lifescapes Beyond Bigness, the National Pavilion UAE's exhibition at the 2018 Venice Biennale, will reveal hidden scenes of everyday life in the UAE across four "human-scale" urban landscapes. Opening on 24 May 2018, the exhibition will highlight the interplay between the built environment and the dynamism of informal social life through images, technical drawings, maps and three-dimensional models.

The exhibition and accompanying publication examine four urban typologies, including: residential neighborhoods (Al Satwa and Al Shorta in Dubai and Baniyas in Abu Dhabi); networks of streets and sikkak (Deira and Bur Dubai in Dubai and Downtown Abu Dhabi); urban blocks (Al Zahya, Al Danah, Al Dhafrah, and Al Zaab in Abu Dhabi); and natural landscapes (Al Mutaredh Oasis and Jebel Hafeet in Al Ain).

The exhibition's curator, Dr. Khaled Alawadi, is an Emirati architect and urban planner, and Assistant Professor of Sustainable Urbanism at Abu Dhabi's Masdar Institute, part of Khalifa University of Science and Technology.

He and his research team have used various spatial mapping and observation techniques to document and analyze the physical characteristics, morphology and social rhythm of the four typologies. Case studies and detailed personal stories offer insight into the anthropology of each research site.

Dr. Khaled Alawadi says: "*Lifescapes Beyond Bigness* is an effort to look beyond the monumental scale of the UAE's most iconic architecture, and instead invite visitors to experience its humane and under-celebrated landscapes. These human-scale 'quotidian landscapes' are socially oriented, rather

than being confined by bigness in architecture and urban planning. The exhibition explores how human scale landscapes are flexible, generous, and adaptable in the promotion of community engagement, social encounters, and pedestrian urbanism, from impromptu playgrounds to street-corner gardens.”

Khulood Khaldoon Al Atiyat, Manager of Arts, Culture and Heritage at the Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation, commissioner of the National Pavilion UAE, says: “The late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the UAE’s founding father, believed that urban planning should support happiness and social cohesion by putting people at the heart of development. In line with the 2018 Year of Zayed, *Lifescapes Beyond Bigness* honors his vision for the nation. The Emirates are home to many different ways of life, and Dr. Alawadi’s important research engages with this diversity to celebrate humanity and spontaneity.”

Opening on 24 May 2018, *Lifescapes Beyond Bigness* will present the simplicity of lifescapes in these hidden urban pockets through three main exhibition components.

Exhibition Design

Two C-shaped enclosures made of vertical steel bars encapsulate the exhibition space and content, and act as walls displaying the exhibition’s two-dimensional media including: a series of site photos, portraits, time-lapse images and case studies of everyday life. Graphs of behavioral data, typological maps and technical drawings highlight how the physical environment of each site influences daily social activities.

Within the enclosed environment, suspended at the exhibition’s core, a mosaic of three-dimensional scale models will allow visitors to experience the form and morphological details of the four typologies.

Publication

The accompanying publication will delve into the insights and findings from the exhibition research in more detail, addressing each of the four typologies in four core chapters. The concluding chapter reflects on the importance of human scale in urban design. Edited by Dr. Khaled Alawadi, the book tells an eloquent and inspiring narrative of the Emirates’ unique form of urbanism, revealing hidden sites and everyday stories.

Each chapter starts with a theoretical introduction to the subject at hand and then delves into case studies, including essays from eight contributors who are respected scholars and professionals in the field, and research materials designed and investigated by Dr. Alawadi and his research team.

The 16th International Architecture Exhibition of the Venice Biennale will take place from 26 May to 25 November 2018 (preview 24 – 25 May), under the theme of *Freespace*. The Biennale’s curatorial direction has been set by Yvonne Farrell and Shelley McNamara of Grafton Architects, and each National Pavilion will respond to their overall aim to reveal the capacity of architecture to connect with history, time, place, and people.

The National Pavilion UAE - La Biennale di Venezia is commissioned by the Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation, and supported by the UAE Ministry of Culture and Knowledge Development.

Dr. Khaled Alawadi

The first UAE national scholar to specialize in the design of sustainable cities, Dr. Alawadi is Assistant Professor of Sustainable Urbanism at the Masdar Institute in Abu Dhabi, part of Khalifa University of Science and Technology, where he founded the MSc. in Sustainable Critical Infrastructure program. He is a trained architect, planner and urban designer whose research is devoted to urban design, housing and urbanism, especially the relationships between the built environment and sustainable development.

Dr. Alawadi recently served as Visiting Assistant Professor at MIT's Center for Advanced Urbanism, and previously worked as an architect for Dubai Municipality and as an Assistant Professor at UAE University.

He holds a PhD in Community and Regional Planning from the University of Texas at Austin.

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