

## The Architect's Bargain: Building the "Bilbao Effect" in the Abu Dhabi desert

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Abu Dhabi's aspirations to define its own brand of modernity are—somehow paradoxically—premised on the adoption of a white European middle-class aesthetics as a metaphorical bridge between the Arab and Western worlds, and between tradition and future. Indexing the State's representational politics and labor regimes, architecture is both symbol and enabler in this arrangement. Drawing from ethnographic and historical sources, this paper explores how the production of architecture and the socio-technical and political landscapes of the Emirate are related: how do expatriate architects, BIM specialists, and subcontractors invested in the construction of the Emirate's flagship architectural visions confront, and make sense of, this problematic context? What do the streams of data they produce say about this world of architectural production? In Abu Dhabi, three vectors—software infrastructures, urban arrangements, and political bargains—converge into a disciplining project to govern—and govern by—a plurality of representational and building practices.

### Biography:

Daniel Cardoso-Llach is an architect and academic interested in social and political aspects of technology in design. His forthcoming book *Builders of the Vision*, based on his MIT dissertation, re-specifies software as cultural infrastructures mediating the production of the built environment (Routledge 2015). He is assistant professor at Penn State.