Mega projects in the Arab World: A reading Through Operators of Conception and Engineering

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The presentation

Is based on - a preliminary work in the context of a PHD research

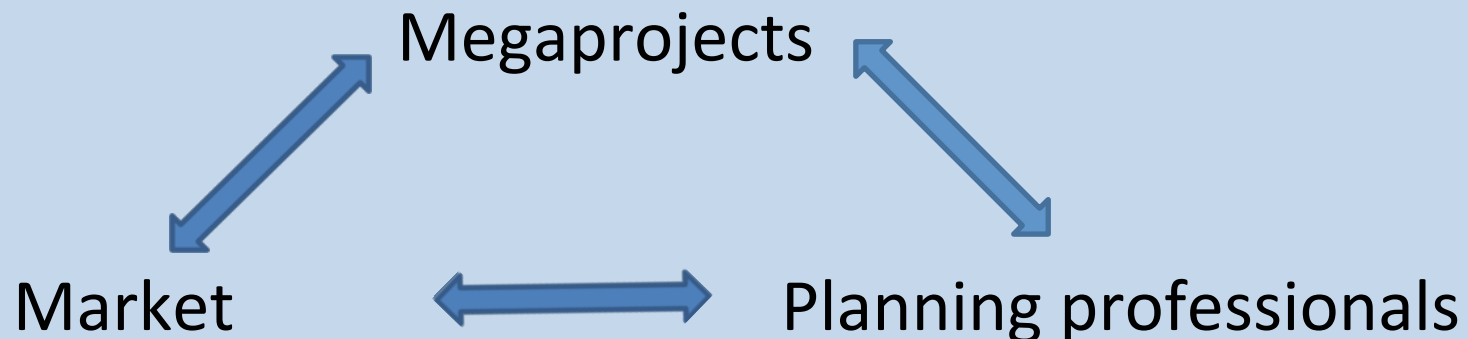- first-hand experience: 3 years designing Megaprojects

Context:

- Emergence of a new trend in Arabic world; megaprojects with unprecedented size and implementation procedures.

- Major role of the real estate market in creating the command, shaping the projects and influencing the planning professionals

- Emergence of the megaprojects tightly related to mega International engineering and consultancy companies

The Pearl-Qatar, Qatar

Questions

- What are the context factors instigating such projects?
- To what extents the planning professionals are shaping these megaprojects?
- Are the professionals practices influenced by the market requirements?

Argument: The market is modifying the planning professionals practices who are adopting a procedural framework – tools and practices- characterized by a lack of theoretical references, flexibility and prioritizing the market exigencies.

Megaprojects

Market ⟷ Planning professionals

Context: The Arab World

- Not a homogeneous block; differences in context between cities
- Witnessed a rapid growth
- Searching for a role at the international level

Megaprojects: definition and History

Large projects: area – targeted population- cost- high level of technology- complicated procedure- large number of professionals and stakeholders.
Integrated procedure: single operator – entire production chain

Megastructures movement in 60s; first megaprojects (ex Tokyo Bay extension by Kenzo Tange)
First megaprojects characterized by rationality and integration to context and local needs.

International Mega engineering and consultancy companies

- Integrated approach from conception, technical details, implementation, management…
- Implanted worldwide through big numbers of offices and professionals especially Middle east and North Africa
- Multitude of disciplines, nationality and background
- Fierce competition in searching for projects command
- Companies marketing: through revenues, ranking, portfolio etc.

	offices	professionals	turnover (in millions $)
HOK	25	1800	470
Dar el Handassa	40	6500	1600
AECOM	**510**	45000	2000
ATKINS	300	**17500**	8000

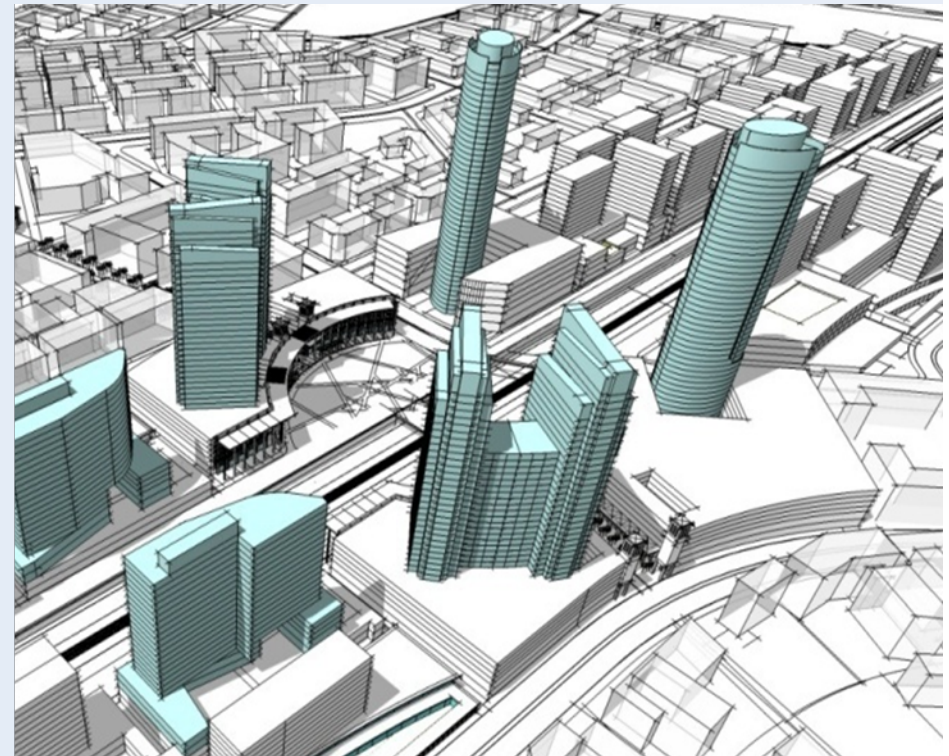Study Case: <u>KEC Knowledge Economic City</u> by <u>Dar el Handasah</u>

Dar:

- Multidisciplinary company
- Projects in Middle East and North Africa
- Planning department with 20 professionals founded in 70s

KEC- Saoudi Arabia
New Town
860 ha
Population 230.000
Mixed Use program

The client and the command:

-    Project started with HOK

-    Program and main projects elements predefined

-    Main decisions taken by the client

-    Client consultant: AECOM

The company procedural framework: mobilized references

- lack of models or theoretical references

- adaptation to client vision

- Country norms and standards only limited to public facilities

- LEED as norms requested by the client as an added value.

- limitation of professionals contribution

Tools and Images Circulation

- Anticipation and pragmatic tools: alternatives and benchmarking

- Importance of visual communication: perspectives, videos, models

- A certain level of exaggeration and unrealism

- Tools for 'urban marketing'?

- Leading to an 'urban utopias market'?

Conclusion

- In a context of predominance of the market requirements, what role remains to the planning profession? Is it reduced to Client vision validation?

- Is 'Dubaisation' become a trade, exported by Dubai-based contractors to surrounding countries, where city utopias are circulated as **products in a real estate market**?

- To what limits, this context is a laboratory of urban and architectural experimentation? Is it the only Place where unordinary ideas can become real?

-in the absence of high technological performance, will these projects still take place? And to what extents sustainability is taken in consideration in a highly non renewable energy-based context?

Thank you