Migration and Diversity
July 2023
Volume: 2, No: 2, pp. 181 – 200
ISSN: 2753-6904 (Print) ISSN: 2753-6912 (Online)
journals.tplondon.com/md

TRANSNATIONAL PRESS® LONDON

Received: 10 November 2022 Accepted: 7 January 2023
DOI: https://doi.org/10.33182/md.v2i2.2866

The Golden Visa: Anatomy of making a long-term home in the UAE[1]

Emina Osmandzikovic[2]

Abstract

While traditionally governed by the 'kafala' system of sponsorship for non-nationals, the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have diversified their visa portfolios in the past few years, in line with rising global trends. The launch of the Golden Visa in the UAE has marked a historic shift in the way the country approaches its non-national community. Building this research on the novel aspirations-capabilities nexus within the often-overlooked lifestyle migration theoretical corpus, I unpack the short-term impact of changing residency policies on the UAE's Golden Visa recipients – medium- and high-skilled non-nationals from various backgrounds and industries. I employ semi-structured interviews with twenty-five recipients. My research inquiry finds that, while it does not provide a structural break in the whole-of-life approach to UAE's non-residents, the Golden Visa does, indeed, act as an enabler of its recipients' capabilities to fulfil their long-term aspirations and (re)construct their desired life(style) in the country. Hereby, this research dampens the paucity of inquiry on the backend processes before and after obtaining the Golden Visa through the lens of lifestyle migration, making a new mark on the GCC-focused literature as well.

Keywords: Lifestyle migration; golden visa; international migration

Introduction

It is a widely understood truism that migration is a key factor in the reshaping of individuals, families and entire communities throughout the contemporary world. As a global epitome of diversity and within a massive developmental drive towards modernity, the United Arab Emirates (henceforth 'the UAE') has held its doors open to foreign nationals of all backgrounds even before the discovery of oil in the early decades of the previous century. It can perhaps be deemed as a new world for many of those who came and stayed.

With the unification of the seven emirates into the modern-day UAE in 1971, the key to coming, living and potentially thriving in the country has been granted to millions of people,

[1] This research would not have been possible without Professor Peirre-Marie Chauvin, and Dr Clio Chaveneau. I would also like to extend my gratitude towards Professor Laurence Louer whose class on Gulf Studies has provided me with very insightful additions to my literature review and theoretical approach. I would also like to thank all of my interviewees without whom this paper would not be possible. Their stories and personal journeys have served as my greatest inspiration.

[2] Emina Osmandzikovic, Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. E-mail: eminaosmandzik@gmail.com

many of whom are often referred to as 'expatriates' or 'expats'. For millions of the country's non-nationals – of all skill levels, the primary way of regulating pre-arrival, arrival and residency in the UAE has been tied to their respective employment. With no long-term or permanent visa options and no clear path to citizenship, renewable visas had acted as the primary regulation pillar for non-nationals and their families.

With the demand for foreigners to fulfil developmental goals of the country, the job-based residency galvanized the rise of a modern, job-based economy for more than 200 nationalities residing in the UAE (Al Zeyoudi, 2022). With the introduction of long-term residency options, Golden Visa being the most prominent among them, the UAE has entered a new phase in its immigration and residency system, paving the way forward from a job-based economy towards a talent-based society (Al Zeyoudi, 2022).

The Golden Visa is a renewable long-term visa that is granted for a period of five or ten years to four main categories of medium- to high-skilled non-nationals, including investors (business, real estate, entrepreneurs, executive directors, advisors), exceptional students (high school and university graduates), medical professionals and exceptional talents (artists and creatives, PhD holders in disciplines of special national interest, scientists, inventors and patent holders, researchers, journalists, educators, early childhood and child development specialists and others).

Symbolising more than just a structural break in the UAE's immigration and residency system, the Golden Visa also represents a unique framework for managing long-term residency, both in the GCC region and the world. It includes pre- and post-arrival policies with active campaigns on inviting exceptional professionals across the outlined categories to come and live in the UAE (UAE Goverenment, 2022). Hence, this research unpacks the ways in which Golden Visa holders navigate the new residency system and construct a sense of home in the UAE.

Literature review

Research on migration patterns in the GCC started at the onset of its rapid development and exponential population growth, as Andrzej Kapiszewski outlines in the early 2000s, calling the influx and employment of non-nationals a 'structural imperative' (2006, p. 2). However, while medium- to high-level migration has been somewhat circumvented, there is a plethora of contemporary research that primarily focuses on labour exploitation, migration push-and-pull factors and the ecosystem of migrants' remittances from and to the region, primarily circling around the lives and livelihoods of low-wage or domestic workers.

While there is some research that examines, for example, patterns across different socio-economic groups – including the UAE nationals – and distinguishes between different income brackets where non-nationals coming from the global West earn, on average, two to three times more than those coming from the Arab world (Al-Awad & Elhiraika, 2010), much of the research primarily focuses on the migration aspects of low-skilled non-nationals.

For instance, in his research on non-nationals' reasons for migration to the GCC, Andrew Gardner outlines three push-and-pull dimensions: (i) poverty and structural violence in the non-nationals' origin countries – as opposed to globally competitive wages in the GCC, (ii) misinformation and disinformation that shapes their decision to migrate – in addition to extra-economic considerations and family-level decisions, and (iii) the subsequent image that non-

nationals construct around their stay in the GCC (2012, p. 42). Another sub-set of such research has provided detailed insights into the lives of low-skilled non-nationals, especially those working in the construction industry, with a focus on labour conditions (Buckley, 2012; Kanna, 2011).

Regional migration scholars and experts confirm that there is disappointingly little ethnographic scholarship on Europeans and North Americans in the GCC (Vora, 2015). Moreover, discussions on migration in the GCC have traditionally and exclusively circled around labour migration with an acute focus on unskilled and/or low-skilled labour migration (AlShehabi, Histories of Migration to the Gulf, 2015), primarily from the global South[3].

Suffering from poor data-based evidence pertaining to the number of granted permits and the rate of visa renewals (Dito M. , 2015), among other variables, the last decade has witnessed a tide of change from the previous migration system configuration.

Herein, Mohammed Dito, argues that

> "the newly emergent mega-real estate projects [IMREP] highlight a marked shift in citizen-state-expatriate dynamics within the region" (2015: 101).

He further argues that expatriates have increasingly become consumers, investors, property and real estate owners, summarizing the shift in the perception towards their role in regional socio-economic development as "agents that animate the city" (2015: 101).

While attempting to encompass more than just low-skilled migrants in its analysis, such a binary approach sees migration shifts in the region as either negative due to the transitory nature of the migration system or unable to adopt change due to possible tensions with the native populations of the region's states.

This distinction between nationals and non-nationals is inherent in nearly all academic discussions of migration in the modern era of the GCC; however, the socio-economic development of the GCC member states has merited reconsidering the non-nationals' roles as "transcending pure labour considerations" (Dito M. , 2015, p. 111).

Building on the foundation of reformed real estate and land ownership policies, the next tide of changes came with economic reforms to move away from a job-based economy towards a talent-based society and a knowledge-based economy. Diversifying national economies away from dependency on oil revenues, GCC states have implemented several measures to boost their economic growth. One of the most important pillars of such measures is nurturing, garnering, attracting, and attaining talent. This has occurred due to several key factors:

Firstly, the migration phenomenon across high- and low-skilled segments has been a prominent and a constitutive part of the GCC states' upward curve of socio-economic development. Due to rapid urbanization of the region's mega-cities that have been catering to 'global citizens' from their very onset, the system as it existed was not able to incorporate

[3] The phrase "Global South" refers broadly to the regions of Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania. It is one of a family of terms, including 'Third World' and 'Periphery,' that denote regions outside Europe and North America, mostly (though not all) low-income and often politically or culturally marginalized (Dados & Connell, 2012). In the case of the GCC, the primary focus has been on South-East Asian countries; namely, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and the neighbouring states.

the diverse socio-economic strata of non-nationals. These changes, however, have been primarily resting on the wide-reaching shoulders of economic changes.

Secondly, there has been a purposeful drive towards diversification from oil across the region. Globally, the changed language from job-based economies to talent-based societies and knowledge economies (Hvidt, 2014; Tadros, 2015) has put an additional layer of change towards a new tide of migration shifts.

As stated earlier, migration as a process that encompasses a diverse plethora of all segments of non-nationals who make up the region's residents has been poorly studied by researchers and policymakers alike. Given the recent changes, migration laws and rhetoric have shifted towards a holistic approach to migration, attempting to re-label the previously known transit states into thriving places for global communities. Gallup called this transition a "success story" as early as a decade ago (Gallup, 2012).

After real estate investment, general business investor visas have been introduced. Broadly speaking, the corpus of these visas covers real estate and business investors, entrepreneurs, start-up founders and their executives and senior staff. Such visas had been made available prior to the release of the comprehensive Golden Visa scheme in the UAE.

Regarding the way the momentum of lifestyle migration has been converging with the country's pull-factors, the UAE has several appealing offers for transnational professionals, including the ability and possibility of affording a desired lifestyle, reflected through readily available services, ease of investment and doing business, e-government and no 'red tape', social opportunities, such as world-class healthcare and public spaces for a fulfilled family life, safety, global connectivity, and available skill-career matching.

While no literature covers the recent rise of the new visa schemes, as the most well-advertised and popularly known self-sponsorship residency schemes in the UAE, the Golden Visa not only represents a historic evolution of the regional migration system but also provides further contribution to the growth of lifestyle migration as a field and the locally specific confluence of push-and-pull factors that make people migrate and stay.

Theoretical perspective

Long studied within literature, one's preference on changing the place and the way they are living is usually studied through the lens of utility – what action and/or choice brings relatively greater benefit (Brown & Longbrake, 1970; Lieber, 1978; Adams & Adger, 2013). Other approaches examine the spatial dichotomy between individual versus family-/community-level choices, with a focus on labour migration (Mora & Taylor, 2006; Belloni, 2020). Such studies have also examined GCC-specific migration patterns, especially of low- and medium-skilled migrants, primarily from South-East Asia (Azeez & Begum, 2009).

There is a great paucity of research on the GCC that tackles migration of high-skilled migrants through the lifestyle lens of aspirations and capabilities, especially when it comes to understanding their choices of moving, staying and settling through their own testimonies.

Migration is often linked to a person's general life aspirations. In instrumental terms, migration is a tool to fulfil one's socio-economic and general life aspirations in a place where the desired lifestyle is (more easily) achievable. The lens of aspirations also allows a profound

analysis of the interplay between push and pull factors for those who migrate and reside outside of their origin country as a tool rather than an end-goal.

In his research on the role of aspirations in migration, Jorgen Carling argues that aspirations play a key role in determining migration in two interconnected ways.

> "People's general aspirations in life can be important factors that directly or indirectly affect migration. These could relate to happiness, wealth, security, or family formation, for instance" (2014, p. 2).

In turn, we can understand the term "migration aspirations" in the greater context of describing one's conviction that migration is desirable. On a macro-level, Carling tackles the question of why large numbers of people migrate, drawing from his research that aspirations towards a better life are the primary driver, regardless of the type of migration that people embark on. On a micro-level, according to Carling, one's aspirations can be understood as aspirations to migrate based on the belief that migration is preferable to non-migration – to fulfil their desired lifestyle. Arguably, among those who aspire to migrate, only a certain number will have the ability to do so (2014, p.3).

From a positivist perspective, aspirations can be thought of as specific types of attitudes. Positivist aspiration theory in lifestyle research focuses on the consequences of a divergence between aspired goals in terms of outcomes and the current state of one's wellbeing (Stutzer & Henne, 2014). The theory incorporates the fact that human beings are unable and unwilling to make absolute judgments as they constantly draw comparisons with their environment and/or expectations of the future. This is where the positivist understanding of aspirations takes its shape. Outcomes are then evaluated by one's deviation from these aspirations (Stutzer & Henne, 2014).

For other migration scholars, such as Carling, aspirations are well-established convictions that persist across specific situations, partially based on sentiments, experiences and (novel) opportunities. The underpinning of this paper is based on the notion of more durable aspirations that are not situation-specific but are rather long-term notions of one's goals for an ideal life(style).

Aspirations are particularly useful for lifestyle migration as they signify both the individual factors, such as educational attainment and employment, and contextual factors, such as quality of services, social benefits and security (Aslany, Carling, Mjelva, & Sommerfelt, 2020). The way aspirations are constructed, kept and reinvented are more profound, and therefore, more useful for this research than expectations and motivations. The former primarily focus on external factors whereas the latter focus on internal factors.

Moreover, the stability and longevity of one's aspirations have a spillover effect on post-migration residency and the fulfilment of the building blocks of said aspirations. This confluence is visible with the Golden Visa as it is a tool to both attract and retain talented professionals in the UAE. The other side of lifestyle migration are capabilities, perhaps better viewed as operationalization tools of aspirations.

More than seventy years ago, in the 1950s and 1960s, Theodore Schultz and Gary S. Becker introduced the concept of human capital to demonstrate how individuals' investment in themselves was analogous to firms' investments in physical capital. Just as firms decide to invest in new machinery to increase their production, individuals can invest in their own

education to gain future benefits. As such, human capital can be seen as a means of production – into which investment yields additional outputs (World Bank, 2016). This, in turn, outgrows a mere instrumental increase in financial opportunities. Schultz (1961) expanded on the meaning of investment to include all activities that improved an individual's skills and productivity, including through (i) health expenditures; (ii) on-the-job training; (iii) formal education; (iv) study programs for adults, such as agricultural extensions, and (v) migration (World Bank, 2016). These notions served to inform many of today's global indices that measure countries' level of human development.

Herein, migration is seen as one aspect of one's human capital; namely, the improvement of ability to fulfil the quest for a better life(style). In the context of lifestyle migration, capabilities operationalize aspirations in the process of one's move and settlement, even feeding into the migration nexus of push-and-pull factors. Hence, my research draws on the relationship between one's aspirations and capabilities with migration in order to understand where the UAE's Golden Visa is situated in one's quest for a better life(style).

As a fairly recent phenomenon in migration literature, lifestyle migration has developed as a way of thinking about some forms of migration, most often that of the relatively affluent and relatively privileged (Benson & O'Reilly, 2016). Within literature, lifestyle migration is broadly described as a search for a better life.

Lifestyle migrants can fall into several categories, ranging from those who make a permanent break with their home-country for personal, socio-economic, cultural, religious, political reasons, those trying to "find themselves" through an identity with a place (Benson & O'Reilly, 2016, p. 8), those who have become permanent "global wanderers" (Benson & O'Reilly, 2016, p. ix) and those seeking a better life.

While the literature on lifestyle migration has been rising in recent years, many scholars argue that the field remains poorly understood and too collectively conceptualized (Amit, 2007), as mentioned by Benson and O'Reilly, without the necessary nuance related to, for instance, regions and spatiality, and migration type.

Subsequently, the re-negotiation of the migrants' work-life balance interacts with the pull-factors of their respective destination country or community. Herein, lifestyle migration can be seen as "a search, a project which continues long after the initial act of migration (Benson & O'Reilly, 2016), constantly developing across space(s) and evolving over time. The understudied side of lifestyle migration is the uniqueness of the long-term interaction of factors of one's personal agency (choice, aspirations, capabilities, expectations) with pull-factors of the place that one chooses to settle in.

However, the core of lifestyle migration that is of interest to this research inquiry is far more complex than that. The seemingly obvious pursuit of the good life – a commonality between all types of migrants – must be examined through the lens of wider sociological, historical and material contexts. It reflects wider lifestyle choices that individual migrants have been making in the post-modern world daily.

As Anthony Giddens argues in his research on modernity and self-identity, although personalized quests for utopia have persisted for centuries, the recent increase in this phenomenon implies that it also emerges partly as a result of a reflexive assessment of opportunities that have only recently been made possible (1991), rather than a direct outcome

of socio-economic privilege. In other words, the process that enables individuals to realise their aspirations in the right context of capabilities has exponentially expanded in recent decades, making the foundations of what is known today as the field of lifestyle migration. With a focus on high-skilled migrants, the concept of lifestyle migration steers away from homogenizing migrants and attempts to capture migration as an analytical tool (Benson & O'Reilly, 2016) and an alternative way of thinking about the entire migration – and post-migration – process.

It is important to note that lifestyle migration is not intended to demarcate a particular group of migrants, but rather to provide an analytical framework for understanding some forms of migration and how they feature within identity-making, and considerations over how to live.

In the context of the UAE as a host country of such migrants, little is written or discussed about the reasons high-skilled non-nationals come, especially when it comes to examining the process from their points of view. This is why the Golden Visa provides an unprecedented opportunity to examine the process in a more nuanced way, in addition to giving them a needed voice.

Hence, I conceptualize migration, especially that of high-skilled migrants, as a function of agency-related aspirations and capabilities to migrate within given sets of perceived opportunity structures. I primarily draw from the work of Hein de Haas' aspirations-capabilities migration framework (2011), merging it with the foundations of economics-related concept of human capital.

While migration theory has been at an "impasse" for several decades (de Haas, A theory of migration: The aspirations-capabilities framework, 2021), human mobility remains being an intrinsic part of broader processes of social change.

Both historically dominant, functionalist, and historical-structural accounts of migration seem diametrically opposed in their understanding of migration, in terms both of its social causes and its consequences for the destination and the origin areas/countries. However, what both paradigms have in common is a general inability to provide a meaningful understanding of human agency through their portrayal of migrants either as rather soulless individual utility-optimisers or as rather passive victims of global capitalist forces (de Haas, 2011). Moreover, this lack of focus also underpins a lack of nuance in distinguishing between different drivers of agency for different socio-economic categories of migrants.

Further, migratory agency has been poorly captured by booth global and regional migration literature, failing to meaningfully conceptualise how migrants exercise agency within broader structural constraints.

Hein De Haas defines migratory agency as

> "The ability to make independent choices and to impose these on the world and, hence, to alter the structures that shape and constrain people's opportunities or freedoms" (2021, p. 14).

The framework explains why social transformation or 'development' is initially associated with increasing migration levels (de Haas, 2007; de Haas, Migration and Development: A theoretical perspective, 2010).

Particularly if certain regions or countries transform from

> "a low-income, agrarian and peripheral status to a middle-income, industrialising and urbanising status, migration aspirations and capabilities both tend to increase rapidly, explaining the paradox of development-driven migration booms" (2021, p. 27).

The gap between the conceptual field of lifestyle migration and extant research on the GCC migration patterns is quite jarring. Hence, my research covers the migration of those with relatively unconstrained mobility with medium- to -high-skill levels from various backgrounds, situating the analysis in the UAE.

Research questions

The confluence of factors that have influenced the advent of the UAE's Golden Visa as a remarkable shift in the country's migration and residency system, in addition to the holistic approach to skilled migration, have galvanized my research questions. The process of developing a sense of home – especially within the context of migration – is a long-term, two-way process where both the place and the individual interact with each other and constantly adapt, whether it be macro-level policies or micro-level choices on where to migrate, whether to stay and for how long.

Therefore, the three research questions of the paper are:

1. Why did the Golden Visa recipients come to the UAE? *What were their aspirations and motivations?*
2. How do Golden Visa recipients describe their experience in the UAE? *To what extent has it impacted their experience?*
3. Have the GV recipients been able to develop a sense of home in the UAE? *How does their sense of home relate to their sense of belonging?*

Methodology

I utilize a qualitative approach in my analysis with semi-structured interviews. Broadly speaking, semi-structured interviews are useful when examining socio-economic phenomena from the perspective of actors. They provide greater depth and breadth of information, the opportunity to discover the respondent's experience and interpretation of reality, and access to people's ideas, and thoughts, but at the cost of reduced ability to make systematic comparison between responses (Blee & Taylor, 2002).

As per the research questions, the interviews cover: (i) previous migration experience: reasons why the respondent moved to the UAE and their expectations prior to moving, (ii) life in the UAE: reasons they stayed and the ways in which their aspirations match their current lifestyle, (iii) the Golden Visa: reasons they applied, the application procedure, the reaction of their employer/community, and their concept of home, and (iv) future plans.

Given the snowball, convenience method, the sample is not representative of all Golden Visa recipients as the exact number remains unknown, especially for each visa sub-category. The data collection period was March-June 2022. The interviews were conducted online via Zoom and in-person.

In total, twenty-five semi-structured interviews were conducted, capturing all but three sub-categories; high school graduates, sportsmen and child development specialists due to age sensitivity/inability to reach out.

The interviews were conducted in English, Bosnian and Arabic. For transcription purposes, I used a paid software called Trint[4]. Please see table 1 for descriptive statistics.

Table 1. *Descriptive statistics of the interviews*

Variable	Male	Female	Total
Gender breakdown	6 (24%)	19 (77%)	25 (100%)
Education			
Bachelor's degree	3 (12%)	8 (32%)	11 (44%)
Master's degree	1 (4%)	7 (28%)	8 (32%)
PhD (incl. doctors)	2 (8%)	4 (16%)	6 (25%)
Geo. region of origin			
North America	0	2 (8%)	2 (8%)
Europe	0	3 (12%)	3 (12%)
Middle East	3 (12%)	3 (12%)	6 (25%)
Africa	0	1 (4%)	1 (4%)
Asia	2 (8%)	9 (36%)	11 (44%)
Australia	1 (4%)	1 (4%)	2 (8%)
Age (at the time of the interview)			
20-29	2 (8%)	6 (25%)	8 (32%)
30-39	2 (8%)	5 (20%)	8 (32%)
40-49	2 (8%)	7 (28%)	9 (36%)
50+	0	1 (4%)	1 (4%)
Length of stay in the UAE			
0-5 years	2 (8.3%)	1 (4%)	3 (12%)
6-10 years	0	5 (20%)	5 (20%)
10+ (including born)	4 (16%)	13 (52%)	17 (68%)
Family in UAE - yes?	5 (20%)	19 (76%)	24 (96%)
Employed - yes?	5 (20%)	14 (56%)	19 (76%)
Main GV holder – yes?	5 (20%)	18 (72%)	23 (92%)

Results

As one of the latest migration and residency policies in the UAE, the Golden Visa navigates a complex landscape, catering to a broad range of non-nationals. It has brought about significant positive changes to the lives of many of those who have received it, as my results suggest. To name a few notable examples, it has helped distinguish and position those working in the creative sector – art, culture, and heritage – who do not necessarily fit in the standard nine-to-five employment boxes and work on a project basis.

It has also helped to promote the medical frontline workers against the coronavirus, in addition to further boosting the status and achievements of fresh graduates – high school and university alike. Additionally, it has brought to the front the economic and social significance of patents and scientific achievements for the people who work in these fields.

[4] Trint is a paid online platform for transcribing video and audio files to text (Trint).

Across all GV categories, the reasons for applying include: socio-economic (employment flexibility), technical (visa renewal, health checks), family (spousal and family support) and personal opportunities.

Similarly, the benefits of getting the Golden Visa include: symbolic and technical freedom (self-sponsorship, no visa/job loss concerns, family sponsorship), new opportunities (career change, investment, labour market attractiveness), changed social status (prestige, appreciation, acknowledgement).

Interestingly, there is a gendered aspect of reasons for applying for the Golden Visa, mentioned by a few female recipients, as it served to boost their self-esteem as women and distinguish them from their original visa title – that of a housewife.

Regarding the overall sentiment of obtaining the Golden Visa, it outgrows personal benefits and instils confidence about the country's future and global standing for several my interviewees.

However, one concern remains throughout, that of the unclear extent of benefits of the Golden Visa, which is expected with any new policy and is, thus, unsurprising.

Previous migration experience

Drawing on the Golden Visa recipients' aspirations for a better lifestyle that have led to them moving to the UAE, these follow multiple dimensions – from socio-religious freedom for mixed families and educational opportunities for students to work opportunities for adventurous professionals and geo/location-based connectivity of the country.

There are also those who have been born and raised in the UAE – never having lived elsewhere – who consider the country as their natural home because their family, friends, education, and work are based in the same place.

Zahara, a Jordanian doctor in Abu Dhabi:

> *"I moved [to the UAE] for social reasons when I got married. I am from a Christian family and my husband is from a Muslim family (…) And then, of course, as a doctor, I saw a good job opportunity in the UAE, so we moved together."*

Two of my interviewees, including Zahara, have a mixed family. The differences stem from religion to differences in nationality between the spouses. In both cases, they see the UAE as a safe and welcoming environment to establish a diverse family.

For others, opportunities, including scholarships and the standard of education, were the decisive point that brought them to the UAE. Subsequently, work, and financial opportunities made them stay, demonstrating multiple dimensions at play. Some were explicit about professional opportunities being the main reason behind their move – either for them or their spouse.

Sara, a Bosnian/American professor in Sharjah/Dubai:

> *"Work opportunity for my husband and a new region we hadn't explored yet. My husband's contract was a 3-year contract with a possibility of renewal. So, we planned to do six years in the UAE (...)*

Given the political climate in the US, we didn't even think about going back between 2016 and 2020. So, in 2016, we decided to stay longer."

Others came to the UAE at the very beginning of their careers and stayed because they saw an opportunity to develop their own businesses and establish their name.

Madeline, a Zimbabwean/British entrepreneur in Abu Dhabi:

"I came as a qualified teacher. I taught for 6 years, and I figured I wanted something more than a teacher, no disrespect to teachers. Teaching is a great job, but I've always wanted to be my own boss (…) I was then approached by one gas company to do their policies. Back then there weren't very many women, so I was treated like a queen, really brilliant (...) There was still a mission to work that wasn't being tapped on. I decided to set up my own company in 2006."

Madeline's story provides a good insight into the opportunities that had been available to medium- and high-skilled non-nationals, regardless of the stage their career is in, to navigate job change, even start their own business, prior to the advent of the Visa. In this sense, the Golden Visa did not provide a structural break in the residency system as such but rather gave further assurances in the longevity of their stay.

Several interviewees have been born and raised in the UAE and, stemming from that, their reference of concepts such as place and home – implying their sense of belonging and aspirations within a spatial framework – tends to be (hyper)localized.

Tyra, Pakistani student in Al Ain: *"I went to school here [in Al Ain]. I went to university here. My siblings were born here. Half of my family is here because we've been here for a very long time. So, it doesn't feel like we are expats."*

Iman, a Palestinian/Jordanian creative in Abu Dhabi: *"I was born and raised in Abu Dhabi and my family is also in Abu Dhabi. Except a short internship in Italy, I've never really lived anywhere else."*

Several interviewees chose the UAE for its strategic location to their origin-country or global connectivity.

Arun, an Indian journalist in Dubai:

"Dubai was never on the cards. I was working in New York. My wife was in Bangalore. My wife's sister, who was in Dubai, said, 'Hey, listen, why don't you apply for this job?' This guy was looking for someone dynamic who is willing to give it a shot. And that was my first break."

Others simply chose the UAE because they 'had nothing to lose' and their move to the region proved lucrative for their professional career and investment.

Ting, a Chinese professor/investor in Dubai/Sharjah:

"Coming to the Middle East, of course, was a very attractive idea. I've heard of Dubai from different sources. There's a lot of negative coverage about Dubai, but I didn't have much money, I didn't have anything to lose (...) I found the region very attractive for my own interest, academically and personally."

Life in the UAE

Planned or unplanned, the decision to stay in the UAE has been drawn along the lines of the country's pull factors. Herein, many cited that they enjoy the professional aspect of their life

and career growth, the ease of living and the level of services (especially for families), safety (especially for women), and the general attractiveness of the UAE as embodying the quintessential Middle Eastern hospitality and cultural diversity.

For others, the push factors by their home-countries have equally kept them in place. For interviewees with family and dependants, the UAE has proved to be safe and family-oriented, matching their ideal life.

Others – including Andrew and Arun – chose to build their early career in the country due to the work opportunities they might not be exposed to in other places.

Andrew: *"The UAE is the perfect place to be. I am an Arabic speaking individual. This place is comparable to Europe or the US in terms of opportunities. There I would feel a lot of racial discrimination and I probably won't have access to as many opportunities."*

Arun: *"Being a journalist, I am aware of what happens in Dubai (…) especially coming from a country where simple things like garbage, electricity, water, utilities (…) is completely scaled. I have worked equally hard my entire life (…) but being in Dubai, what I get in return for the same amount of my work I have put in India and New York, the return is infinitely higher."*

Others, especially those who do not work in a typical office job setting and travel for business frequently, chose to stay due to the country's strategic location for their career progression.

Carol, an Australian investor in Abu Dhabi:

> *"My first job in the UAE was an incredible learning curve and I think, a lot of people get those opportunities here [in the UAE] where it's kind of like it's either you or someone else who's going to try and give it a go. And that's why I always say that a lot of the opportunities here are as broad as your shoulders are."*

Some of my respondents who work in the creative sector also draw on the fact that the country's diverse profiles of people and their complex sense of home is what makes them feel understood – vaguely implying a sense of belonging, a home away from home. Similarly, for those who are a part of mixed families, the UAE has proven to be a place where they are able to raise their children in an equally diverse setting.

For those who have been born and raised in the UAE, the relationship to the country goes beyond staying for professional opportunities. In addition to their family being based in the UAE, they reminisce on the entirety of the lifestyle they can enjoy – a holistic and well-rounded life.

Mohammed, a Palestinian/Jordanian executive director in Abu Dhabi:

> *"You can base your whole life here in the UAE. And believe me, wherever you go, you will never find the same level of services that you have here and the ease of living. (…) For sure, living here is not cheap, but the quality of living is very high. You won't even find it in other modern countries.*"

The Golden Visa

Many questions regarding the Golden Visa and its benefits are still on the table with many interviewees expressing curiosity and lack of exact knowledge towards the its concrete benefits. The application procedure was different for every single interviewee, ranging from a few days (for investors) to a few months (for some students). The visa itself has brought about

incremental changes to the lives of its recipients. While some were nominated, the reasons for applying have been diverse and, often matched the feeling that obtaining the Golden Visa brought to recipients. The results suggest two types of responses – neutrality towards the benefits and a positive sentiment towards obtaining the Golden Visa.

Many interviewees have been in the UAE for more than ten years, including those who have been born and raised in the country. Some equate their length of stay with visa eligibility, rather than their professional/educational achievements *per se* (which is the actual criteria).

Some of my interviewees were encouraged to apply in their workplace or applied because of peers.

Zahara: *"At the time when I applied, all the doctors in my hospital were applying as well (…) It was a bit unclear at the beginning on what the steps were and all, but once I started my application, everything went smoothly."*

When it comes to the meaning of the Golden Visa for her: *"I don't have to worry about renewing my visa every two years. The Golden Visa made things a bit more relaxed. It also makes me a bit more ambitious regarding new opportunities."*

Mara, Indian student in Dubai: *"I got my Golden Visa as some of the people I went to 'uni' with got theirs (...) The process was very simple (…) I just applied on the ICA app*[5] *and went to their office twice."*

Regarding the meaning of GV: *"One major thing is that I don't have to fear losing my job. I don't have to switch back to my dad's visa (...) But I don't think the visa has changed my sense of how much I feel Dubai or the UAE is my home. That always remained constant."*

The stories of those who were nominated for the Golden Visa are quite distinct.

Margot:

> *"We never really asked for the Golden Visa (…) I thought at the beginning it was for those exceptional people working on cancer research. But what happened is that, in the summer of 2021, we got an email from the Cultural Foundation*[6]*. And the email said that my husband was proposed for the Golden Visa. It mentioned that they would inform him of the outcome (…) We didn't even know who proposed him - or how."*

Others applied with career progression and work flexibility in mind.

Mina, a Chinese software engineer in Dubai/Abu Dhabi:

> *"I actually nominated myself (…) I just really liked the idea of having your time here without going through certain kind of inflexibility (…) It gives me more confidence about the country. I really like the UAE and I believe its future is big. The visa just gives me that flexibility to think things over."*

For some who have been in the country for many years and had their own private consultancy/business licence, the Golden Visa brought a breath of fresh air to the procedural side of regulating their stay.

[5] Previously known as ICA, UAE ICP is the UAE Federal Authority for Identity, Citizenship, Customs and Port Security, offering a range of services for both citizens and residents of the UAE, including: visas, payment of fines, passport stamping, Emirates ID application and more (UAE Federal Authority for Identity, Citizenship, Customs and Port Security).

[6] Launched in 2008, the Dubai Cultural Foundation or Dubai Culture is an emirate-level authority that develops the cultural and creative sectors in Dubai (Dubai Culture).

The gendered aspect of the Golden Visa has quite prominently populated the testimonies of two of my female interviewees who struggled with their previous status of a 'housewife', personally and symbolically.

Amaliya:

> *"I arrived on a housewife visa. And this this was something that was really difficult for me, not because it does anything, it's just a word. But it really affected my own sense of self-worth (…) That was the driving force that really made me take the step to apply (…) Home is a concept that I think everyone in the UAE has a really unique relationship to. That's one of the things that speaks the most to me in this country, because I have a very fractured sense of identity."*

One interviewee who had been a previous resident of the UAE and whose spouse had originally come to the UAE in the early 1990s heard about the initial conversations about the Golden Visa related to the educational sector even prior to the announcement of the new policy.

Jennifer, a Dutch/American PhD holder in Abu Dhabi:

> *"I was first here in 2007 (…) Fast forward nine, ten years and that was right at the time that I was considering coming back (…) I didn't think I would have any difficulty renewing the visa. It's a blood test every two years, no big deal. But I must say that once I heard in the fall of 2019 that this broader possibility was coming, I thought, wow, that's actually very meaningful and I'd like to have it."*

Future plans

While the Golden Visa did reaffirm the interviewees' sense of home and belonging in the UAE, its impact on their future provided a mixed canvas. Some argued that the visa opened their eyes to potential investment opportunities while others argued that the visa has little influence on their plans. One common thread across all responses is the spatially localized sense of planning and a strong sense of surety that their future will see them in the UAE. Another common thread is the hope for clarifications of the visa's benefits.

Madeline:

> *"My husband and I talked about this a long time ago in terms of where is home. You know, you can go into somebody's apartment or villa and it can be a house or it can be a home. We have a home. It's never been anywhere else."*

Similarly, those at the start of their career see their professional path within the country as more realistic.

Fahima, an Indian student in Al Ain:

> *"The Golden Visa has influenced me. I have always wanted to stay here. I respect the kind of culture, the environment and advancement that you got, the exposure. I would like to continue living here because I really love this country (…) So, this visa really helps me because I don't have to think about that aspect of my life."*

There are those who appreciate the technical nature of the visa in terms of not needing to spend funds on setting up a business to stay but rather seeing the visa as giving them an opportunity to invest further.

Rana: *"I think it is perfect because, going back to the sponsorship programme (…) having the Golden Visa takes that away (…) it was either owning property or having a company, which was extremely expensive to be able to afford visas."*

Mohammed: "I have plans. I own a commercial plot. I've bought it and I was thinking to build it as an investment. Right now, I think I would invest in my kids' education, this is the big investment. One day, we will all die. And I want to die here."

Those with a wealth of previous migration experience and a mixed-background family, are incorporating the new residency changes in the UAE into their international lifestyle.

Discussion and conclusion

At its most basic level, it is in human nature to strive for an optimal life with good opportunities. As a function of both personal and society-wide aspirations for a better life, migration is a trademark of contemporary reality.

De Haas would add to this by stating that, if people's ideas of the good life and the associated growth in material aspirations change faster than and outmatch local opportunities, this leads to growing migration propensities (de Haas, 2021, p. 27). For this reason, the aspirations-capabilities framework has been essential in contextualizing the operational and intrinsic meaning of the UAE's Golden Visa in the experiences of those who had received it. Using de Haas' migration of those who have both the aspirations and capabilities to migrate, I was able to map out the confluence and the *barzakh*[7] between the two regarding the GV recipients' realities and aspirations, the reasons they moved to the UAE and why they stayed.

The reasons for applying for the Golden Visa have proven to be quite diverse with no pattern within each GV category. This observation is rather illustrative in nature as I cannot claim this is the case for everyone. However, the two axes of distinction are observable from my sample: (i) those who migrated to the UAE in search of a long-term home with better opportunities – including those from the global south, Westerners at the early stages of their career and mixed-families, and (ii) those who tend to have extensive transnational experience and whose concept of home and an ideal lifestyle are more abstract rather than tied to a particular push-and-pull embedded country, regardless of their national background.

Within the process of the historic structural change in the UAE's residency system that is at the core of this inquiry, the primary reason for applying for the Golden Visa for many is socio-economic, ranging from career progression opportunities to independence from a particular employer. One peculiar observation is the ability of leaving one's job and that inherent flexibility when it comes to self-sponsorship that has great appeal for my interviewees rather than a concrete plan to leave their job.

Two rather peculiar patterns emerged during the interviewees – one related to gender and one related to the length of stay in the country. Several female respondents argued that the self-sponsorship nature of the Golden Visa elevates not only their socio-economic status but also their personal sense of worth. Regarding the length of stay in the UAE, respondents who were born and raised in the country and those who have been in the UAE for decades argued that it feels like their length of stay has been rewarded, equating visa eligibility with the length of residency rather than merit *per se*. Two striking things are visible here; people's socio-

[7] Barzakh – it is an Arabic word that signifies a separation or a barrier between two things

emotional attachment to the life(style) they have spent decades on constructing in the UAE and their recognition of their own importance within these system-wide changes.

Given that migration is only a part of this process, this (self)investment does not cease upon one's move. The fact that interviewees' remarks on their long-term journey in the UAE have echoed these sentiments implies that there is a connection between their sense of home in the UAE – as enabled by the wealth of opportunities given to them in the country as opposed to other countries that they're from or they had lived in – and their aspirations towards an optimal life(style). Put simply, the process is iterative and marked with milestones, one such milestone being the Golden Visa.

To contextualize the Golden Visa, my research suggests that it elevates and betters the ability of its recipients to navigate their residency status in the country, hence influencing their future plans as well. The visa was able to act as a catalyst of the execution of aspirations, as it boosted the pool of the country's pull factors to retain medium- and high-skilled professionals in.

Going beyond the UAE and the GCC region, contextualizing the regional residency structural break within the larger global movement and the latest wave of lifestyle migration, it is important to situate these changes within a more nuanced understanding of new patterns of migration and residency around the world. In the upcoming years, it would be valuable to observe how these new migration policies translate to increased investment, boost in economic growth and a range of other socio-economic measures that further catalyse regional whole-of-society development.

References

Abu Dhabi Department of Economic Development (ADDED). (n.d.). *Official website*. Retrieved from Abu Dhabi Department of Economic Development (ADDED): www.added.gov.ae

Abu Dhabi Government Media Office (ADGMO). (n.d.). Retrieved from Thrive in Abu Dhabi : https://www.mediaoffice.abudhabi/en/topic/thrive-in-abu-dhabi/

Abu Dhabi Residents Office. (n.d.). *Official Website*. Retrieved from Abu Dhabi Residents Office: www.adro.gov.ae

Adams, H., & Adger, W. N. (2013). The contribution of ecosystem services to place utility as a determinant of migration decision-making. *Environmental Research Letters , 8*(1).

Afsar, R. (2009, May). *Unravelling the Vicious Cycle of Recruitment: Labour Migration from Bangladesh to the Gulf States*. Retrieved from International Labour Organization: http://www.oit.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_106536.pdf

Al Zeyoudi, T. (2022, January 24). *The National*. Retrieved from Attracting talent is a top priority for the UAE: https://www.thenationalnews.com/opinion/comment/2022/01/24/attracting-talent-is-a-top-priority-for-the-uae/

Al-Awad, M., & Elhiraika, A. (2010, September 8). Cultural Effects and Savings: Evidence from Immigrants to the United Arab Emirates. *The Journal of Development Studies, 39*(5), 139-151.

AlShehabi, O. (2015). Histories of Migration to the Gulf. In O. AlShehabi, A. Khalaf, & A. Hanieh, *Transit States: Labour, Migration and Citizenship in the Gulf* (pp. 3-38). London: Pluto Press.

AlShehabi, O. (2019). *Contested Modernity: Sectarianism, Nationalism, and Colonialism in Bahrain*. Simon and Schuster.

Amer247 - Dubai Immigration Services. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://amer247.com/

Amit, V. (2007). Structures and dispositions of travel and movement. In *Going first class* (pp. 1-14).

Arnold, F., & Shah, N. (1986). *Asian Labor Migration: Pipeline to the Middle East*. London: Westpoint.

Aslany, M., Carling, J., Mjelva, M. B., & Sommerfelt, T. (2020). Retrieved June 2022, from Systematic review of determinants of migration aspirations: https://www.quantmig.eu/res/files/QuantMig%20D22%202021-01-29.pdf

Azeez, A., & Begum, M. (2009). Gulf migration, remittances and economic impact . *Journal of Social Sciences, 20*(1), 55-60.

Beaugé, G. (1986). La Kafala: un système de gestion transitoire de la main-d'œuvre et ducapital dans les pays du Golfe. *Revue européenne de migrations internationales, 2*(1), 109-122.

Belloni, M. (2020). Family project or individual choice? Exploring agency in young Eritreans' migration. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 46*(2), 336-353.

Benson, M., & O'Reilly, K. (2016). From lifestyle migration to lifestyle in migration: Categories concepts and ways of thinking. *Migration Studies, 4*(1), 20-37.

Blee, K. M., & Taylor, V. (2002). Semi-structured Interviewing in Social Movement Research. In B. Klandermans, & S. Staggenborg, *Methods of Social Movement Research*. University of Minnesota Press .

Brown, L. A., & Longbrake, D. B. (1970). Migration flows in intraurban space: Place utility considerations. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 60*(2), 368-384.

Buckley, M. (2012). From Kerala to Dubai and back again: Construction migrants and the global economic crisis. *Geoforum*, 250-259.

Carling, J. (2014). *The role of aspirations in migration*. University of Oxford. International Migration Institute.

Dados, N., & Connell, R. (2012). The Global South. *Sage, 11*(1), 12-13. Retrieved from https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1536504212436479#:~:text=The%20phrase%20%E2%80%9CGlobal%20South%E2%80%9D%20refers,politically%20or%20culturally%20mar%2D%20ginalized.

Damir-Geilsdorf, S., & Pelican, M. (2019). Between regular and irregular movement: Subverting the kafala system in the GCC countries. *Migration and Development, 8*(2), 155-175.

de Haas, H. (2007). Turning the tide? Why development will not stop migration. *Development and change, 38*(5), 819-841.

de Haas, H. (2010). Migration and Development: A theoretical perspective. *International Migration Review, 44*(1), 227-264.

de Haas, H. (2021). A theory of migration: The aspirations-capabilities framework. *Comparative Migration Studies, 9*(1), 1-35.

Dito, M. (2015). Rootless Hubs: Migration, Urban Commodification and the 'Right to the City' in the GCC. In A. Khalaf, O. AlShehabi, & A. Hanieh, *Transit States: Labour, Migration and Citizenship in the Gulf* (pp. 101-131). London: Pluto Press.

Dito, M. E. (2015). Kafala: Foundations of Migrant Exclusion in GCC Labour Markets. In A. Khalaf, O. AlShehabi, & A. Hanieh , *Transit States: Labour, Migration and Citizenship in the Gulf* (pp. 79-100). London: Pluto Press.

Dubai Culture. (n.d.). Retrieved from www.dubaiculture.ae

Dubai named third best city globally for expats. (2021, December 9). Retrieved from Business Traveller Middle East : https://www.businesstraveller.com/business-travel/2021/12/09/dubai-named-third-best-city-globally-for-expats/#:~:text=Dubai%20has%20been%20named%20as,th%20and%2016th%20respectively.

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (n.d.). *Data Portal*. Retrieved from Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia: https://data.unescwa.org/portal/69b86687-53d8-4c50-b5d7-b6c96df42d0b

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (n.d.). *Official Website*. Retrieved from Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia: https://www.unescwa.org/about

FDI Insider. (n.d.). *Golden Visa in Kuwait*. Retrieved from FDI Insider: http://www.fdiinsider.com/golden-visa-in-kuwait/

Fragomen. (n.d.). *Oman: Additional Details Announced for Long-Term Residence Permit for Investors* . Retrieved from Fragomen: https://www.fragomen.com/insights/oman-additional-details-announced-for-

long-term-residence-permit-for-investors.html#:~:text=The%20government%20fee%20for%20the,years%20and%20upon%20visa%20renewal).

Francis, M. (n.d.). *What is the Saudi Premium Residency Scheme (Green Card)?* Retrieved from Inside Saudi: https://insidesaudi.com/what-is-the-saudi-green-card/

Gallup. (2012). *The United Arab Emirates at 40: A Success Story*. Retrieved from Gallup: https://news.gallup.com/poll/157061/united-arab-emirates-success-story.aspx

Gardner, A. (2012). Why Do They Keep Coming? Labor Migrants in the Gulf States. In M. Kamrava, & Z. Babar, *Migrant Labour in the Persian Gulf* (pp. 41-58). New York: Columbia University Press.

Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and Self-Identity*. Stanford University Press.

Government of Bahrain. (n.d.). *Government of Bahrain*. Retrieved from Golden Residency Visa: https://www.bahrain.bh/wps/portal/!ut/p/a1/lVHBboMwDP2WHTiGBAIUduPQ0aFKU8W0llymACFkgoRCVsa-fum6y6S1aL5Ytp79np8hgQdIJD0JTrVQkrbnmgSvmycUOG7opom_xmiXJNl2527Xjy8e3EMCSSl1rxuYy36gFgotxFVbMQkGNgqTyxmcxEjPyL4UFcwrTFcucwsQoAgBL6IhiCq3Ash3PKesGcZlZKhzQ42uRIyWlGVM

Government of Dubai Media Office. (2022, April 18). *Government of Dubai Media Office*. Retrieved from UAE Cabinet approves Executive Regulations of Federal Decree-Law on Entry and Residence of Foreigners: https://www.mediaoffice.ae/en/news/2022/April/18-04/UAE-Cabinet-chaired-by-Mohammed-bin-Rashid-approves-law

Gulf Today. (2022, August 3). Retrieved from 65,000 Golden Visas have been issued in the UAE since 2019: https://www.gulftoday.ae/news/2022/08/03/65000-golden-visas-have-been-issued-in-the-uae-since-2019

Hanieh, A. (2015). Overcoming Methodological Nationalism: Spatial Perspectives on Migration to the Gulf Arab States. In A. Khalaf, O. AlShehabi, & A. Hanieh, *Transit States: Labour, Migration and Citizenship in the Gulf* (pp. 57-76). London: Pluto Press.

Holtmeier, L. (2020, November 24). *In the UAE, Dubai golden visa likely to increase economic growth by up to 1 percent*. Retrieved from Al Arabiya English: https://english.alarabiya.net/News/gulf/2020/11/24/In-the-UAE-Dubai-golden-visa-likely-to-increase- economic-growth-by-up-to-1-percent

Hvidt, M. (2014). The development trajectory of the GCC states: An analysis of aims and visions in current development plans. In *Gulf Politics and Economics in a Changing World* (pp. 11-28).

Hvidt, M. (2019). Exploring the nexus between highly-skilled migrants, the kafala system, and development in the UAE. *Journal of Arabian Studies, 9*(1), 75-91.

International Labour Organization. (n.d.). *Reform of the kafala (sponsorship) system*. Retrieved June 2022, from International Labour Organization: https://www.ilo.org/dyn/migpractice/docs/132/PB2.pdf

IPSOS. (2021). Retrieved from KSA Attractiveness and Uncertainties: https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2021-03/ipsosflair-saudi_arabia_singles.pdf

Kanchana, R. (2018). Is the Kafala Tradition to Blame for the ExploitativeWork Conditions in the Arab-Gulf countries? In M. Chowdhury, & S. Irudaya Rajan, *South Asian Migration in the Gulf* (pp. 1-13). Palgrave Macmillan.

Kanna, A. (2011, June 2). *Foreign Workers and Biopolitics in the Gulf*. Retrieved from Jadaliyya: https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/24053

Kapiszewski, A. (2006). *Arab versus Asian migrant workers in the GCC countries*. United Nations , Department of Economic and Social Affairs - Population Division. Beirut: United Nations .

Khalaf, A. (2015). The Politics of Migration. In A. Khalaf, O. AlShehabi, & A. Hanieh, *Transit States: Labour, Migration and Citizenship in the Gulf* (pp. 39-56). London: Pluto Press.

Khalaf, S., & Al Kobaisi, S. (1996). Migrants' Strategies of Coping and Patterns of Accommodation in the Oil-Rich Gulf Societies: Evidence from the UAE. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, 26*(2), 271-298.

Lieber, S. R. (1978). Place utility and migration. *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography, 60*(1), 16-27.

Longva, A. N. (1993). Kuwaiti Women at a Crossroads: Privileged Development and the Constraints of Ethnic Stratification. *International Journal of Middle East Studies , 25*(3), 443-456.

Longva, A. N. (2005). Neither Autocracy Nor Democracy but Ethnocracy: Citizens, Expatriates and the Socio-Political System in Kuwait. In *Monarchies and Nations: Globanization and Identity in the Arab states of the Gulf* (pp. 114-135).

Mora, J., & Taylor, J. E. (2006). Determinants of migration, destination and sector choic: Disentangling individual, household and community effects . *International migration, remittancese, and the brain drain, 21*(4), 21-52.

Nguyen, N. (2021). *Georgetown University Online Library*. Retrieved from From Slavery to Kafala: British Colonialism and Its Impact on Labor Governance in the Persian Gulf 1800 - 1950: https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/handle/10822/1061224

Oommen, A. (2022, May 18). *How expats can apply for Saudi Arabia's Premium Residency visa in three simple steps*. Retrieved from Arabian Business: https://www.arabianbusiness.com/politics-economics/how-expats-can-apply-for-saudi-arabias-premium-residency-visa-in-three-simple-steps

Osmandzikovic, E. (2017). Immigrants' Integration Experience in Seven EU Countries. *New York University Abu Dhabi Journal of Social Sciences*, 1-26.

Osmandzikovic, E. (2019). Refugee Characteristics as a Game-Changer for Integration in Fortress Europe. *European Scientific Journal, 15*(8), 59-86.

Qadri, M. (2020, July 7). *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. Retrieved from The UAE's Kafala System: Harmless or Human Trafficking?: https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/07/07/uae-s-kafala-system-harmless-or-human-trafficking-pub-82188

Qatar E-Government. (2020, September 3). *Qatar E-Government*. Retrieved from Residence and Work Permits: https://hukoomi.gov.qa/en/article/residence-and-work-permits

Rahman, M. (2012). Bangladeshi labour migration to the Gulf states: patterns of recruitment and processes. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies / Revue canadienne d'études du développement , 33*(2), 214-230.

Saudi Arabia Online Visa. (n.d.). *Saudi Arabia Online Visa*. Retrieved from Saudi Arabia Grants Foreigners Premium Residency: https://www.saudiarabiaonlinevisas.com/foreigner-premium-residency/#:~:text=How%20much%20is%20a%20Saudi,100%2C000%20Saudia%20riyals%20(%2426%2C700).

Schultz, T. W. (1961). Investment in human capital. *The American economic review, 51*(1), 1-17.

Schultz, T. W. (1961, March). Investment in Human Capital. *The American Economic Review, 51*(1), 1-17.

Stutzer, A., & Henne, T. (2014). Aspiration Theory. In A. Michalos, *Encyclopedia of Quality of Life and Well-Being Research*. Dordrecht: Springer.

Tadros, M. E. (2015). *The Arab Gulf States and the Knowledge Economy: Challenges and Opportunities*. Retrieved from The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington : https://agsiw.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Tadros_Knowledge-Economy_Rev1.pdf

Tamm. (n.d.). Retrieved from www.tamm.abudhabi

The National. (2021). Retrieved from 36 celebrities who received the UAE's golden visa: from Ranveer Singh to Giorgio Armani: https://www.thenationalnews.com/arts-culture/film/2021/08/24/celebrities-golden-visa-uae/

The National. (2022, April 18). *UAE's new visa rules to come into effect in September*. Retrieved from The National: https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/2022/04/18/uae-sets-out-major-overhaul-of-visas-and-ends-sponsorship-system/

Thraya, T. A., Taha, J. A., Stern, E. E., Shie, G., & Haroun , F. (2019, July 23). *Mayer Brown*. Retrieved from Saudi Arabia Introduces Permanent Residency for Expats: https://www.mayerbrown.com/en/perspectives-events/publications/2019/07/saudi-arabia-introduces-permanent-residency-for-expats

Trint. (n.d.). Retrieved from www.trint.com

Twofour54. (n.d.). Retrieved from www.twofour54.com

UAE Federal Authority for Identity, Citizenship, Customs and Port Security. (n.d.). Retrieved from Typing offices across the UAE: https://icp.gov.ae/en/typing-offices/

UAE Federal Authority for Identity, Citizenship, Customs and Port Security . (n.d.). *Official website*. Retrieved from UAE Federal Authority for Identity, Citizenship, Customs and Port Security : www.icp.gov.ae

UAE Goverenment. (2022, July 18). Retrieved from Getting the Golden Visa: https://u.ae/en/information-and-services/visa-and-emirates-id/residence-visa/getting-the-golden-visa

UAE Government. (2022, July 14). Retrieved from Remote Work Visa: https://u.ae/en/information-and-services/visa-and-emirates-id/types-of-visa/remote-work-visas

UAE Government. (2022, August 16). *Population and demographic mix*. Retrieved from UAE Government: https://u.ae/en/information-and-services/social-affairs/preserving-the-emirati-national-identity/population-and-demographic-mix

UAE Government. (n.d.). *Types of visas and entry permits*. Retrieved from UAE Government: https://u.ae/en/information-and-services/visa-and-emirates-id/types-of-visa

Visit Dubai . (n.d.). Retrieved from Work Remotely From Dubai : https://www.visitdubai.com/en/business-in-dubai/travel-to-dubai/visas-and-entry/work-remotely-from-dubai

Vora, N. (2015). Expat/Expert Camps: Redefining 'Labour' Within Gulf Migration. In A. Khalaf, O. AlShehabi, & A. Hanieh, *Transit States: Labour, Migration and Citizenship in the Gulf* (pp. 170-197). London: Pluto Press.

World Bank. (2016, September). *Human Capital and Economic Growth*. Retrieved from https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/344881530863186365/pdf/Human-capital-literature-review.pdf

Zoom: Video Conferencing. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://zoom.us/