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Dubai: "The land of opportunities" but not for everyone
"An analysis of the existent dichotomy between exploited
immigrant workers and the advantaged foreign investors &
companies"

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Extended Abstract

This final thesis is the result of my internship by the Italian Industry and Commerce Office in the UAE, in particular in Dubai. The personal analysis evolves around the dichotomy and extreme differences of both living and working conditions that exist between immigrant workers from poor and less developed Countries (namely India, Pakistan and Bangladesh) and foreign investors and companies that decide to set, run and enlarge their business in the Emirate at hand. These two “poles” of the examined dichotomy represent the main subject of the paper and it will be shown throughout the whole thesis that the former lack the economic and social advantages that are widely granted to the latter.

Furthermore, it will be studied how a variety of different kinds of job are performed by immigrant workers and how this variety creates a sort of three main labour tiers that make up the labour market in Dubai: firstly, there are the Local Emiratis, who are followed by Professional Expatriates and then as third tier, there are the construction workers, who are usually from South Asia Countries. It will be explained during the whole paper that Dubai represents a real *melting pot* of different cultures, traditions and habits, as shown by factual data: in fact, within the Emirate (and homonym city) ninety-five per cent of the whole population comes from different other Countries, thus being in majority in respect to nationals. As a city that has been developed and keeps being developed with the main purpose of being a city of and for the future, where professional and personal well-being is the focus of foreign and internal policies, the different nationalities lives together in a peaceful way.

Notwithstanding this, living peacefully does not mean providing equal and right policies for everyone who arrives in this land: overcrowded and overheated apartments are the living conditions offered to those immigrant workers who are employed as riders or constructors. This has been testified by Mohammed Arsalan and Mohammed Amcha, respectively two 27-years-old and 30-years-old men from Pakistan who are forced to live in Jebel Ali labour camps since their pay as riders is barely sufficient for sustain themselves in Dubai.

Indeed, during my stay in Dubai I did five different interviews to five different immigrant workers who have changed their lives by deciding to establish themselves in Dubai: in the second chapter of my personal research and analysis it will be shown how, independently from the different economic, social and educational background, all of them arrived in Dubai with the main purpose of improving their working and social conditions. Not everyone has found what was firstly looking for, as it has been explained by Gabriella Camalo, a 48-years-old woman from Argentina who works six days out of seven for an average of twelve hours per day and with a salary that does not allow her to rent a single room for herself, thus being forced to live in the living room of a shared apartment. Not surprisingly, no health insurance, no written contract and no visa is given to her, who has to pay everything by herself in order to legally remain in the Country.

It will be then focus the attention on the other big subject of this thesis, that is the foreign companies and investors who arrive in Dubai with the idea of setting, running and/or enlarging their business in the land which establishes itself as “the land of opportunities” and whose motto is “impossible is possible”, as it has been underlined by the campaign “United Global Emiratis”, launched by the government. It will be then even highlighted how the promotion of such-above-mentioned campaign, the development of important strategies like the “2030 Dubai Industrial Strategy” and the creation of the so-called “free zones” are clear evidence of the openness toward foreign investment of the Emirate at hand.

Thus, these favorable economic initiatives bring several advantages and benefits that can be enjoyed by foreign Companies: in fact, foreign investors and entrepreneurs have access to both business friendly tax policies (like zero per cent income tax) and expat-friendly visa regulation (like getting visa for living and working in Dubai for investors and their relatives as well). In addition to this, Dubai is set in a favorable geographical position, being it a direct link between the East and the West so that it is easier to create commercial relationships that can be enlarged to the whole Arab Region, that comprehends Countries like Oman, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar etc...

These policies welcome every year different foreign industries and companies: the “Italian Yellow Directory in the Gulf” project -launched by the Italian Industry and Commerce Office in the UAE at the end of June 2022- clearly displays the huge quantity of Italian big and small size companies that hope to fully enjoy the several advantages and opportunities offered in Dubai. Moreover, in the final part of the thesis it will be analyzed even the export policy of the Italian multi-brand car’s dealer Frattin Auto S.r.l. in order to clearly show one more time that Dubai sets itself as an attractive logistic, commercial and economic hub where to invest.

The last considerations will be based on a critical analysis: does it being an Emirate of the future mean being attentive only to the economic, financial and technological aspects of the society or does it mean being particularly focused on the promotion of fair, ethical and just rights for everyone? The lack of ratifications by the Federation of the United Arab Emirates of several Conventions about the general rights of workers (like the right of organize and the right of collective bargaining) and the protection related to the minimum wages is a clear evidence about the fact that the government of the United Arab Emirates does not care about the lower strata of its workforce. On the contrary, the policies fostered by it welcome the foreign investors, independently from the Country of origin. Thus, the answer to the above question should be immediate and clear, making everyone understand that Dubai should make several social steps forward in order to be fully considered a real city of the future.

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Introduction

Dubai: the city that wants to establish itself as the one of the future, where all possibilities are real and obstacles seem to disappear. It is not by chance that the motto which stands at the basis of the “United Global Emirates” campaign is “impossible is possible”. Surely, all the wonderful attractions and buildings present in the land at hand are a clear expression and a *de facto* evidence of the above-mentioned motto: the Burj Khalifa, namely the tallest building in the world, the Palm, the artificial islands created in a minimum lapse of time directly in the middle of the sea and futuristic ideas that build the foundation of the “Museum of the Future” are examples of the Emirate’s philosophy that poses itself as the “land of opportunities”.

Nothing is done without creating fallacies, obstacles and problems for those that can not sustain to be in the first line when enjoying the multiple benefits offered by this Emirate (and city): the rapid economic, financial and technological development of Dubai came at the expense of immigrant workers from poor and least developed Countries like India, Bangladesh and Pakistan. This is the topic of the present paper and final thesis, that is providing a clear analysis and explanation of the existent and real dichotomy between the exploitation of immigrant workers and the several advantages and benefits enjoyed by foreign companies and investors. It will be immediately highlighted that Dubai is the “land of opportunities” but not for everyone. The two subjects of the analyzed dichotomy represent two big and important “poles”, where in between several other groups can be found.

The United Arab Emirates is a Federation that is made up by six Emirates, namely Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm al-Qaiwain, Ras al-Khaimah and Fujairah and it is located along the east coast of the Arabic peninsula with a territory that extends itself for 83,600 square kilometers. Differently from Abu Dhabi, where the first discover of oil happened in the late 1950s, in Dubai the huge resource of oil has been found out in 1966¹. Each Emirate of the Federation tried to diversify its economy and to reduce its dependency on oil since the beginning of the 2000s: in particular, the Emirate of Dubai worked severely hard on the development process of different sectors like business, tourism, finance, education,

¹ De Bel-Air (2015).

urbanization, trade etc... The development and creation of new ports, trade, services and financial activities led to the hiring of large number of foreign workers coming from everywhere in the world: indeed, in Dubai live people belonging to more than 180 different nationalities and they all live peacefully in respect of each others' cultures, traditions and habits under the main rules imposed by the Emirate.

The work's and job's spheres reflect the wide diversification of the population: for instance, in the whole United Arab Emirates in 2010 the foreign nationals made up 88.5 per cent of the Country's total population, most of whom came from Asia and especially from India². When taking into account the employed population, the rates are even larger because just in the city of Dubai in 2011 the foreign nationals accounted for the 96 per cent of the whole city's employed population³. Following this distinction between foreign nationals' and native workers' rates in the whole population, it should be highlighted the different rates concerning the public and private sectors too. The private sector is mostly characterized by the presence of foreign national workers who make up the 99.5 per cent of the whole employed population while in the public sector the rates of the non- Emirates workers are lower since they make up just the 40 per cent⁴.

It is clear then that in Dubai the majority of the population comes from foreign Countries, whereas the locals and nationals represent a little portion of the whole: almost 95 per cent of the average population is immigrant. Although a peaceful living is one of the main characteristics of the Emirate at hand and all traditions and cultures are well respected, differences emerge in daily life and in basic daily activities and jobs. From my first days in Dubai I immediately understood that not everyone was considered and reputed at the same way and with the same attention to rights and duties. Low-skilled immigrant workers from the least developed Countries like India, Pakistan and Bangladesh experience everyday the "dark side" of the city, living in over-crowded and over-heated shared apartments located at the margin of the city, in Jebel Ali labour camps.

² De Bel-Air (2015).

³ De Bel-Air (2015).

⁴ De Bel-Air (2015).

Indeed, this poor living has been testified by two riders from Pakistan who I have personally interviewed during my stay in Dubai for three months. Mohammed Arsalan and Mohammed Amcha, respectively two 27-years-old and 30-years-old men who are currently employed as riders for the big company “Talabat”, live in the Jebel Ali labour camp with a pay equal to dirham 7,50 (nearly two euros) per each commission. Due to the several costs that they have to monthly afford (like those for their own food, accommodation and fuel for the bike), what is left for them is barely sufficient for living. As a consequence, they are not able to send money back home to their relatives; thus they constantly live ashamed of their conditions.

Improving the social and working conditions is the main aim and *leitmotiv* that makes people move from their own Country in order to find a new land where opportunities and possibilities seem to be offered to everyone. In fact, the other three interviewed persons have arrived in Dubai several years ago with the main goal of creating a better future for themselves and, in some cases, for their families too.

For instance, the financial manager of the Italian Industry and Commerce Office in the UAE Basid Choudhari has moved to Dubai after his bachelor’s graduation in finance and commerce in order to find a better job and a better salary. He has found what he was looking for: a better living, an higher salary, security and a fair environment within the workplace. On the contrary, Dubai has not been able to satisfy all the wishes of Lucille Quinny and Gabriella Camalo: the former, an Indian 36-years old woman and the latter, an Argentine 48-years-old woman. Although in different ways and in diverse degrees, these two women have found a job but what is offered to them is not enough to say that they are living and working in the way which should be the fair one for them. Gabriella Camalo works with no written and formal contract, no visa and health insurance are granted to her, thus she has to spend her own savings in order to provide herself with all the documents she needs to legally remain in the Emirate at hand. Differently, Lucille Quinny has a job that offers her a basic health insurance, a visa and a salary that enables her to live in Dubai in average mediocre conditions.

What is in common to all these five persons is their feeling and perception to not be an important point of focus for the government of the Emirate of Dubai and of the United Arab Emirates in general. They feel to be constantly left aside since there is a lack of concrete policies and rules that favour the immigrant workers, to whom nothing is given for the mere purpose of donating and giving. This situation stands in clear contrast with the one faced by foreign companies and investors that decide to enlarge, run and set a business in the land at hand or/and to invest in different ways in Dubai.

On the contrary, for example, since the development of the “2030 Dubai Industrial Strategy” and the launching of the “United Global Emirates” campaign, it is clear that Dubai wants to be and present itself to the world as the city of the future, being so an economic, financial, technological, tourism’s, and investment’s hub. Foreign investors and companies are welcomed with open policies that favour their businesses: infrastructures, geographical position, business friendly tax policies and expat-friendly visa regulation are the four main advantages and strong points that make Dubai so attractive for foreign industries and investors as well.

This is the result of the manifested will of the government of the United Arab Emirates which declared through the United Arab Emirates’ Government portal that a new phase of growth, joined by the will of becoming one of the best in the world by the year of its Centennial, is the main aim of actual policies and rules⁵. Being “the best in the world” means providing promising sectors for investment and an outstanding lifestyle, thus establishing the Federation as an ideal destination for living, working and investing for everyone who wants and can afford it.

A further clear example of the main object of Dubai, and more in general of the United Arab Emirates, is the creation and establishment of the so-called “free zones” (FZ), which are designated areas that eliminate traditional trade barriers (such as tariffs) and minimize bureaucratic regulations, thus making commerce and trade easier and more efficient. Thus,

⁵ The Official Portal of the UAE government (2022).

their creation is the result of the will to enhance the Country's global market presence by attracting new business and foreign investments.

Indeed, among the several advantages gained by the opening up of such kinds of zones are the direct employment creation and income generation, export growth and export diversification, foreign exchange earnings and foreign direct investment etc... The diversified economy of Dubai has led to the development of the "free zones" which, together with fostered policies, promote the establishment and running of several foreign enterprises and companies. An evident example can be found in the actual export policy of the Italian car's manufacturer company "Frattin Auto S.r.l.", whose export manager Christian Fietta has declared me that the reliability of the Country at hand, the important system of logistic for automotive trade worldwide, the strategical geographical position which enables the easy access to the whole Arab region and the presence of wealthy customers are among the reasons that make Dubai such an attractive economic, financial and investment's hub.

It is then clear that Dubai is an Emirate with a double facade: on one side there is the Emirate which treats the immigrant workers from poor and underdeveloped Countries in an unethical way, while on the other side there is the Emirate that is willing to welcome foreign investors and companies that can bring it more richness and profits. This kind of different behaviors toward immigrant workers and foreign companies and investors is the practical result of the theoretical policies and inner beliefs of the whole Federation of the United Arab Emirates. In this respect, it is important to highlight that the United Arab Emirates' ratification is missed when several important Conventions developed by the *International Labour Organization* are taken into account.

The *International Labour Organization* (ILO) is the only tripartite United Nations agency that has been established in 1919 by the Peace Conference that followed the First World War and it has been created for humanitarian, political and economic reasons in order to put an end to the intolerable exploitation of workers, to avoid social unrest and revolution coming from industrialization and to ensure fair competitiveness among Countries by improving their labour legislations. Although the United Arab Emirates officially joined the organization at

hand on 25th April 1972, several Conventions about the rights of workers, immigrant workers, minimum wage and salary in general have not been ratified by it. For instance, the “Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention”(C087) and the “Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention” (C098), respectively dated 1948 and 1949, have not been ratified by the United Arab Emirates⁶. In the Country at hand, the right of collective bargaining, the right of strike and that of organize are severely forbidden and thus punished if they happen.

During my stay in Dubai, riders have organized a revolt and several strikes in order to denounce the economic and social abuses operated by big companies, like Talabat and Deliveroo. It is even important to underline that in Dubai the “kafala system”, even known as sponsorship system, regulates the working and personal lives of migrant workers and it involves two parties: on one hand there is the immigrant worker while on the other hand there is the local sponsor, the so-called “kafeel”, who is the employer of the worker. Although the two big foreign companies have tried to falsely promote new policies and rights for their workers, no real effective result and change of policy was obtained by them.

Throughout the whole paper other important topics related to the analyzed dichotomy between the exploitation of immigrant workers and the several advantages favoured to foreign investors and companies will be studied: for instance, the Federal Law No. 33 (which updates some regulations governing the private sector), the gratuity payment, the corporate social responsibility, the “2030 Dubai Industrial Strategy” etc... will be attentively explained.

The following final thesis is divided into three main chapters, whose content is different but interrelated to the one of the others. In order to provide a clear explanation of the chosen subject, being it the existent dichotomy between the exploitation of immigrant workers from poor and under-developed Countries (like India, Pakistan and Bangladesh) and the several benefits granted to foreign investors and companies that decide to start and/or enlarge their business in the Emirate and homonym city of Dubai, the following three main arguments will

⁶ International Labour Organization [ILO] (n.d.).

be handled: firstly, it will be provided an explication of the general situation of the labour market in Dubai by looking into depth at the rules, policies and written documents of the *International Labour Organization*; secondly, the point of focus will be switched to the figure of the immigrant worker through a series of five different interviews that I have personally performed and thirdly, the argument will go on by studying the reasons that lead foreign investors and companies to invest in Dubai by analyzing different campaigns and projects put forward by the government of the Country at hand. Final considerations and personal ideas will follow in the last pages. Moreover, I want to lastly underline that this research is the result of what I have personally seen and experienced during my internship by the Italian Industry and Commerce Office in the UAE (precisely in Dubai) from the 28th March 2022 to 25th June 2022.

Chapter I: The history, rules and data that shape the labour market in Dubai

All around the world there are few cities that come up to mind when one thinks about luxury, fun and magnificence: one of these is surely Dubai.

Dubai is the name of the city and of the correlated Emirate which together with the other six Emirates of Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm al-Qaiwain, Ras al-Khaimah and Fujairah constitute the Federation of the United Arab Emirates. This Federation is located along the east coast of the Arabic peninsula and its territory extends itself for 83,600 square kilometers⁷. Dubai has been and still keeps being of great economic, social, political and religious value for the development of the United Arab Emirates and it is preceded in importance just by the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, whose homonym city is even the capital of the whole Federation.

As it has been declared in the first above lines, Dubai is a city that immediately captures one's attention not only once there but even just by hearing about it. It is well-known that the city characterizes itself by the presence of big skyscrapers, luxury hotels, restaurants and bars in every corner, monuments and attractions that hold the global award for being the tallest, the biggest, the largest and the longest like the world-known "Burj Khalifa", the "Dubai Frame", the "Atlantis Aquaventure" and the "AquaFun Water Park". Everything has been and is built with the main intention of making the tourist feel astonished by what the city can continuously offer.

Indeed, once arrived in Dubai I felt captured by both the magnificence and grandiosity of everything that was around me and by the efficiency of the services that the city offers. But, one has to immediately ask him-/herself what is the other side of the coin and who are those that pay the costs of a city that apparently seems perfect and beautiful. From my experience there and from what I could have seen by staying and living in Dubai for three months, Dubai is a city full of contradictions and controversies that offers the best it can to its tourists as well as to its western and north asian immigrant workforce, while it shows the worst of its policies and beliefs to immigrant workers coming from the third and less developed Countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and South Africa.

⁷ Italian Industry and Commerce Office in the UAE [IICUAE] (2021).

I.I The history of Dubai: its economy and immigrant workforce during the years

As it has been stated in the paper *Demography, Migration, and the Labour Market in the UAE* by Françoise De Bel-Air, both Abu Dhabi and Dubai have “always attracted various flows of migrants” well before the discovery of oil in the late 1950s in Abu Dhabi and in 1966 in Dubai. These two important cities, which in the past years were known as the “Trucial States under British rule”⁸, have represented the home for “merchants from the Indian subcontinent, Baluchi families and seasonal workers and traders from neighbouring Persia, among whom were the Ajamis, a class of merchants mostly settled in Dubai since the mid-nineteenth century”⁹. Actually in Dubai live people belonging to more than 180 different nationalities and they all live peacefully in respect of each others’ cultures, traditions and habits under the main rules imposed by the Emirate, where the main religion is the Islamic one.

This wide diversification of the population has consequences even in the work’s and job’s spheres: in order to provide practical and numerical examples for a better comprehension, it is important to underline that in the whole United Arab Emirates in 2010 the foreign nationals made up 88.5 per cent of the country’s total population, most of whom came from Asia and especially from India¹⁰. When taking into account the employed population, the rates are even larger because just in the city of Dubai in 2011 the foreign nationals accounted for the 96 per cent of the whole city’s employed population¹¹. Following this distinction between foreign nationals’ and native workers’ rates in the whole population, it should be highlighted the different rates concerning the public and private sectors too. The private sector is mostly characterized by the presence of foreign national workers who make up the 99.5 per cent of the whole employed population while in the public sector the rates of the non-Emirates workers are lower since they make up just the 40 per cent¹².

⁸ De Bel-Air (2015).

⁹ De Bel-Air (2015).

¹⁰ De Bel-Air (2015).

¹¹ De Bel-Air (2015).

¹² De Bel-Air (2015).

In the recent history of the Federation of the United Arab Emirates, as well as in that of the particular case of Dubai, three historical phases and years can be recognized. The changing and development of the numbers and rates of the general total workforce have been through three “ideal” steps that can be classified in the years of the 2000s, 2008 and the years following 2008. In particular, it can be summarized as follows: the late 2000s sign a phase of spectacular economic growth fueled by the soaring of the oil prices; this expansion and rise have been severely hit by the 2008 financial downturn, which has been overcome in the following years thanks to the creation and promotion of large-scale projects like “Dubai Expo 2020”¹³.

Furthermore, it must be stated that each Emirate of the Federation tried to diversify its economy and to reduce its dependency on oil since the beginning of the 2000s. In fact, each Emirate worked on the development process of different sectors like business, tourism, finance, education, urbanization, trade etc... These policies led to the hiring of large number of foreign workers coming from everywhere in the world¹⁴.

In the single case of Dubai, the pursued policy has been mainly the one that fostered the development and creation of new ports, trade, services and financial activities. Indeed, the Emirate’s “Strategic Plan 2015” was based on the pursuit of the building of new urban areas, the construction of newer, larger and more efficient transportation systems and roads, the use of energy in a sustainable way and more attention was given to the environment too. Differently from the other Emirates which today rely on different economies, Dubai turned itself into a financial gateway and cosmopolitan hub of Middle East during the 2000s¹⁵.

¹³ De Bel-Air (2015).

¹⁴ De Bel-Air (2015).

¹⁵ De Bel-Air (2015).

I.I.I The big initiatives and policies that show how Dubai is always improving itself

These policies that have been initiated during the 2000s have brought with them considerable important consequences for the Emirate and city of Dubai. As it can be read in the *Presentazione Paese 2022*, an official document released by the Italian Industry and Commerce Office in the UAE (IIUAE), the transportation system and the infrastructures are well developed in Dubai.

In this Emirate, as well as homonym city, it can be found the Dubai International Airport, which is the third classified in the whole world both for international traffic of passengers and for its contribution to have made Dubai a sophisticated and important airport hub. In Dubai there are even the Jebel Ali port, which is the biggest maritime port in the Middle East and lastly, it is in this city that the two world-known and big airlines like *Emirates* and *Etihad* have been created. This is followed by the enlargement of the road network that has been pursued in order to relieve the traffic congestion, which has been made possible through the doubling of the main road axis, that is *Sheikh Zayed Road*, and through the expansion of other two important communication roads, *Al Yalayis Road* and *University City Road*¹⁶. This can easily explain the words of the Secretary General of the Italian Industry and Commerce Office in the UAE Mauro Marzocchi, whose answer to my question why Italian companies (like other foreign industries and businesses) want to open and run a business in Dubai has been that Dubai has an enormous ability of re-exportation through the MENA Countries, being them the Countries of the Middle East and North Africa. As a matter of fact and according to him, this is simply possible due to the highly developed infrastructure system of Dubai.

As it has been written above, differently from the other Emirates, Dubai had based its economy on the development and bettering of not only the trade sector, but even of sectors like business, tourism, environment and energy. Regarding this last sector, it is of incredible importance to highlight the so-called *Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park* project: through the construction of a 100MW photovoltaic plant, that will cost 272 million US

¹⁶ Italian Industry and Commerce Office in the UAE [IICUAE] (2021).

dollars, Dubai will reach five per cent of renewable-solar energy share in 2030¹⁷. The creation of such huge project will go through four different phases, two of which have been already completed but the last phase is the most ambitious one. As stated in the *Presentazione Paese 2022*, upon completion of the project, the solar power plant will have an area of 214 square kilometers and a 260-meter-high central reflective tower consisting of mirrors and heliostats in order to focus light and create heat, which in turn will be used to power turbines and generate electricity.

But one has to keep in mind that Dubai's main richness come from the huge presence of tourists coming from all over the world: indeed, the other sector on which the Emirate has put great attention and effort is the one of tourism. There are several examples that can be made but there are a couple that truly deserve to be mentioned: the first is the project called *Aladdin City* while the second is the *Dubai Parks and Resorts*. The former, announced by the Dubai Municipality, is the creation of a *New Aladdin City* in the middle of the Dubai Creek. This project has been inspired by the stories of Aladdin and Sinbad and it will comprehend three towers, both for residential and commercial usage, and it will expand itself for more than 450 meters¹⁸. The construction of climatized bridges and moveable floors in order to connect towers, parkings and pathways will be the characteristic feature of such project. On the other hand, the project *Dubai Parks and Resorts* is based on the construction of *Motiongate Dubai*, *Bollywood Parks Dubai*, *Legoland Dubai* and *Legoland Water Park* which will offer different memorable experiences with more than hundreds indoor and outdoor attractions to tourists from all over the world¹⁹.

¹⁷ Italian Industry and Commerce Office in the UAE [IICUAE] (2021).

¹⁸ Italian Industry and Commerce Office in the UAE [IICUAE] (2021).

¹⁹ Italian Industry and Commerce Office in the UAE [IICUAE] (2021).

I.I.II The immigrant workforce in Dubai

The two above-mentioned examples show how the Emirate at hand is deeply concerned with tourism, that in turn represents one of the main sources of profit for Dubai. This is the main difference that lies between the two most important Emirates of the Federation, Abu Dhabi and Dubai: while the former has gone through the discovery of oil in the late 1950s, the latter took sixteen years more to find it but they base their economy on completely different activities. As it has been stated in *Demography, Migration, and the Labour Market in the UAE* by Françoise De Bel-Air, Abu Dhabi main reason of richness is its policy based on oil, gas and hydrocarbons. In addition to this, Abu Dhabi is even more “conservative” about the topic regarding the migrants’ incorporation: this Emirate gives particular benefits, advantages and priority to blood descent people in order to easily grant the citizenship while the *jus solis* people find many obstacles and difficulties for obtaining the citizenship²⁰.

Regarding this, during my trip to Abu Dhabi I met Ali Salah, a 29-years-old man whose parents come from Egypt but he was born and has been raised in Abu Dhabi. Despite having studied in the Emirate, having lived in the Emirate for his whole life, having a well rewarded job as engineer and supervisor of his team, Ali has not the right to have the citizenship of the Emirate because his family is non-Emiratis. Moreover, he widely explained me that in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi one can gain the citizenship only if the father is a local whereas if the mother comes from the Emirate -but not the father- the children can not gain the citizenship.

On the contrary, Dubai is much more inclusive than Abu Dhabi. This is linked to the fact that, differently from Abu Dhabi, Dubai’s main policy is dependent on foreign direct investment (FDI), in particular it’s main policy is based on “mega real estate projects”, which in turn explains the reasons why Dubai has been severely hit by the 2008’s financial crisis²¹. Thanks to the Abu Dhabi’s financial assistance, Dubai was able to recover from the crisis which has “solidified the economic and socio-political power of the capital city”, as it can be read in the paper *Demography, Migration, and the Labour Market in the UAE*. The years that followed

²⁰ De Bel-Air (2015).

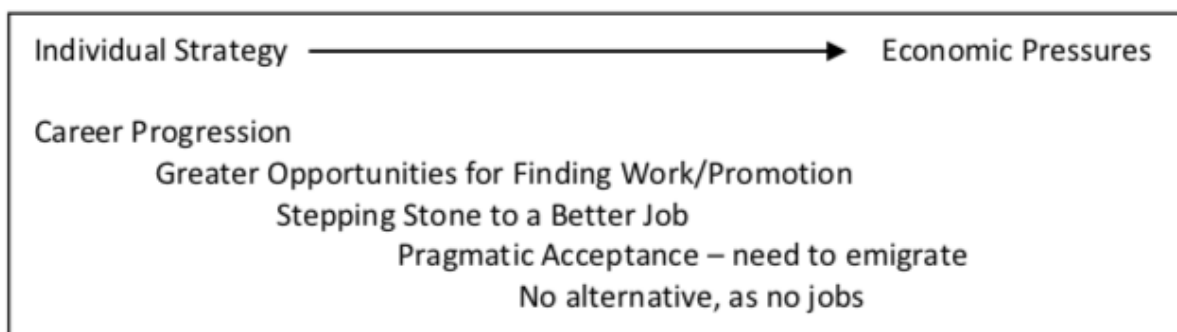
²¹ De Bel-Air (2015).

the crisis have been featured by a rise in hiring foreign workers due to the creation and planning of large scale projects.

So, it is clear that the population of Dubai is a melting pot of different cultures and traditions and that immigrant workers constitute a substantial portion of it.

As it can be read in the work written by Julia Connell and John Burgess *The Labour Market, Immigration and the Building of Dubai*, the labour market of Dubai is dominated by migrant workers, who are estimated to account for 90 to 95 per cent of the total workforce. The reasons that bring one person to migrate and to find work in a foreign Country are different but it can be stated that they generally are based on the desire and expectation of professional and personal improvements, being them some lifestyle changes, improved wages and better job prospects.

Figure I.I: The Reasons why Workers decide to emigrate



Source: *The Labour Market, Immigration and the Building of Dubai*, adapted from Wright, T. (2006) *Problems and Experiences of Ethnic Minority and Migrant Workers in Hotels and Restaurants in England*.

The rapid development of Dubai in less than sixty years has been possible thanks to the massive labour immigration, which works as follows: the employment agencies are the intermediary tool that recruit and manage the immigrant workforce. In addition to this, these agencies are even committed to the training and payment of the workers. As it has been noted above, the years following 2008 have testified an openness of Dubai to all foreign workers (independently from their Country of origin) in order to realize many different important projects. Indeed, the settlement of a very diverse foreign population lead in 2011 to a 96 per

cent (in numbers it is translated into 1,273,166 non-Emiratis persons) of immigrant workforce²².

Figure I.II: Employed workforce from different geographical areas in Dubai during 2011

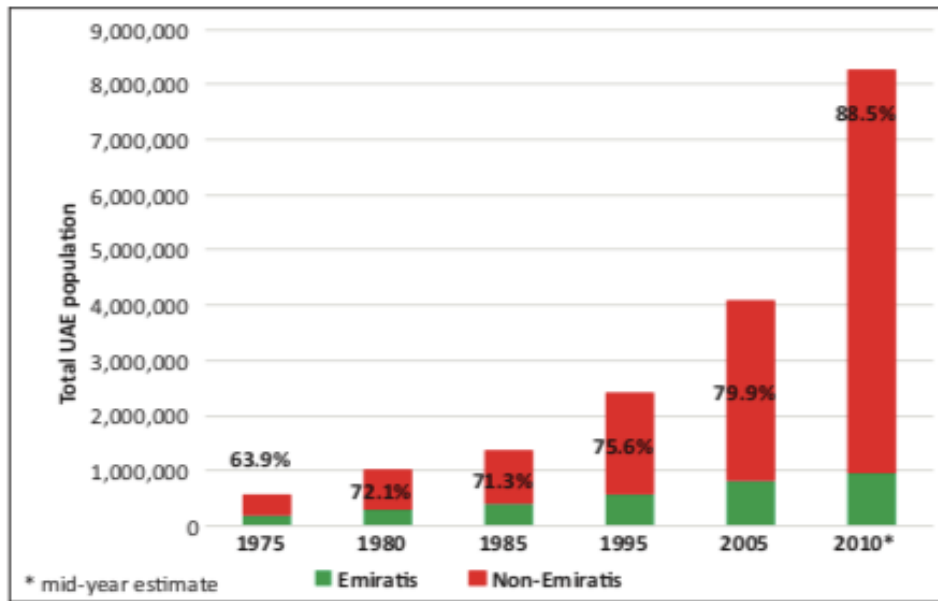
	Number	%
UAE	52,783	4.0
GCC countries	314	0.0
Other Arab countries	75,280	5.7
Asia	1,152,366	86.9
Africa	23,125	1.7
Europe	16,951	1.3
North America	3,524	0.3
Caribbean & Central America	381	0.0
South America	379	0.0
Oceania (Australia, New Zealand, etc.)	846	0.1
Total non-Emiratis	1,273,166	96.0
Grand total	1,325,949	100.0

Source: *Demography, Migration, and the Labour Market in the UAE* by Françoise De Bel-Air, taken from *Labour Force Survey 2011*, DSC.

Moreover, as it has been noticed in the paragraphs above, during the late 2000s the demographic expansion was particularly high. Indeed, in the two pictures below is it possible to see the changes of the population in the general Federation of the United Arab Emirates on one hand, and those in the particular case of Dubai on the other hand.

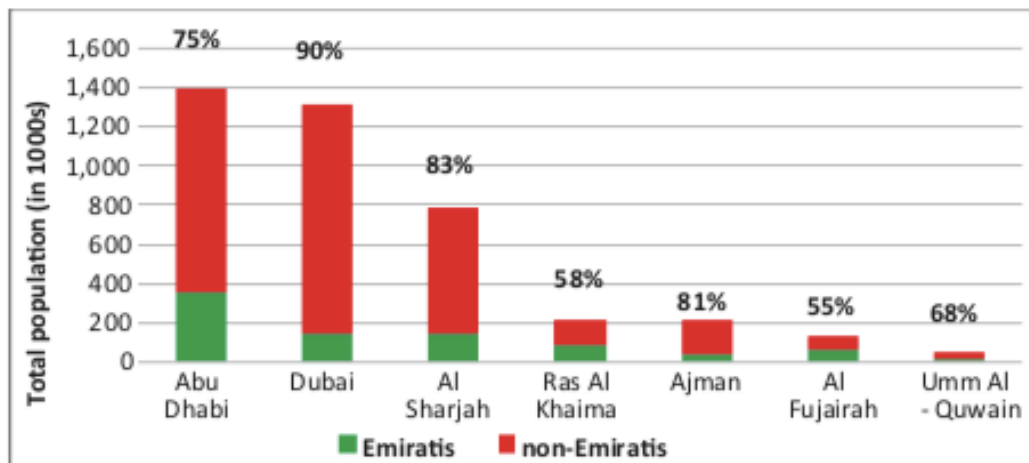
²² De Bel-Air (2015).

Figure I.III: United Arab Emirates' total population and the relative proportion of non-Emiratis in census years 1975, 1980, 1985, 1995, 2005, 2010



Source: *Demography, Migration, and the Labour Market in the UAE* by Françoise De Bel-Air, taken from NBS.

Figure I.IV: Proportion of non-nationals for each single Emirate



Source: *Demography, Migration, and the Labour Market in the UAE* by Françoise De Bel-Air, taken from Census 2005.

As it has been widely explained above and from what can be seen by the two above pictures, in the late 2000s the numbers and percentage of non-Emiratis workers in the UAE have widely risen and Dubai is the only Emirate where the non-nationals are much more than the Emiratis themselves, with a proportion of 90 per cent out of 100 per cent²³.

Notwithstanding what has been mentioned above, it is important to highlight that in the early 2010s the Federation of the United Arab Emirates had significantly reformed its migration policies for four main reasons, which can be summarized as follows²⁴:

- I. Emergence of nationals' unemployment
- II. Security
- III. Creation of the so-called "Emirates ID"
- IV. Call by various international human organizations for improving the working and living conditions of immigrant workers

I.I.III The new little improvements and phases experienced by the city of Dubai

As it has been declared by Françoise De Bel-Air in her work *Demography, Migration, and the Labour Market in the UAE*, the United Arab Emirates and especially Dubai are actually living a new phase of post-financial crisis era, which is making them more attentive and sensible to the enhancement of the political control and the management of natural and human resources. For instance, in 2013 the United Arab Emirates government amended a federal law to better safeguard victims of human trafficking²⁵. These small but important improvements have been the result of the four points written above.

²³ De Bel-Air (2015).

²⁴ De Bel-Air (2015).

²⁵ De Bel-Air (2015).

Starting from the early 2010s, the United Arab Emirates widely reformed its migration policies. Firstly, there was just 9.2 per cent of nationals in the total population who were employed in various sectors; secondly, there was the fear of revolutions within the Country due to the supposed sympathy of different Lebanese with Hezbollah, as well as the halt that was given to hiring workers from Tunisia, Egypt and all other Countries that were affected by the Arab uprisings; thirdly, the control and monitoring of expatriate residents and workers have been made much more strict and effective throughout the creation of the “Emirates ID”, a personal identification card that is incorporated in the population registry and that allows identifying and cataloguing all residents²⁶. Lastly, the introduction of a number of new measures have been made possible by the numerous calls advocated by sending Countries and international human rights organizations ²⁷.

Regarding this last point, the Labour Ministry at the beginning of 2009 worked on a specific action plan in order to raise awareness on human rights-related labour issues²⁸. In addition to this, a new facility at Dubai Police has been established in order to monitor human trafficking and to address the complaints from workers²⁹. It is of great importance to mention even the collaboration of the Ministry of Labour with the *International Labour Organization* (ILO) for the development and creation of a “Decent Work Programme”³⁰.

²⁶ De Bel-Air (2015).

²⁷ De Bel-Air (2015).

²⁸ De Bel-Air (2015).

²⁹ De Bel-Air (2015).

³⁰ De Bel-Air (2015).

I.II International Labour Organization: UAE general data and Conventions

The *International Labour Organization* (ILO) is the only tripartite United Nations agency that has been established in 1919 by the Peace Conference that followed the First World War. It brings together government, employers and workers of 187 member States in order to set labour standards, develop policies and devise programs promoting decent work for all women and men. Indeed, it has been created for humanitarian, political and economic reasons in order to put an end to intolerable exploitation of workers, to avoid social unrest and revolution coming from industrialization and to ensure fair competitiveness among Countries by improving their labour legislations³¹.

The *International Labour Organization* is based on two important values that it tries to promote through its daily policies, regulations and actions. The first value concerns the commitment to social justice, which is essential for universal and lasting peace; while the second value is related to the fundamental rights in the workplace³². The *International Labour Organization* evolves around the main subject of work, which is perceived as being central to everyone's well-being since it is part of every person's daily life and it is crucial for a person's dignity.

ILO's commitment to the topic of work has led it to be recognized as the world's authority on the world of work. Due to the fact that more than five hundred millions people have a job but they live in poverty and that hundreds of millions lack the basic labour rights that give them a healthy, safe and secure living, ILO developed the "International Labour Standards" in order to promote opportunities for both women and men to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and dignity³³.

³¹ Brino (2022).

³² International Labour Organization [ILO] (n.d.).

³³ International Labour Organization [ILO] (n.d.).

Thus, ILO's four strategic objectives to create greater opportunities for women and men to decent employment and income, to enhance the coverage and effectiveness of social protection for all, to promote and realize standards and fundamental principles and rights at work and lastly, to strengthen tripartism and social dialogue are designed to meet the several labour standards that cover a variety of topics³⁴. The subjects addressed are freedom of association, child labour, violence and harassment, labour inspection and administration, collective bargaining, migrant workers, forced labour etc...

Nowadays, the *International Labour Organization* has four main goals: it calls for cooperation between governments, employers and workers in promoting and enhancing social justice with a view to universal and lasting peace; it advocates for the implementation of fundamental social rights at universal level; it acts for counteracting the downward pressure on national labour standards exerted by trade competition and lastly but not least, it tries to advance fair trade by ensuring that substandard working conditions are not a basis for reducing the costs of production³⁵.

In principle, the main point of interest for the *International Labour Organization* is work and the correlated rights that workers can and have to enjoy. Indeed, the *International Labour Organization* is the main regulatory actor who creates norms and rules to protect workers in the global scenario. In order to be the main regulatory actor, the *International Labour Organization* makes use of the labour law "as a complex interplay of norms, standards, principles to regulate the contractual relationship between workers and employer and to recognize a minimum system of protection for the employee worldwide"³⁶.

³⁴ Brino (2022).

³⁵ Brino (2022).

³⁶ Brino (2022).

I.II.I The relationship between the *International Labour Organization* and the United Arab Emirates

Before taking into account the particular case of the Emirate of Dubai, a brief explanation of the relationship between the Federation of the United Arab Emirates as a whole and the *International Labour Organization* is required.

The United Arab Emirates is an official Member of the above mentioned organization since 25th April 1972, it has been classified within the ILO Region of the Arab States and its correspondence language is English³⁷.

By analyzing the types of Conventions and Ratifications that have been signed and approved by the United Arab Emirates, it is immediately possible to recognize the other facade of the Country at hand, where apparently everything seems to work in a fair and right way while in reality some deep problems concerning human rights and the rights of workers are not protected and guaranteed at all.

The Country has signed a total of nine Conventions, among which six are fundamental ones (out of ten), one is a governance Convention (out of four) and two are technical Conventions (out of one hundred seventy-six)³⁸. Furthermore, as it has been stated by the official website of the *International Labour Organization*, “Out of 9 Conventions ratified by United Arab Emirates, of which 9 are in force, No Convention has been denounced; none have been ratified in the past 12 months”.

³⁷ International Labour Organization [ILO] (n.d.).

³⁸ International Labour Organization [ILO] (n.d.).

In particular, as shown in the table that follows, the topics regarding the ratified Conventions are:

Figure I.V: Conventions by categories ratified by the United Arab Emirates

Fundamental			
Convention	Date	Status	Note
C029 - Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)	27 May 1982	In Force	
C100 - Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100)	24 Feb 1997	In Force	
C105 - Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105)	24 Feb 1997	In Force	
C111 - Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)	28 Jun 2001	In Force	
C138 - Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) <i>Minimum age specified: 15 years</i>	02 Oct 1998	In Force	
C182 - Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)	28 Jun 2001	In Force	
Governance (Priority)			
Convention	Date	Status	Note
C081 - Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81)	27 May 1982	In Force	
Technical			
Convention	Date	Status	Note
C001 - Hours of Work (Industry) Convention, 1919 (No. 1)	27 May 1982	In Force	
C089 - Night Work (Women) Convention (Revised), 1948 (No. 89)	27 May 1982	In Force	

Source: International Labour Organization [ILO], n.d. (official website https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:11200:0::NO:11200:P11200_COUNTRY_ID:103495).

As it has been severely underlined by Julia Connell and John Burgess in their work *The Labour Market, Immigration and the Building of Dubai*, Dubai and the more general case of the United Arab Emirates have a “highly rudimentary system of labour regulation”, thus it follows that it does not support core and fundamental labour standards. Indeed, there are not the rights to join a trade union, to collectively bargain and those that make possible the elimination of forced and compulsory labour. The type of government in the United Arab Emirates is that of a constitutional monarchy, which means that the monarch is *de facto* the head of the state but he/she shares power with a constitutionally organized government³⁹.

³⁹ Encyclopaedia Britannica (n.d.).

However, the government both in Dubai and in the United Arab Emirates has full control over many aspects, for instance the media are highly supervised and there are a series of rules that both nationals and foreigners have to fully respect. One aspect in which the control of the government is widely visible is the impossibility for workers to join trade unions, bargain and strike. This kind of policy has led Dubai, together with its Country of belonging, to be defined as an Emirate where there is a substantial lack of political and civil rights which consequently brings to the absence of labour rights⁴⁰. To be more precise, it follows that the existence of a strong civil society enables the establishment of democratic institutions but if these are weak and poorly developed, the whole industrial relations system will not enable both collective participation (both collective bargaining and collective agreements) and a decent working environment⁴¹.

I.II.II Deep analysis of particular fundamental and technical Conventions not ratified by the United Arab Emirates: reasons and consequences

Among the sixty-six Conventions not ratified by the government of the United Arab Emirates there are two of fundamental type that regard the “Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention” (C087) and the “Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention” (C098), dated 1948 and 1949 respectively⁴². In addition to these two Conventions not ratified by the United Arab Emirates, it is of fundamental importance to pay attention to other two technical Conventions that have not been signed by the Country at hand; they are: “Migration for Employment Convention” (C097), that is dated back 1949 and “Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention” (C143), which has been articulated in 1975⁴³.

⁴⁰ Burgess & Connell (2011).

⁴¹ Burgess & Connell (2011).

⁴² International Labour Organization [ILO] (n.d.).

⁴³ International Labour Organization [ILO] (n.d.).

By studying and analyzing the above-mentioned Conventions, it is immediately possible to understand the reasons why the United Arab Emirates have not ratified them. In particular, the “Migration for Employment Convention” (C097), that is made up of twenty-three articles, regards the rights of migrant workers to not live and work under any discrimination of any type and to be treated as equal as nationals. Indeed, the first part of *Article 6* cites as follows:

Each Member for which this Convention is in force undertakes to apply, without discrimination in respect of nationality, race, religion or sex, to immigrants lawfully within its territory, treatment no less favourable than that which it applies to its own nationals in respect of the following matters:

(a) in so far as such matters are regulated by law or regulations, or are subject to the control of administrative authorities--

(i) remuneration, including family allowances where these form part of remuneration, hours of work, overtime arrangements, holidays with pay, restrictions on home work, minimum age for employment, apprenticeship and training, women's work and the work of young persons;

(ii) membership of trade unions and enjoyment of the benefits of collective bargaining;

(iii) accommodation

It is evident that the migrant for employment, “a person who migrates from one country to another with a view to being employed otherwise than on his own account and includes any person regularly admitted as a migrant for employment”, as it has been stated in *Article 11* of the Convention, must be guaranteed a decent living both in the private and professional sphere.

This is in line with the definition that has been given to “labour” by the *International Labour Organization* “Declaration of Philadelphia” (10th May 1944): it does not represent a commodity. In fact, the Conference reaffirms it as one out of four fundamental principles on which the Organization is based through the first point of the first article.

In the case of the United Arab Emirates the above considerations are not respected not only in theory but also in practice. In Dubai I saw workers cleaning the windows of the skyscrapers without the adequate protections, building the streets during the hottest hours of the day, repairing damaged street lamps in the middle of the night, making the pavement in the Marina Walk using the drill without the right protections etc...

The migrant worker from under-developed, third-world Countries in the city and Emirate of Dubai is seen and treated as a mere commodity because fundamental rights are not guaranteed at all. I was particularly and badly surprised when I saw a young worker removing a chewing gum from the pavement: immediately, my first thinking was about the effectiveness of a city that wants to make everything perfect but in a second moment I reflected about that worker. The work he was performing, does it give him dignity and respect?. I do not think so, due to the surely extreme low salary and bad conditions. Every work is worthy and there should not be shame on those who perform the less qualified jobs but it is even of equal importance to understand whether removing a chewing gum from the street is truly a work or just an activity that the government wants to be performed in order to make the tourist and the richer people feel everyday more attracted by a city that can give them everything. However, in Dubai giving the richer everything means giving nothing to the poorer.

This explains why the United Arab Emirates did not ratify the above-analyzed Convention as well as the “Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention” (C143). Like the former, even this one is about the working and living conditions of the migrant worker, that are immediately explained in *Article 1* which declares that “each Member for which this Convention is in force undertakes to respect the basic human rights of all migrant workers”. The *Article 2* strengthens the point of the first Article by making clear that prior to, before and after arrival the migrant employee should not be subject to any kind of discrimination and abuses:

1. Each Member for which this Convention is in force shall systematically seek to determine whether there are illegally employed migrant workers on its territory and whether there depart from, pass through or arrive in its territory any movements of migrants for employment in which the migrants are subjected during their journey, on arrival or during their period of

residence and employment to conditions contravening relevant international multilateral or bilateral instruments or agreements, or national laws or regulations.

2. The representative organisations of employers and workers shall be fully consulted and enabled to furnish any information in their possession on this subject.

The missed ratification of even this Convention must not surprised because, as has been written in *The Labour Market, Immigration and the Building of Dubai* by Julia Connell and John Burgess, Dubai has a “dark side” that collocates migrant workers away from the modern apartments and hotel blocks, making them live in poor overcrowded buildings in the middle of the desert, struggling with extreme heat and oppressive living conditions. The life of these workers, especially those who work in the construction sector, revolves around working long hours under difficult conditions and commuting to labour camps. In addition to this, the immigrant workers in Dubai have no voice in the workplace, have no citizenship rights and first and foremost, they are highly dependent on contractors and employment agents that gain control over them by withdrawing them their passport⁴⁴. In this way, the immigrant workers are no more free to leave the Country when they want to.

I.II.III The new policies and programs developed in collaboration with the *International Labour Organization* to foster the living and working conditions of immigrant workers

On the contrary, little steps forward seem to start to take place due to the ongoing pressure exercised by sending Countries and international organizations that try to urge Dubai and the United Arab Emirates in general to take action against their own policies that do not safeguard the human and working rights of the migrant workers from poor, less developed and underdeveloped Countries. One example can be found by the collaboration of the Dubai Ministry of Labour with the *International Labour Organization* to accept, develop and promote the *Decent Work Country Programmes* (DWCPs).

⁴⁴ Burgess & Connell (2011).

These programmes are organized around a limited number of Country's priorities and outcomes and they have been established as the main vehicle for delivering ILO support to Countries⁴⁵. The two basic objectives around which the programs evolve themselves are the promotion of decent work as a key component of national development strategies and the organization of ILO knowledge, instruments, advocacy and cooperation at the service of the Country that takes part to such program⁴⁶.

In line with this, in the article *Towards Better Working Conditions in the UAE - ILO and UAE launch comprehensive capacity building programme for labour inspectors*, released in the official website of the *International Labour Organization*, it is underlined the launch of a comprehensive labour inspection capacity-building program in order to strengthen the capacities of the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization in the UAE “to improve labour working conditions and occupational safety and health”. The main end of such program is the training and creation of well-equipped inspectors who will be specialized in the protection of foreign workers and employers. These graduate inspectors will also gain training skills to ensure continuous training for all newly hired inspectors in order to create a continuous circle of training.

The program at hand can be divided into three streams: firstly, the training inspectors will acquire the training-of-trainers methodologies and the technical modules to build a pool of inspector trainers within the ministry; secondly, the trained inspectors will deliver the acquired knowledge to the other inspectors and thirdly, the promotion of knowledge sharing amongst inspectors will be fostered in order to ensure that the learned material is also applied in the inspection visit process⁴⁷.

⁴⁵ International Labour Organization [ILO] (n.d.).

⁴⁶ International Labour Organization [ILO] (n.d.).

⁴⁷ International Labour Organization [ILO] (2017).

The learning activities of such program will be delivered both in-class lessons and online. The objectives of such program and training are finalized to make labour inspectors able to understand International Labour Standards and Conventions of labour inspection, describe responsibilities, functions, scope, principles, and main characteristics of labour inspection, strengthen the ethical behaviour and decision making in labour inspection and promote ethical and socially responsible practices in the workplace and to describe labour inspection policy and designing strategies for promoting compliance⁴⁸.

Furthermore, during the period between 1st April 2015 and 28th February 2018 the *International Labour Organization* worked with the UAE Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation to strengthen governance of foreign labour. This activity and policy have been made possible by building capacity in labour market policy making, improving inspection systems and by implementing mechanisms for dispute resolution. As it can be read in the article *Improved Labour Migration Governance Programme* released in the official website of the *International Labour Organization*, the ILO provided technical cooperation in order to allow the United Arab Emirates “to develop capacities in labour market policy making and evaluation, improve the labour inspection, combat forced labour and develop mechanisms to improve access to justice for foreign workers”. The three main outcomes that were supposed to emerge from such program were the improvement of the capacity of the labour market policy making and evaluation, the bettering of the inspection’s activity of the labour system in the private sector in order to allow the system to prevent and identify forced labour and finally, the prevention and resolution of dispute mechanisms for improving the access to justice for migrant workers.

The *International Labour Organization* has always highlighted the importance of migrant workers who “continue to make significant contributions to their societies and can do so much more when they are empowered and able to negotiate on a more equal footing with their employers (...)”, as has been stated in the article *Protecting the most vulnerable: Why protecting the rights of migrant workers remains a critical priority* that can be found in the official website of the *International Labour Organization*.

⁴⁸ International Labour Organization [ILO] (2017).

In the United Arab Emirates over than 85 per cent of the Country's resident population are foreign laborers and the majority of them come from third world Countries, underdeveloped and poor. For this basic fact it is really important for the well-development of the Country itself and of each single Emirate to foster, promote and develop policies, programmes and activities that enable migrant workers to have a decent private and working life.

I.III General condition of the labour market in Dubai

I.III.I “Work for a Brighter Future”

In the Report for the 5th Ministerial Consultation of the ADD (the acronym stands for the member States of the so called “Abu Dhabi Dialogue”), named *Preparing for a brighter future of work* and released by the *International Labour Organization*, the main point of discussion evolves around the topic of the future of work and how it will be framed.

The Prime Minister of Sweden Stefan Löfven in the video “Work for a Brighter Future”, that can be found in the official website of the *International Labour Organization*, declares that “the future of work is basically putting people first”. His words then have been supported by the belief and hope of the Chief Executive Officer of Norway Kristin Skogen Lund who hopes that the future of work will be more human-centric thanks even to the publication of the above mentioned Report. The Report, according to Haifa Al Kaylani, Founder Chairperson of the Arab International Women's Forum, it is inclusive of all and it is about equity, social dialogue and social justice. In addition to them, even the Former Secretary-General of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry Did Singh says that the Report at hand is valid for industry, governance and unions; basically it is valid for everybody. One more time, the Former General Secretary of UNI Global Union Philip Jennings in the analyzed video reports how the Report *Preparing for a brighter future of work* will make government once again focused on what really matters, that is the conditions of governments' people and their own citizens. So, the Report at hand evolves around the important subject of work and how it has to be linked with human beings.

I.III.II The “Abu Dhabi Dialogue”

A previous step forward has been made by the formation of the "Abu Dhabi Dialogue", that is a dialogue between eleven Colombo Process Countries and nine other Countries. To explain it in a simple way, such dialogue is about Asian Countries of origin and destination that discuss about a possible way to improve and better the management of temporary contractual labour mobility. The Dialogue, which was first established in 2008, has as a central goal the building of trust and the increase of cooperation among Asian Countries of origin and destination on issues related to labour migration governance.

Indeed, as it can be read in *Abu Dhabi Dialogue - Submission to the International Migration Review Forum*, which has been released in May 2022, there are three pillars of effective governance that pave the way for the promotion of certain specific thematic priorities and of the design of related programs. The pillars and principles are “at the heart of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue's commitment to facilitating safe, orderly and regular temporary labour migration”⁴⁹. The pillars at hand are about the need to ensure the protection and fulfillment of workers’ skills, goals and aspirations by enabling them to benefit from the outcomes of temporary labour migration, to adapt to a changing business’ and workers’ environment and needs and finally, to support the labour market institutions in order to help them in the formation of right labour migration policies⁵⁰.

The “Abu Dhabi Dialogue” has been called in this way since the First Ministerial Consultation took place in the capital of the United Arab Emirates in 2008. The States involved in such Dialogue and relative consultations were (and still are): China, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam (the States that mainly constitute the Countries of origin), and Bahrain, Kuwait, Malaysia, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, United Arab Emirates and Yemen (the Member States that are mainly designed as the Countries of destination)⁵¹.

⁴⁹ United Nations (2022).

⁵⁰ United Nations (2022).

⁵¹ International Labour Organization [ILO] (2008).

In the article *Abu Dhabi Dialogue on Contractual Labour for Cooperation between Countries of Origin and Destination in Asia*, that can be found in the official website of the *International Labour Organization*, it is underlined the importance of the hosting and funding of the Ministerial Consultation between the Colombo Process Countries and Asian destination Countries by the Government of the United Arab Emirates because it clearly explains the interstate collaboration.

Moreover, it is important to remember one more time that just in the single case of Dubai, labour immigration played and still continues to play a fundamental role and integral part for the rapid development of the Emirate and homonym city. However, nearly all immigration to Dubai is short term and transitory, limited to specific employment contracts⁵². This outlines the importance of the participation of the United Arab Emirates due to their internal policies and history: their fast and big development has been made possible thanks to the work of millions immigrant workers who must be protected by guaranteeing their rights in the workplace as well as in their life.

The partnerships between the Countries of the “Abu Dhabi Dialogue” are based on the strong wish to foster information sharing in the areas of labour market trends, skill profiles, temporary contractual workers and remittances policies; to promote technical cooperation through the building of effective matching of labour demand and labour supply; to enable effective interstate cooperation by preventing illegal recruitment practices and to underline the importance of capacity building in order to develop a framework for a comprehensive approach to managing the entire cycle of temporary contractual mobility⁵³. Indeed, their action-oriented work is an ongoing activity that seek to engage other relevant stakeholders for the implementation of other useful initiatives.

⁵² Burgess & Connell (2011).

⁵³ International Labour Organization [ILO] (2008).

The work, policies and commitment that have been initiated in the Asian continent by the development of the “Abu Dhabi Dialogue”, starting from the First Ministerial Consultation in 2008, are now fostered and extended by the Fifth Ministerial Consultation that took place in Dubai in October 2019 and which led to the publication of the paper *Preparing for a brighter future of work* by the *International Labour Organization*.

The fast development of a Country like the United Arab Emirates, and in particular of Dubai, is a clear evidence that economic growth and investments have generated demand for labour at all skill levels. Indeed, this high demand has led millions of workers from low income and emerging economies in Asia to the Countries of the Gulf. While these workers represent the answer from Countries of origin to the high demand coming from the Countries of destination, they are even the main vehicle of supply of labour in destination Countries by effectively helping them to grow and to efficiently transform their economies⁵⁴.

Indeed, worldwide economy has always been characterized by both pull and push: on one hand, there is the pull of opportunities while on the other hand there is the push that arise from the decent work deficits that continue to drive international labour migration and mobility around the world⁵⁵.

However, it should not be forget that labour migration and mobility create big challenges in terms of protecting migrant workers’ rights under international human rights and labour standards, “especially for temporary migrant workers”, as has been outlined in the paper *Preparing for a brighter future of work* by *International Labour Organization*.

⁵⁴ International Labour Organization [ILO] (2019).

⁵⁵ International Labour Organization [ILO] (2019).

I.III.III The drivers that foster the future of work

Despite the fact that the “Abu Dhabi Dialogue” Countries of origin’s economies are growing faster than those of the Countries of destination, thus reflecting a process of economic convergence, the majority of them remain considerably poor. In fact, the average GDP per capita in destination Countries is US\$ 22,701 compared to an average of just US\$ 2,369 for Countries of origin⁵⁶. As a consequence, this differential push people to migrate in search of more decent better-paid employment.

In the paper at hand four main drivers for the future of work are taken into account, they are: demographics, technological progress, climate change and globalization. These drivers represent both the opportunities and challenges for temporary migrant workers as well as the profound implications that they will bring for the future of the world of work.

• Demography

In the case of demographics the main point of focus is the aging of population that requires more workers employed in the service sectors and in those of health and care. The aging populations around the world will continue to increase the demand for care workers particularly in high-income Countries, including the GCC Countries. For instance, in 2013 in the Arab States there were 3.16 million migrant domestic works, representing 27.4 per cent of the global total⁵⁷. But, in the particular case of Dubai the problem of aging population is not the most important one since the population is made up of young, middle-aged people who find themselves in the Emirate for job affairs.

Furthermore, it should be remembered that the foreign nationals of the entire population represent the 88.5 per cent while they constitute the 96 per cent among the employed population. The strict policies of the Emirate at hand declare that once retired, foreign nationals have to go back to their Country of origin and to leave the Emirate that hosted them

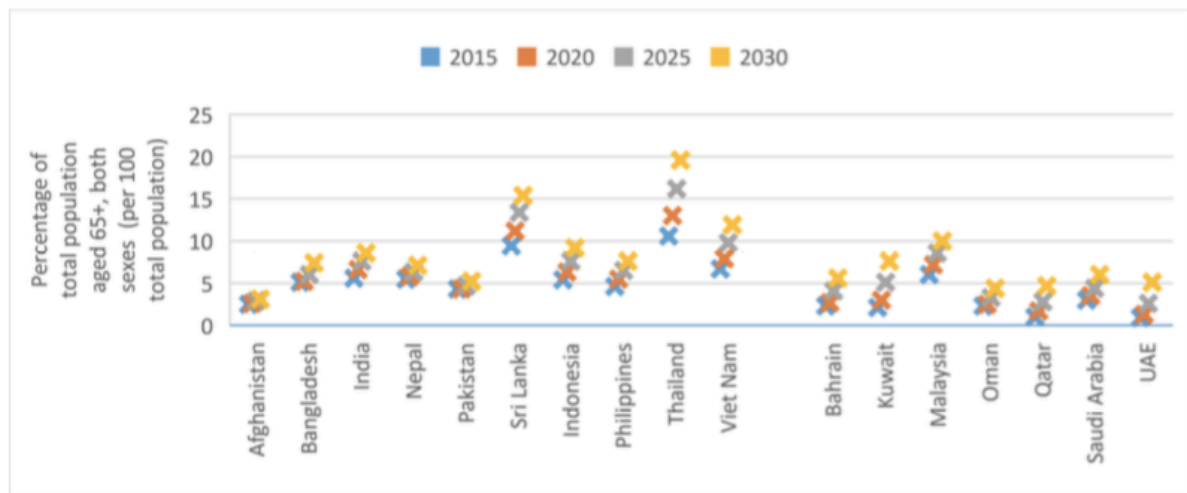
⁵⁶ International Labour Organization [ILO] & World Bank World Development Indicators (2019).

⁵⁷ International Labour Organization [ILO] (2019).

during their working age. Indeed, during my period in Dubai was not easy to find old persons around the city because for the facilities it offers, for the way it has been constructed and for the services it provides it is not a city made for aged, old persons.

By looking at the below table, it is possible to see that the United Arab Emirates is the Country where there have been and there will be the lower degree of aging population since its population is made up of young persons, as previously highlighted.

Figure I.VI: The rate at which the population is aging. In some “Abu Dhabi Dialogue” Member States is aging faster than others.



Source: International Labour Organization [ILO], 2019 “Report for the 5th Ministerial Consultation of the ADD” and United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2019. World Population Prospects, 2019.

- **Technological progress**

Another driver for the future of work that has been mentioned earlier is that of technological progress. When the topic of technical progress is considered, it should be outlined that it is strictly correlated to the high impact of automation in the workplace. One example that immediately comes up to my mind is the one related to metro and tram. In Dubai the metro, the tram and the monorail that links The Palm to the inland of the city are all automated, which means that there are no women nor men who drive them. As European citizen it has been something that I immediately observed since in many cities of Europe and of other

Countries of the world still there are persons who are specifically employed for driving tram, trains and metros.

Indeed, in the short run automation will reduce demand for workers in specific sectors that use robots -like that of automobiles- but at the same time it will not represent an obstacle for workers employed in the labour-intensive sectors -like construction, gig-economy and services- of the Gulf Countries like the United Arab Emirates.

However, technological progress is not only about automation but it is about digital adoption too. Linked to this, it must be stated that the United Arab Emirates represents the Country where the access to the internet by individuals, the online presence of business and the provision of online services by governments is one of the most advanced⁵⁸. Two examples can be mentioned regarding this point: the first one is the wide use in Dubai of the app “Justlife”, while the other is the many services that the government of Dubai provides in its official website.

Once the app “Justlife” is downloaded and the registration is done, in the section “Home” there is the list of all available services that the user can book directly online with the best offers. Such services comprehend all the needs that individuals can have, from “Healthcare at Home”, “General Cleaning” and “Pet Care at Home” to “Packers & Movers” and “Handyman & Maintenance”. In addition to this, the app sends emails in order to promote its offerings and to persuade the user to invite his/her friends to use the app for obtaining special discounts.

The services provided are effective and recognized even by the government because, to bring a practical example, I used the app to book a PCR test in order to move to Abu Dhabi for the weekend. Differently from Italy, for instance, booking online was easy and saved me more time, the test was effectively recognized by the State, the nurse came directly to my house and the cost for everything was really cheap since I paid the equivalent of twenty-six euros and I obtained the result within twenty-four hours.

⁵⁸ International Labour Organization [ILO] (2019).

Another example that shows the high usage of internet and the related services in Dubai is directly visible in the official website of the government: the government itself promotes various initiatives that foster and promote digitalization. For instance, the “Smart App” initiative is a dashboard for the smart application for employers and workers. The user can view all the information related to the employer such as establishments, domestic workers, statistics, and reports, and at the same time he/she can view the worker’s data, contact data, and wages protection service data⁵⁹.

Thanks to the use of such application, the worker or business owner can sign and end transactions through the application without the need to visit service centers and the employer can send contract data to the worker, who in turn has the possibility of remote approval. The contract data is displayed to the worker through the application and the related remote signing and approval are possible without the need to visit service centers⁶⁰. Another use that is possible to do by such application is the booking of tickets for the queue system for centers.

Another fact that clearly shows the high use of internet devices and applications in Dubai, as well as in the more general case of the United Arab Emirates, is the presence of almost every service in the major social medias. Indeed, even the official website of the United Arab Emirates Ministry of Human Resources & Emiratisation points out its presence in the major social medias like Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn. As it has been stated in the Report for the 5th Ministerial Consultation of the ADD *Preparing for a brighter future of work*, the Countries of destination of the “Abu Dhabi Dialogue” which have an higher level of complements have higher levels of digital adoption.

⁵⁹ United Arab Emirates Ministry of Human Resources & Emiratisation [MOHRE] (2022).

⁶⁰United Arab Emirates Ministry of Human Resources & Emiratisation [MOHRE] (2022).

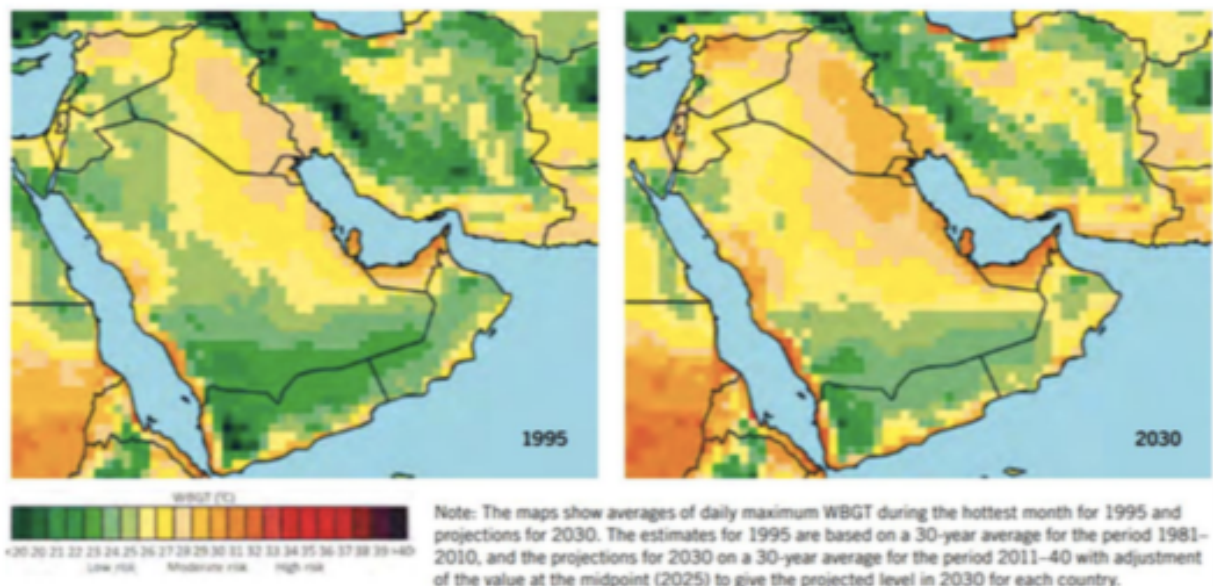
- **Climate change**

The other driver that is analyzed for having a better understanding of the future of work is the one of climate change. Differently from the other drivers that have diverse levels of affection between Countries of origin and Countries of destination, climate change is affecting the world of work in both Countries of origin and destination at almost the same rate.

The consequences that will follow from a rise in temperatures and of extreme weather events will “put pressure on local labour markets and reduce the availability of income-earning opportunities and jobs (...), which could lead to increased “distress migration””⁶¹.

The *International Labour Organization* has estimated that the Arab States are particularly subjected to an increase in temperatures that follows from global warming. As a result of heat stress, the Arab States, the United Arab Emirates included, are supposed to lose 1.1 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2030⁶².

Figure I.VII: Two projections dated 1995 and 2030 about the incidence of heat stress during the hottest month in Western Asia



Source: International Labour Organization [ILO], 2019 “Report for the 5th Ministerial Consultation of the ADD” and ILO estimates based on the HadGEM2 and GFDL-ESM2M climate models.

⁶¹ International Labour Organization [ILO] (2019).

⁶² International Labour Organization [ILO] (2019).

Indeed, as it can be seen by the above picture, the United Arab Emirates is the Country majorly hit by the increase of temperatures and global warming. The “heat stress” phenomenon will be made more common due to the rise of global temperatures caused by climate change. This will have and actually has serious consequences for the immigrant workers because excess heat increases both workers’ vulnerability and risks, that can show themselves by heatstroke and even death⁶³.

For example, during my visit to Abu Dhabi in the weekend 23rd and 24th of April 2022 I saw workers fixing the street lamps in the middle of the night. The policeman who was regulating the traffic explained me and my friends that the work was carried out in the first hours of the night because during the day the temperatures were too high.

- **Globalization**

The last driver for the future of work that has been previously mention is the one of globalization: the movement of people, goods and services across borders has been central for the growth and development of the world’s economy. In recent years the global trade has slowed which implies that the commodity prices are unlikely to recover and this will negatively impact the economies of the Gulf Countries and other resource-rich nations⁶⁴. The Countries’ economies that will be negatively affected by such reduction of trade flows will be those of the so-called Countries of origin. In such Countries and labour markets the number of jobs available will be reduced though lower commodity prices, which will benefit those who are large importers of resources, like India⁶⁵.

⁶³ International Labour Organization [ILO] (2019).

⁶⁴ International Labour Organization [ILO] (2019).

⁶⁵ International Labour Organization [ILO] (2019).

But, in recent years the process of globalization has been supported by increased investment around the world and on a more positive note, developing Countries benefited from an increase in FDI flows from US\$ 691 billion in 2017 to US\$ 706 billion in 2018, with the largest share going to developing Asia⁶⁶. Overall, Countries are able to access capital cheaply to fund infrastructure and other types of investments due to low interest rates and this will favor workers in some specific job sectors⁶⁷.

I.III.IV Labour conditions and opportunities all around the world: *International Labour Organization’s Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work*

The 2019 *International Labour Organization’s Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work* acts on three main areas in order to foster the labour conditions and opportunities all around the world. The three main areas of interest evolve around the major investments in people’s capabilities, in the institution of work and in decent and sustainable work.

The first area of action implies the enhancement of the employability of workers by enabling them to up-skill and re-skill through lifelong learning systems, by supporting people going through important transitions such as those from school to work, from work to training, from job to job and from job to retirement, by underlining the importance of equal treatment and opportunities for both men and women to allow them to unfold their full potential and lastly, by granting universal access to sustainable social protection system in order to allow people (and workers in particular) to go through future transitions without fear and insecurity⁶⁸. In this respect, in the video “Work for a Brighter Future”, the Professor of Labor Economics and Executive Advisors for Academic Affairs at the Keio University in Tokyo, Japan, Atsushi Seike asserts that “it is very important for us to promote the lifelong active society in which the will and the abilities of people of all generations can be fully realized”.

⁶⁶ International Labour Organization [ILO] (2019).

⁶⁷ International Labour Organization [ILO] (2019).

⁶⁸ International Labour Organization [ILO] (2019).

The second area of action is the one that underlines the importance of investing in the institutions of work. This is of fundamental importance because it assures that labour is characterized by freedom, dignity, economic security and equal opportunities, that can be achieved through employment contracts, regulations, collective representation and agreements and through labour inspection systems⁶⁹. When these institutions are well-designed, effective and operational, they can also increase the overall performance of labour markets and economies as a whole. In particular, migrant workers often suffer from the lack of appropriate institutions which provide protection and rights at work.

Indeed, the first migrant worker who I have interviewed, Gabriella Camalo said me that she does not feel protected by the government because in Dubai there are not appropriate institutions that help and sustain the workers. According to her, the Ministry of Labour that represents the only institution where workers and immigrant workers can go to claim their rights is not very attentive to their needs and poor conditions of working environment. This has led her to avoid to go there for complaining about bad and not-that-fair situations that she had to face in the workplace since “the government does not care about us”, as she asserted.

In the United Arab Emirates the development of institutions for bettering the conditions of workers and those they meet in the workplace is slow and it should be improved in an effective way. For instance, in the table that follows it is possible to see the missed ratification by the Country at hand of the Conventions regarding the topic of “freedom of association”. In fact, strikes are not allowed in the whole Country and workers are not represented by any trade unions. The only representative they have, so to say, is the Ministry of Labour.

Although the United Arab Emirates has ratified during the years other Conventions regarding the topics of “Forced Labour”, “Discrimination” and “Child Labour”, several steps forward must be made since acts of discrimination in the working place are widely present, especially against workers coming from less developed Countries, like India. For instance, in the interview that I have done to Lucille Quinny, a thirty-six years old female immigrant worker who lives in Dubai since 2008, she explained me that she has been victim of discrimination in

⁶⁹ International Labour Organization [ILO] (2019).

her past workplace in a Japanese company, which deals with construction equipment, due to her nationality.

Figure I.VIII: Ratifications of ILO’s fundamental Conventions by Member States of the “Abu Dhabi Dialogue”

Country	Freedom of association		Forced labour		Discrimination		Child labour	
	C087	C098	C029	C105	C100	C111	C138	C182
Afghanistan				1963	1969	1969	2010	2010
Bangladesh	1972	1972	1972	1972	1998	1972		2001
China					1990	2006	1999	2002
India			1954	2000	1958	1960	2017	2017
Indonesia	1998	1957	1950	1999	1958	1999	1999	2000
Nepal		1996	2002	2007	1976	1974	1997	2002
Pakistan	1951	1952	1957	1960	2001	1961	2006	2001
Philippines	1953	1953	2005	1960	1953	1960	1998	2000
Sri Lanka	1995	1972	1950*	2003	1993	1998	2000	2001
Thailand			1969*	1969	1999	2017	2004	2001
Viet Nam		2019	2007		1997	1997	2003	2000
Bahrain			1981	1998		2000	2012	2001
Kuwait	1961	2007	1968	1961		1966	1999	2000
Malaysia		1961	1957	1958 (den..1990)	1997		1997	2000
Oman			1998	2005			2005	2001
Qatar			1998	2007		1976	2006	2000
Saudi Arabia			1978	1978	1978	1978	2014	2001
United Arab Emirates			1982	1997	1997	2001	1998	2001

Source: International Labour Organization [ILO], 2019 “Report for the 5th Ministerial Consultation of the ADD” and ILO NORMLEX.

The third and last area of action for the improvement of the future of work is the one that tackles with investments in decent and sustainable work. The promotion of sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, decent work for all and full and productive employment is one of the set goals in the 2019 *International Labour Organization* “Declaration for the Future of Works”⁷⁰. The increased awareness of climate change has led different Countries to develop and promote different global initiatives and national policy responses. In particular, over the last decade different Countries have put forward policies

⁷⁰ International Labour Organization [ILO] (2019).

based on the link between climate change, environmental sustainability and employment.

In the United Arab Emirates the sector of solar photovoltaics is the major one that creates most of the employment: in fact, this technology accounts for 1,900 jobs out of 2,200 jobs in renewable technologies in the Country at hand⁷¹. Another dimension that has received particular attention in both policy and academic spheres is technology, especially the one that is related to the automation and its effects on jobs. The United Arab Emirates is the Country that uses at high speed and rapid rates of adoption new forms of digital automation (from mechanization to artificial intelligence) compared with the other Countries of the world. Indeed, this is widely shown in the “Museum of the Future” of Dubai.

The “Museum of the Future” has been opened on the 22nd February 2022 in the Financial Centre of Dubai and it represents an intellectual and scientific hub. All the different levels through which the visitor has to go through are finalized for showing the project of improving and reducing the human activities with the help of robotics and automatization within the Emirate of Dubai. In the last level there is the exposition of automated cars and robotic dogs that are supposed to improve our lives and reduce our efforts while performing some jobs. Technology, robotics and automation are represented as the main supporter for human-beings lives and as something that does not belong to the distant future, but instead it is more imminent than we think.

⁷¹ International Labour Organization [ILO] (2019).

I.III.V The way the Emirate of Dubai is looking at the future by forgetting to take into account the foreign immigrant workforce

In the *UAE's Strategy for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR)* the vision for the UAE “to become a leading global hub and an open lab for the Fourth Industrial Revolution’s applications” is set up. Indeed, this Strategy aims to strengthen the Country’s position as a global hub and to increase its contribution to the national economy by means of advancing innovation and future technologies. The development of such project and strategy will require both highly skilled and low skilled migrant workers.

As it can be read in the official website of the United Arab Emirates,

The strategy outlines the path to achieve the future experience of government services by providing intelligent and interactive government services around the clock to achieve customer happiness and to position the UAE as a model for interactive cities using artificial intelligence to achieve sustainability. The strategy focuses on a number of key fields. Some of them are innovative education, artificial intelligence, intelligent genomic medicine and robotic healthcare⁷².

Furthermore, in line with the 8th Sustainable Development Goal, the *UAE's National Agenda 2021* set as national priority the one of “promoting innovation and research, supporting high value-adding sectors and strengthening the regulatory framework for key sectors”, as it has been stated in the Official Portal of the SDGs in the UAE.

The Ministry of Human Resources & Emiratization (MOHRE) is actually focused on the development of a system of policies, standards and institutional partnerships in order to empower the national labour force and to protect the work environment whilst reinforcing innovation. Among the policies and initiatives it can be found the one already mentioned above regarding the launch of smart apps in order to encourage efficiency and promote ease in service provision. Two examples of such initiative are the applications “Wajehni” and

⁷² United Arab Emirates Ministry of Human Resources & Emiratisation [MOHRE] (2021).

“Salamah”: the former aims at providing professional guidance to the UAE’s fresh graduates to identify work and internship opportunities while the latter focuses on employers, workers and doctors by aiming to be a platform where is it possible to instantly report any work-related injuries⁷³.

One more time it is important to highlight that these smart applications, projects and strategies are addressed to nationals of the United Arab Emirates and not to foreign workers, who are not taken into account. Even the last point that has been analyzed, regarding the 8th Sustainable Development Goal for the promotion of inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all is finalized to the bettering and improvement of the lives of national and local workers and not that of immigrant ones.

I.IV Migrant work: differences between the different jobs done by migrants

Immigrant workers are not equal. It is a matter of fact that even when the division of labour is taken into account, the workers coming from the western, developed and rich Countries are favored in the employment of high skilled and well-paid jobs whereas those workers who come from the so-called “Third World Countries” and the less developed ones have not the same opportunities to access higher levels of employment in the working environment of a foreign Country. This can be widely observed in the Emirate and homonym city of Dubai, where the division of labour based on nationality and Country of origin is more than visible.

As it has been underlined in the Report *Preparing for a Brighter Future of Work* published by the *International Labour Organization*, there are a series of reasons that contribute both to increase and decrease the labour mobility around the world. The establishment of mega projects like Dubai Expo 2020 and Qatar’s World Cup 2022 in the Countries of destination favour the labour mobility, as well as the investment in skills development. The higher numbers of aging populations in destination Countries and the persisting of social preferences for certain types of employment in destination Countries due to the fact that nationals are not

⁷³ The UAE portal for the Sustainable Development Goals. (n.d.)

inclined to perform certain low skilled and badly-paid jobs are further reasons that promote labour mobility. On the other hand, the policies in the destination Countries that favour nationalization and technological and automation programs in addition to higher heat stress are the ones that limit the labour mobility.

I.IV.I “Emiratisation program” and the Three Labour Market Tiers in Dubai

In the United Arab Emirates there has been the promotion of the so-called “Emiratisation program”. This program seeks to give priority to local Emiratis to get a job in both private and public sectors. The policy that follows from such program is based on the imposition of quotas on particular sectors, like banking and insurance, in order to ensure that the authorities employ local staff⁷⁴.

Moreover, starting from 2006 the Ministry of Labour decreed that all employers with over fifty employees should only employ Emiratis as secretaries and the UAE nationals who work for the private sector are entitled to the same social benefits and pension as they would receive working for the public sector⁷⁵. To be more practical on this issue, the Ministry of Labour imposes that companies based in the territory of the United Arab Emirates would be required to employ not less than fifteen per cent of national workers as part of their workforces⁷⁶.

The fast development of Dubai over a very short period of time has been made possible due to a rudimentary economy, a few institutions and oil revenue. The building of large skyscrapers, wealth and magnificence that characterize the city have been frequently created at the expense of the well-being of expatriate laborers, who were forced and still are forced to live in conditions of extreme poverty. The formation and construction of Dubai as well as of the other Emirates have generated approximately 300,000 new jobs each year and there are not

⁷⁴ Burgess & Connell (2011).

⁷⁵ Burgess & Connell (2011).

⁷⁶ Burgess & Connell (2011).

enough locals to fill them⁷⁷. For the huge numbers of workers currently employed at all levels in Dubai, it is possible to make a distinction of three tiers that make up the labour market in the Emirate. Each Labour Market Tier is characterized by its relative category of workers and the characteristics that distinguish them from the others.

The category belonging to the first tier is the one represented by local Emiratis that are actually favored by the above-mentioned “Emiratisation program”, which imposes quotas on companies in order for them to employ a minimum percentage of nationals. The professional expatriates are mainly high skilled workers coming from the western Countries and they are generally employed for performing job of high levels, thus making up the second tier. In the last third tier there have been located the construction workers, that is those people coming from the Asian countries that are employed in order to perform the lowest levels jobs.

In the below table, there is the schematic explanation of what has been explained in this paragraph.

Figure I.IX: Three Labour Market Tiers in Dubai

Labour Market Tier	Category	Comments
Tier 1	Local Emiratis	Quotas imposed on companies to employ minimum of 15% locals (as per a new law introduced in December 2010)
Tier 2	Professional Expatriates	Adverts asking for UK/US educated or 'Arabs only' commonplace and legal.
Tier 3	Construction workers	Usually from South Asia comprising approx constitute for 42.5% of the UAE's workforce

Source: Burgess & Connell, 2011.

⁷⁷ Burgess & Connell (2011).

This division of workers leads to another serious problem that can be found in Dubai, that is that of discrimination in different forms: by job and by salary. The former is based on ethnic origin and nowadays the trend is declined: in the past there were even job advertisement which expressed the kind of worker whom the announcement was directed to. The requirements were written in the form of “Arabs only” or “UK/US educated”.

On the other hand, it can be said that the latter is a practical manifestation of the three labour market tiers since local Emiratis are those who receive the highest salary, favored even by the “Emiratisation program” that tries to put nationals first. Then, people coming from the western Countries and from some Countries of Asia -like Japan, South Korea and Singapore- are those with the second highest salaries and lastly, at the bottom of this hierarchy, there are workers from Countries of South Asia, East Asia and Africa that are paid very badly.

Indeed, in the work *The Labour Market, Immigration and the Building of Dubai* by Julia Connell and John Burgess is it well explained how the Dubai’s employment regulations are segmented, reflecting the division of the labour market itself. Firstly, there are regulations for the national Emiratis who are employed in the public sector; secondly, there are rules and norms for those who are expatriate and other low skilled workers and thirdly, there are regulations governing domestic service workers. “It is a social pyramid system, with the local Emiratis on the top and non skilled or semi skilled (immigrants) at the bottom”, as it has been written by Julia Connell and John Burgess in *The Labour Market, Immigration and the Building of Dubai*. In addition to the social and labour pyramid that can be found in Dubai, it is worth mentioning that in this city there are no trade unions, strikes are illegal, employers are the ones who decide the wages and collective bargaining is prohibited.

I.IV.II “Open and Dynamic Model of Industrial Relations”

As it has been written in the above paragraphs, the Emirate and homonym city of Dubai has experienced a rapid economic development immediately after the discovery of oil, which in Dubai has been found out in 1966. The rapid escalation of the city of Dubai has been made possible due to the hard work of a low skilled workforce. To better explain the economic and industrial development of Dubai, it is important to mention the so-called “Open and Dynamic Model of Industrial Relations” that has been formulated by Caspi and Kastiel in 2006⁷⁸.

In a nutshell, the model is based on the idea that the open system continuously interrelates with its surroundings and it is influenced by elements in the external environment⁷⁹.

The system is called “open” because it is characterized by a process of change that radiates to the surroundings and affects the other linked system. In turn, the output of this system influences the open system. This model underlines the important effects of the external factors within the industrial relations system.

The system is based on four key elements that are: external factors, internal factors, industrial relations processes and the output. The external factors comprehend the ruling ideology, the legal structure, the economic conditions, the media and the standard of living; the internal factors are the trade unions, the government and the employer associations; the industrial relations processes mean the collective bargaining, dispute resolution and the agreement regulation while the output is the way a society is, that is its working conditions, wages, employment security, productivity and legitimization.

⁷⁸ Burgess & Connell (2011).

⁷⁹ Burgess & Connell (2011).

Figure I.X: The Open and Dynamic Model of Industrial Relations by Caspi and Kastiel

Internal/External Factors	Processes	Output
<p>External Factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socio-economic characteristics/cohesion • Standard of living • Quality of life • The media • Economic conditions • Political system • Ruling ideology • Economic structure • Legal structure • Technology <p>Internal Factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trade Unions • Employer organisations • Government involvement 	<p>Collective bargaining</p> <p>Collective agreements</p> <p>Implementation of agreements</p> <p>Conflict resolution</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees • Working conditions • Compensation • Employment security • Employers • Productivity, efficiency • Compensation • Government • Legitimation • Policy support

Source: Burgess & Connell, 2011. Adapted by Caps & Kastiel, 2006.

In the case of Dubai and of the more general United Arab Emirates, the external factor is represented by the dependence of the Emiratis on immigrant workers who are excluded from the civil institutions. In turn, without civic and democratic institutions there is a lack of labour rights and core labour standards, which are not available for all workers⁸⁰. This has facilitated the impressive growth record observed in Dubai. This rapid growth has even been pointed out by the Italian Industry and Commerce Office in the UAE in the *Presentazione Paese 2022*, where a slot of three pictures shows the rapid change and progress of Dubai within few years.

⁸⁰ Burgess & Connell (2011).

I.IV.III “Demography imbalance” and the resulting job’s differences and discrimination

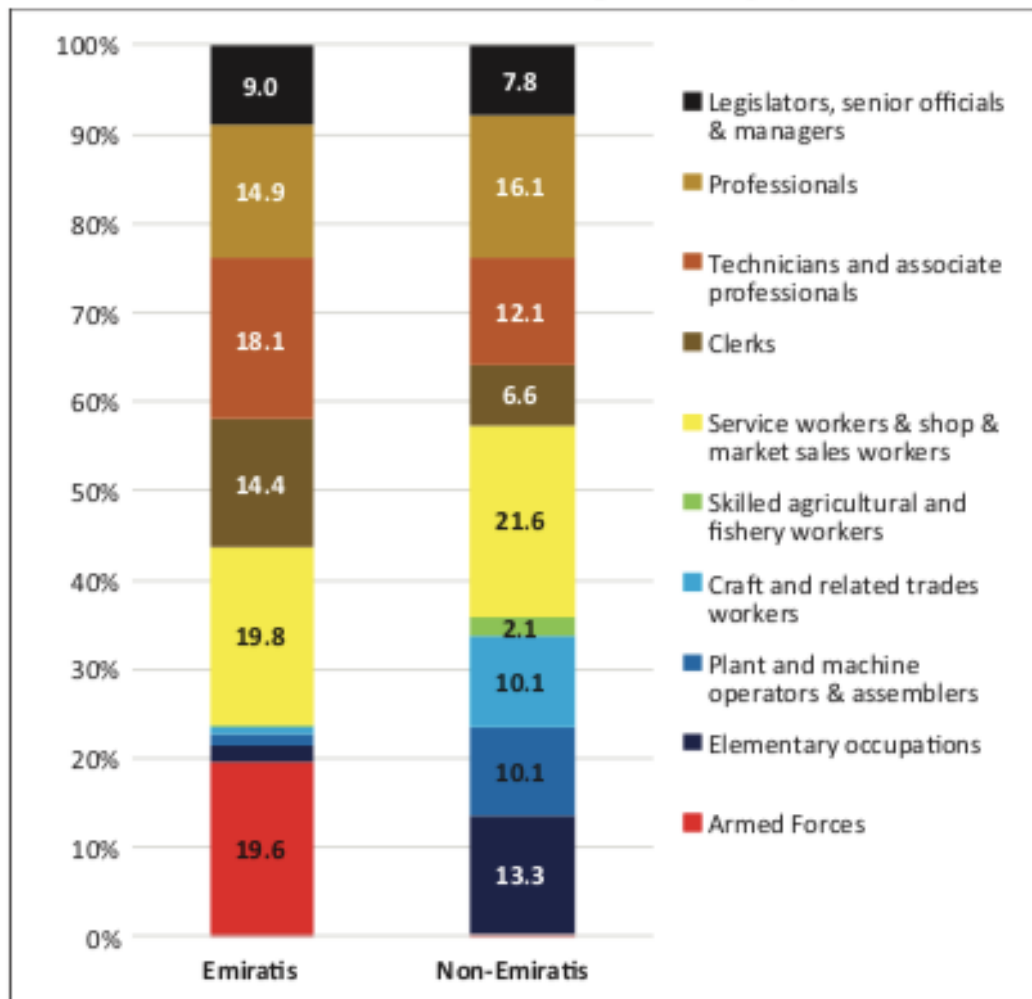
Dubai is characterized by the so-called “demography imbalance” that is especially reflected in its workforce since the foreign workers dominate numerically at every occupational level. For instance, a 2008 survey indicated that foreign workers made up 99 per cent of employees in the unskilled positions while they constituted 89 per cent of all managers⁸¹. Due to the fact that in Dubai live people coming from many different Countries, and thus there is a real melting pot of nationalities and cultures, foreign workers display a relatively diverse profile: according to the work *Demography, Migration, and the Labour Market in the UAE* by Françoise De Bel-Air, 24 per cent of foreign workers are in managerial and professional positions, 22 per cent are in “trade and services” occupations, while a third of them are employed in “blue-collar” categories. Moreover, the above mentioned job discrimination is widely visible in Dubai since there are important variations between nationality groups.

On average, Western nationalities are those that can be found mainly in the upper kinds occupations while the Asian nationalities are employed in the “blue collar” ones, even though around 15 per cent of them also perform managerial and professional occupations⁸². On the contrary, Arab workers are more evenly distributed across the occupation scale.

⁸¹ De Bel-Air (2015).

⁸² De Bel-Air (2015).

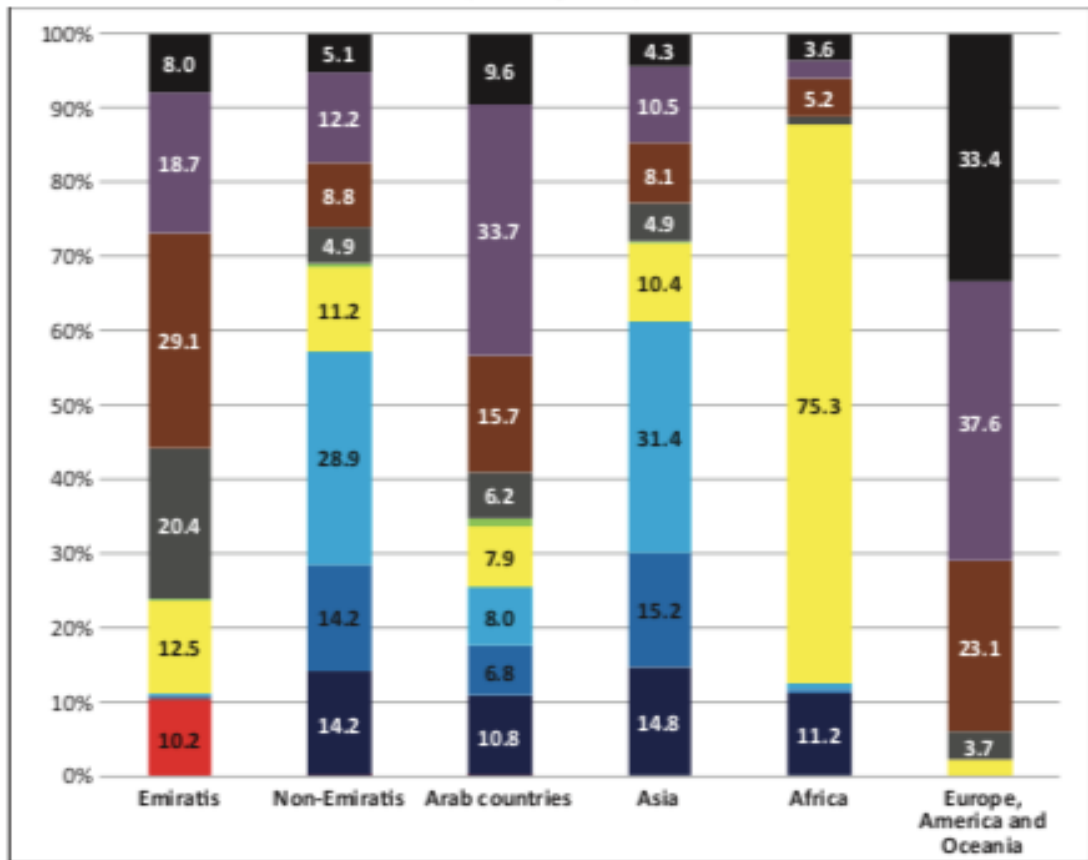
Figure I.XI: Employed population by nationality and occupation category in 2009



Source: De Bel-Air, 2015. Retrieved from LFS 2009, NBS.

The scale of expatriates' participation in the United Arab Emirates' economy in both private and public sectors and the diversity of the non-national population in performing different kinds of works that require different skills and degrees of specialization is shown in the following figure.

Figure I.XII: Employed population by nationality group and occupation category in Dubai



Source: De Bel-Air, 2015 and LFS 2011, DSC.

As of 2009, the Emiratis locals were mostly concentrated in “Public Administration, Defence and Social Security” sector of activity, with a percentage equal to 61 per cent, while in the Education sector they made up 9 per cent, meaning that they were in a much more lower extent⁸³. As for non-Emiratis, their activity sectors were rather diverse: they were found in retail trade with a percentage of 17 per cent, in construction for the 14 per cent, while 15 per cent of them were in the domestic services sector and 9 per cent of non-nationals were in manufacturing and transport sectors⁸⁴.

⁸³ De Bel-Air (2015).

⁸⁴ De Bel-Air (2015).

Despite the 2008 financial crisis that severely hit Dubai and the United Arab Emirates in general, the Country has been able to successfully and progressively overcome the effects of the crisis. Indeed, in 2014 the overall size of the labour force reached 4.417 million, a 10 per cent growth from 2013, being “the strongest growth rate in 44 years” according to the Ministry of Labour, after the long decrease in size that characterized the Country until 2011, when the low of 3,886,165 active persons has been reached⁸⁵.

⁸⁵ De Bel-Air (2015).

Chapter II: Immigrant worker

As it has been widely exposed in the previous Chapter, the population of Dubai is mainly made up by foreigners whose percentage in employed population is around 90 and 95 per cent, reaching the highest point in 2011 when the immigrant workers were around 96 per cent. The majority of the migrant workforce come from the South and East Asian Countries due to their historical ties between the territory and the subcontinent with the United Arab Emirates. It follows that, due to the high percentages, in Dubai -as well as in the whole territory of the Federation of the United Arab Emirates- there is a strong imbalance between locals and expatriates.

Despite the numbers show a huge discrepancy between the nationals and the immigrant workers, the Emirate and homonym city of Dubai issues policies that are always in favor of the national citizens while the immigrant workforce is within itself divided in different categories, each of them having their own benefits and disadvantages based on the “category of belonging”. Indeed, as it has been mentioned in the paragraph *Migrant work: differences between the different works done by migrants* (I.IV) of the previous Chapter, in the working society of Dubai there is a clear distinction of three tiers that characterizes the labour market of the Emirate at hand.

In this social pyramid, the first tier is made up by local Emiratis who enjoy a series of benefits, like higher salaries and easy access to the jobs of the public sector, the professional expatriates are those that follow the first tier and they are mainly workers from the Western rich Countries and they perform working activities that require high skills and abilities, in the last tier there are the so-called construction workers and all other workers from South Asian Countries, who perform low-skills jobs and who are underpaid and exploited.

II.I Exploitation of immigrant workers

It is from the word “exploitation” that this second Chapter will start: as it can be read in *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*, exploitation is “a situation in which somebody treats somebody else in an unfair way, especially in order to make money from their work”. In this respect, the conditions of many immigrant workers coming from the poor and underdeveloped Countries can be said to be exploitative.

A clear image of the exploitation and of his victims is depicted in two distinct articles of “The Guardian”, titled *Allegations of worker exploitation at ‘world’s greatest show’ in Dubai* and *‘I am starving’: the migrant workers abandoned by Dubai employers*, respectively written by Pete Pattison and Katie McQue. In both articles it is highlighted the poor, exploitative, severe and inhuman conditions in which immigrant workers are forced to live and work. As I tried to explain since the beginning, Dubai is a city where many contradictions clearly emerge in everyday life, where everything is done to astonish the tourist, the rich people and foreign companies that bring money in the Emirate in order to establish and run a business. However, behind such incredible sparkling life there is the cruel side of Dubai, the one that comes at the expense of the well-being of thousands of immigrant workers.

In the article *Allegations of worker exploitation at ‘world’s greatest show’ in Dubai* it is pointed out how security guards, cleaners and hospitality staff at Dubai Expo 2020 were found to work in conditions that amounted to forced labour. Many immigrant workers employed at the international fair assessed that they have been forced to pay illegal recruitment fees, suffered racial discrimination, had their passports confiscated and their wages had been withheld⁸⁶. In addition to this, two-thirds of the migrant workers reported that their wages and many more benefits were not always paid on time or in full, so that many of them had to struggle to pay for food or for sending money home to their families⁸⁷.

⁸⁶ Pattison (2022).

⁸⁷ Pattison (2022).

Another illegal fact, together with the one already mentioned that deprives the migrant worker to his/ her basic rights, is the withhold of one's passport. Many workers said that their passports were held by the employer who used this practice in order to systematically control his/her workforce. As it has been testified by one worker, although Expo's management instructions were to always return workers' passports, "the company made us sign a paper saying we have received our passport. In reality, it is still in the office of our accommodation camp"⁸⁸.

II.I.I The ten principles of the *Worker Welfare* and the analysis put forward by Equidem

It is important to mention the quote of Equidem -a human rights and labour rights not-for-profit organisation that works globally and locally to promote the rights of marginalised communities and to account serious violations- which reported and highlighted the "significant disconnect between the Emirate's stated ambition of being a modern, international state and the reality of racial discrimination and forced labour practices that migrant workers are facing"⁸⁹.

In fact, one more time, the appearance of what emerges and of what is visible to the eyes of the wealthier population, both national and foreign, is completely different from the substance. For example, the legal sector of Dubai Expo 2020 has written and published the so-called *Worker Welfare*, which has been finalized for ensuring the highest standards for the workforce employed in the global fair. In the introductory section it can be read that

At Expo 2020 Dubai we work together with our partners and UAE federal entities to advance worker welfare standards. We are committed to the health, safety, welfare and dignity of all workers, and we continually review the policies, procedures and standards that were put in place from the start of Expo 2020. We do this by regularly monitoring these standards through

⁸⁸ Pattisson (2022).

⁸⁹ Pattisson (2022).

frequent inspections of the working and living conditions of those helping to build Expo 2020⁹⁰

In this respect, ten principles have been developed in order to promote a policy that was applicable to all organizations working to deliver Expo 2020 Dubai. The ten principles are those that follow⁹¹:

1. Ensure fair and free recruitment
2. Ensure that employees understand the terms and conditions of their employment
3. Treat employees equally and without discrimination
4. Protect and preserve the dignity of employees and not tolerate harassment of any kind
5. Respect the right of employees to retain their personal documents
6. Pay employees' wages and benefits on time and in full
7. Allow employees freedom to exercise their legal rights without fear of reprisal
8. Provide a safe and healthy working environment
9. Provide access to grievance mechanisms and remediation
10. Ensure that bonded, indentured, forced, or child labour is not used

According to the declarations of several migrant workers who have been interviewed by “The Guardian” and to the general working conditions of the workers in Dubai, none of the ten principles mentioned above has been respected for the creation of the international fair nor are they respected in everyday working life in Dubai. The findings revealed the failure of the respect of such standards and principles that have been introduced to supposedly protect the rights of workers employed in the construction of the event, by providing them security and hospitality services.

⁹⁰ Expo 2020 Dubai UAE (2022).

⁹¹ Expo 2020 Dubai UAE (2022).

Equidem, the non-profit organization that foster the promotion of human and working rights for the marginalized population all around the world, made a Report called “EXPOsed” about the discrimination acts and forced labour practices on Expo 2020 Dubai. As it has been cited in the official website of Expo 2020 Dubai, the main aim was that of “(...) building a better future for everyone while creating real impact that transforms our dreams into realities.” Expo 2020 Dubai has been developed with the main intention of being the main figure of what Dubai already is, that is an international hub for tourism, business and culture. Behind this apparent intention there has been the exploitation of several migrant workers, whose working conditions were not the mirror of the ten principles mentioned in the previous lines.

According to the Report at hand, the key findings of the several undergone interviews have been the impossibility for workers to access grievance mechanisms, the retention of their passports, the non-payment of both wages and benefits, the systematic racial discrimination and bullying, the illegal recruitment fees charged by workers and their submission to forced labour practices. To translate this into numbers, it is possible to look at the below graph elaborated by Equidem itself.

Figure II.I: Forced labour at Expo 2020 Dubai



Source: Equidem, 2021.

Although the United Arab Emirates' law prohibits forced labour and any other kind of abuses under national law and international conventions, *de facto* the government very rarely prosecutes forced labour and human trafficking cases.

In the analyzed Report, the interviewed workers were from eleven different nationalities and 77 per cent were from Bangladesh, India, Kenya, Nepal and Pakistan, while the remaining were from six different African Countries. The interviews, which have been carried on during the period from September to December 2021, have been done to twenty-two men (representing the 73 per cent of the total) and to eight women (who were the 23 per cent), the average age was between 24 and 42 years old. Among the different declarations reported by the non-profit organization, there were two that struck my attention most:

They didn't provide the contract to me. I signed the contract paper and gave it back to the employer. The offer letter was described in English. All the official papers are explained in English and Arabic and we didn't get any written documents in our native language

and

I never received any overtime and am always working for more than nine hours every day

The first quote is of a Pakistani security guard, while the second quote is of a Pakistani constructor worker: both reported examples show the failure but even the willingness to not respect the ten principles related to the welfare of the worker. This can be widely understood by analyzing the first quote which shows that to the Pakistani security guard was not given the contract in his own native language, thus not allowing him to fully and properly understand the content in it. Treating the migrant workers in an irrespectful way is not the consequence of something that casually has happened but it is the result of a government that voluntary does not take care of the rights of its migrant workforce. In addition to this, it should be remembered that in Dubai any form of strikes, collective bargaining and trade unions are not allowed and are considered illegal by the government.

II.I.II Federal Law No.33

According to Equidem, the reasons why the United Arab Emirates failed to protect migrant workers from forced labour are to be found in the lack of enforcement of labour protections by the national authorities, the non-compliance with the “Worker Welfare Standards” by the Expo 2020 Dubai companies, the limits imposed on workers to access remedies by prohibiting them any form of trade unionism and lastly, but not least, the new United Arab Emirates labour law does not address non-compliance and lack of enforcement. Regarding this last point, it is important to underline that on 2nd February 2022, the United Arab Emirates put into force the Federal Law No.33, which updates some regulations governing the private sector.

The law at hand sets rules for the introduction of the minimum wage, for the abolition and prohibition of discriminations on all forms and for the introduction of new visa categories but it does little to address non-compliance with existing legislation by employers and with the inadequate investigation and enforcement of the regulations by the UAE authorities⁹². Moreover, this new law does not permit migrant workers to freely associate, organize, bargain collectively or form trade unions, nor does it guarantee workers access to independent and professional advice and representation to assist them in taking forward a complaint⁹³.

Indeed, there are no articles that deal with the mentioned topics. The other articles reflect a little improvement on paper but it is not then put into practice. Although the topics are different, the articles of the law at hand are not concerned by the authorities and the government itself, which should be both the ones that guarantee their respect. For example, this is the case of the thirteenth Article, the one that is about the Employer’s obligations. The steps forward that some articles seem to promote and advance are just on paper because they are not reflected in reality.

⁹² Equidem (2021).

⁹³ Equidem (2021).

While *Article 13* (about Employer's Obligations) assess that "the passport is considered a personal right of the employee, and may not be seized", being an example of a step forward toward better conditions in the workplace (although, as already mentioned, in reality the opposite often happens), there are *Article 27* (about Minimum limit of salaries), which declares that "there is no minimum salary, the salary shall be subject to the mutual agreement between the parties" and *Article 37* (about Compensation for work injuries and occupational diseases), that starts by affirming that the occupational diseases and the due amount of compensation "shall be organized by Cabinet decision", which are clear examples of a Law barely studied in order to concretely better the working conditions of workers.

II.I.III The real working life of the immigrant workers

Once again the little improvements done by the United Arab Emirates government are just made to appear as made for the real improvement of the conditions of immigrant workers but *de facto* they have no substance, being void and of no usage in case of need by a migrant worker to appeal to them. Despite the fact that in the official website of Expo 2020 Dubai it is written that "We are committed to the health, safety, welfare and dignity of all workers" and that the workers' welfare standards are monitored through regular inspections of working and living conditions in order to improve their current situation, the reality is different and opposite.

Not surprisingly, the case of Expo 2020 Dubai has not been the only one where abuses, discrimination and exploitation were the daily battle for thousands of immigrant workers. In the article *I am starving': the migrant workers abandoned by Dubai employers*, published by Katie McQue in "The Guardian", it is explained one more time what the real and dark side of Dubai is. In fact, in the article are mentioned the poor living and working conditions of thousands of immigrant workers who are not allowed to go back home due to a series of acts that are not respectful of any principle and law that can have been fostered by the government of Dubai.

In the article at hand a series of concrete examples are pointed out: one of them is worth mentioning since it shows the lack of basic human rights that a civilized society should have. Hassan, a thirty years old Pakistani man, has underwent heart surgery and every month since then his employer has deducted 75 per cent of his salary in installments because his medical insurance did not cover the full price of the procedure⁹⁴. Since his medication costs dirham 950 per month (the equivalent of euro 294), he can not pay for it since he does not earn enough⁹⁵. This underlines a serious problem that undermines the physical and mental well-being of a man: a society, that is constantly looking for deep improvements in the life of its citizens and visitors and that wants to promote itself as the city of the future where everything is built by taking into account the needs of its people, should promote basic rights that everyone should enjoy, independently from the work performed. Dubai is a city that works well for those people that earn enough money to follow the frenetic rhythms of a city that continuously wants to improve itself but for those people who are left on the side is a city where everything is required but nothing is given back.

This lack of basic principles, like the one that allows easy access to medication and medical treatment, is shown even in the missed policies and rules that could foster and promote them. For instance, in the Federal Law No.33 there are no articles concerning with health issues. The only article that partially addresses such topic is *Article 46*, which is about the “Termination of service due to lack of medical fitness”. The article at hand is vague and it is not explained into depth, it just affirms that the employment relationship terminates due to lack of medical fitness not until the scheduled sick leave was expired. The easy access to medical care should be a basic right for all and not a privilege of a few.

The access to medical care is not the only one that is not guaranteed: many immigrant workers do not have easy access to food since they do not have enough money to buy it. In the city of Dubai it is strictly forbidden to beg and to live as a tramp in the streets. I was particularly surprised when I saw a poor man eating something on the floor of the pavement behind my building: that man, well hidden in the corner was eating his dinner next to the

⁹⁴ McQue (2020).

⁹⁵ McQue (2020).

room of the rubbish. It was the first and only one who I saw during my whole stay in Dubai and what has made me reflect has been the fact that poor people in Dubai have not only to bear the “shame” of their conditions but, more than elsewhere in the world, they have even fear of being discovered by the police which can severely punish them due to the rules of the Emirate. These extreme conditions and situations make many immigrant workers to affirm something like “we are sick and tired of this place and we want to escape. But I can’t go back with nothing”⁹⁶. The psychological situation of many immigrant workers is also delicate because the majority of them feel the pressure of not being able to send money back to their families in their home Country, making them feel impotent and ashamed, as Mohammed Arsalan has explained me during the interview that I have conducted and that it will be explained in the following paragraphs.

Although the United Arab Emirates has collaborated with the *International Labour Organization* in order to strengthen the governance of the labour market by introducing a series of reforms about workers protection, labour governance, labour dispute prevention and resolution mechanisms and national and non-national employment, the working situation of many immigrant workers is under basic standards of decent living⁹⁷. For instance, in the paper *The Labour Market, Immigration and the Building of Dubai* by Julia Connell and John Burgess are described the living conditions of those workers who make up the third tier of the labour market, so those immigrant workers who perform low skills job, like the ones employed in the construction sector. What has been described in the paper perfectly reflects the testifies of the workers interviewed by “The Guardian”: the labour camps are usually located in the desert, “away from the modern apartment and hotel blocks, constructed from portable buildings where inmates have to endure extreme heat, overcrowding and oppressive living conditions”⁹⁸.

⁹⁶ McQue (2020).

⁹⁷ International Labour Organization [ILO] (n.d.).

⁹⁸ Burgess & Connell (2011).

II.II Different kinds of exploitation and experiences: interview to Gabriella Camalo, Lucille Quinny and Basid Choudhari

II.II.I The “Kafala System”

The United Arab Emirates is one of the Countries of the Middle East where the so-called “kafala system”, even known as sponsorship system, regulates the working and personal lives of migrant workers. The “kafala system” is a legal framework that was created in order to provide cheap and plentiful labour during a period characterized by a rapid economic growth, thus benefiting rapid development and the local as well as foreign businesses⁹⁹. This system involves two parties: on one hand there is the immigrant worker while on the other hand there is the local sponsor, the so-called “kafeel”, who is the employer of the worker¹⁰⁰.

The system at hand provides that the State gives local individuals or companies, that act in function of local sponsors, particular permits to employ foreign workers: the “kafeel” should cover travel expenses and housing, often in dorm-like accommodations or, in the case of domestic workers, the sponsor’s home¹⁰¹. But, in the majority of cases, local sponsors do not directly hire individuals. Instead, they make use of private recruitment agencies in the Countries of origin to find workers and facilitate their entry in the host Country¹⁰².

In the table that follows, it is possible to understand the kind of protections guaranteed to the workers employed through the sponsorship system in the Gulf Countries, which are those mainly used to the practice of such system.

⁹⁹ Robinson (2021).

¹⁰⁰ Robinson (2021).

¹⁰¹ Robinson (2021).

¹⁰² Robinson (2021).

Figure II.II: Protections of the “kafala” workers by host Countries

	Join unions	Change job or quit without permission	Leave country without permission	Minimum wage	Domestic workers included under labor law	Standard contract for all workers
Bahrain	Yes	After 1 year	Yes	No	In some cases	No
Jordan	Yes	After 1 year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kuwait	Yes	After 1 year	Yes	Yes	No	No
Lebanon	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Oman	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
Qatar	In some cases	Yes	In most cases	Yes	No	No
Saudi Arabia	No	In some cases	No	No	No	No
UAE	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes

Source: International Labor Organization [ILO] & Saudi Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development.

In the case of the United Arab Emirates the guaranteed protections are less than those not allowed and in the majority of cases they have not a real checking in the real life. As it has been mentioned above while discussing the article of “The Guardian” *I am starving’: the migrant workers abandoned by Dubai employers* by Katie McQue, there are many immigrant workers’ passports that are confiscated at the arrival, not allowing them to go back home when they want.

The “kafala” system applies to almost every kind of worker, independently from one’s nationality, culture, economic class and profession but nowadays most of the workers employed through the sponsorship system are those coming from Africa and South Asia¹⁰³. These workers do jobs that are disregarded by nationals because they find them undesirable for financial and/or cultural reasons. These jobs are mainly those in the construction, domestic and service sectors.

¹⁰³ Robinson (2021).

This system that apparently can seem to work well is, on the contrary, one of the main source of exploitation of workers. The “kafala system” is not equal and fair because the two involved parties do not have the same power: there is a strong and evident sponsor-worker power imbalance. The consequences of such imbalance are the numerous abuses that the migrant workers have to face, among these abuses it can be mentioned the one of debt bondage, visa trading, forced labour, restriction of movement and communication and irregular residency status.

For example, in the case of forced labour, contract substitution is a common practice in which workers unwittingly accept poor wages and bad working conditions by signing multiple contracts, some in a language that is not their native one¹⁰⁴. Or, as for the abuse regarding irregular residency status, many workers depend on sponsors to remain in the Country legally due to the fact that the sponsors can invalidate their status for any reason¹⁰⁵.

Consequently, the lack of regulations and proper protections for migrant workers’ rights often results in low wages, employee abuse and poor working conditions¹⁰⁶. The “kafala system” has been one of the main means through which the government has favored the exploitation of migrant workers who arrive in the United Arab Emirates and in the Emirate of Dubai with the will to improve their families and their own living conditions.

¹⁰⁴ Robinson (2021).

¹⁰⁵ Robinson (2021).

¹⁰⁶ Robinson (2021).

II.II.II Gratuity payment

Furthermore, another topic to mention before going into depth of the analysis is that of gratuity payment, together with the more general one of salary payment. According to the United Arab Emirates Labour Law, there are two kinds of contracts: limited-term contract and unlimited term contract. The former sets both the start and end dates of the employment period and it is automatically cancelled when it expires (unless the contract is renewed), while the latter is open-ended, thus being more flexible. It can be terminated with mutual consent or by giving a notice period of at least one month.

The gratuity pay is calculated based on the basic wage paid into the employee account without additional allowances or bonuses¹⁰⁷. But not everyone is entitled to receive it since if an employee resigns of his/her own free will before completing one full year of work, then he/she will not be entitled to any gratuity pay. Just after having provided the completion of one whole year of continuous service the employee is entitled to receive the gratuity for the served fraction of a year¹⁰⁸. The end of service gratuity is calculated on basis of the last wage to which the employee was entitled, namely the basic salary. The basic salary does not include allowances such as housing, conveyance, utilities, furniture etc... In addition to this, the days of absence from work without pay should not be included in the calculation of the period of service.

To sum up, as it has been mentioned in “Caterer Middle East” website, the largest magazine for catering industry professionals covering catering news, food and beverage news and latest trends, there are four cases in which an employee is entitled to receive the relative amount of gratuity payment.

¹⁰⁷ Caterer Middle East (2022).

¹⁰⁸ Caterer Middle East (2022).

Below the four cases are mentioned:

1. If an employee resigns before completing one year of service, he/she is not entitled to any gratuity pay
2. If an employee has served between one and three years, he/she is entitled to one third of 21 days' basic salary as gratuity pay
3. If an employee has served between three and five years, he/she is entitled to two-thirds of 21 days' basic salary as gratuity pay
4. If an employee has served more than five years, he/she is entitled to full 21 days' basic salary as gratuity pay¹⁰⁹

So to say, the gratuity pay is an accounting vocabulary for saying “end of salary” that is based on the basic salary. In turn, the basic salary is always a little portion of the whole salary because in this way the gratuity pay will always be low since it is based on the basic salary. In addition to this, in the United Arab Emirates the whole salary is the result of the sum between basic salary and allowances, being them accommodation, visa, health insurance, transportation or lunch tickets.

II.II.III The interviews

After having explained the two basic tools of the working labour market and the salary mechanism, this Chapter goes on by analyzing and focusing the attention on three different interviews that I personally put forward while I was in Dubai. In this section, I will expose the results of three interviews done to three different people -different by sex, age, social and educational background, nationality and by job performed- and what their opinions are about working and living in Dubai based on their own experiences.

¹⁰⁹ Caterer Middle East (2022).

The set of questions that I have elaborated for the interviews are the ones that follow:

1. General informations (name, surname, age, nationality, performed job)
2. As immigrant worker, why have you chose to come to Dubai for working?
3. General background (family, education and economic condition)
4. How many hours per day do you work? Have you some breaks in-between? How many days per week do you work?
5. What is your average salary per month?
6. Where do you live now? Do you share the apartment or do you live on your own?
7. As worker, do you feel to have rights like that of strike, collective bargaining, safe at work, decent salary and decent working conditions?
8. Have you got duties? If yes, which ones?
9. In your personal opinion, what are the rights that a worker like you should freely enjoy?
10. There are job organizations in Dubai that support and help workers like you?
11. Do you feel “protected” by the State?
12. What would happen if you decide to quit your job? And in case you get fired?
13. Have you (now) or had you (in the past) some other job opportunities?
14. According to you, which improvements there should be in your job sector?
15. Are you worried to lose your job? What would be the consequences?
16. How long would you remain in Dubai?
17. What documents do you need to work in Dubai?

Although the three personal experiences of the three interviewed are different, they share some points in common while others are completely different. As it will be shown below, the three workers belong to different tiers of the Labour Market Tier but, even if two of them are in the third tier, they have different working conditions. Thus, one is a little bit above of the other in terms of social and working pyramid that characterizes the labour market in Dubai.

The three interviewed persons are: Gabriella Camalo, Lucille Quinny and Basid Choudhari. At the bottom of this basic pyramid there is Gabriella Camalo, who is followed by Lucille Quinny. At the top it can be found Basid Choudhari since he has better working and living conditions than the other two.

- **Gabriella Camalo**

Gabriella Camalo is a 48-years-old woman from Argentina who is currently employed in a tourist agency called “Big Red”. Apart from her whole family who is still in Argentina, her 28-years-old son lives in Italy with his wife while her 21-years-old son lives in Dubai but not with her (G. Camalo, personal communication, May 4, 2022). The answer to the question “Why have you come to Dubai?” is simple and similar to all other immigrant workers’ reasons for moving to another Country and leaving the own one: the strong desire to have better working and social living conditions. Despite her desires and ambitions, the reality she has to face is completely different from what she had imagined once arrived in Dubai for the first time: she arrived in Dubai for an holiday in 2012 with a tourist visa but she was so thrilled about what the city had offered her, that she decided to come back, living and working in the Emirate of Dubai (G. Camalo, personal communication, May 4, 2022).

Gabriella has studied in the “Public University of Argentina”, where after five years she obtained the final graduation on commercial activities and, at the same time, she studied for getting a diploma in order to become both a teacher for kindergarten school and a beautician in professional beauty saloons (G. Camalo, personal communication, May 4, 2022). Although her several years of study and having being a personal secretariat for different important business men, now she does a job that she does not appreciate at all (G. Camalo, personal communication, May 4, 2022). It is better to say (and even to highlight) that what she dislikes most is the job system in Dubai, where no social and work protections are guaranteed to workers like her. The sentence “workers like her” stands for all those immigrant workers who do not have a contract since they are not resident in Dubai. Not having a contract simply means not having the right to get the visa and the health insurance from the company that engages its employees. Gabriella Camalo has to spend her own money in order to have a health insurance and to renew her own visa. Renewing a visa every three months has a cost equal to dirham 1600 (the equivalent of euro 433.35), which is so expansive for a person like her who earn not so much (she did not want to tell me the exact amount of her salary because she did not feel comfortable to say it, but she underlined that her salary is very low) (G. Camalo, personal communication, May 4, 2022).

Gabriella admitted that she likes the job she is currently doing since 2018 because it gives her the opportunity to interact with different people, to plan and design particular tourist packages and offers and to assist groups of people during the tours of the city. Even if she declared that “in Dubai nothing is bad”, she also asserted that she is really tired of her living and working conditions: she works twelve hours per day, having just one break for having her own lunch (that she normally brings from home) and having just Wednesday as day off. The work occupies her the whole time, so that she has not any time left for searching a better job.

Indeed, she declared that “they do not allow us to search for other jobs” since it is practically impossible for her to find the time to have interviews and to personally search new job’s opportunities. According to her, the situation got even worse after the emergence of Covid-19: before it she worked for nine hours per day and she could afford quite everything (she used to live in her own room, sharing the apartment with another woman from Colombia in JBR, the beach side of the city); while after the outbreak of the pandemic she got the same low salary for working three hours more and the impossibility for her to live in a good apartment with just another woman since the prices for accommodations and living in general have risen (G. Camalo, personal communication, May 4, 2022). Now she is living in a shared apartment with other four women, not having her own bedroom but just a bed where to sleep and a bathroom to share with other two women.

According to her, it should be her right to have a visa and an health insurance paid and provided by the company for which she works. In addition to this, she stated that it is her right to be paid on time. She told me that the pay is generally given in between the first five days of every month but there have been some occasions in which she got the salary the fifteenth or sixteenth day of the month but she can not doing anything about it (complaining, taking legal actions and denouncing the situation) since she does not have a contract. In other words, she is not a regular and legal worker.

Furthermore, what she misses most is the solid presence of the government that practically takes action against companies like the one she is working in. In Gabriella's opinion, the government simply does not care especially when private companies like "Big Red" are taken into account. Since she is not a resident, she has not a contract and the money she receives is given "hand to hand", it is practically impossible for her to complain about her situation. Actually she is looking to move in Italy, where her son and daughter in law live, but she already knows that the kind of work she will do is the one of carer but at least "my life would be better in a Country that will provide me with medical insurance and economic help", as she believes (G. Camalo, personal communication, May 4, 2022).

What has surprised me most about this interview is the sense of continuous research of a better working and living environment by an adult woman, who has not yet found her place, both in the job sector and in the personal one. Having just a bed in an apartment where other people live means being deprived of one's own privacy, precluding a person to have her/his own life. This is what Dubai has to (not) offer to many of its workers: as several people taught me during my experience there, "nothing is free in Dubai". The city can offer the best it has only if something is given back to it because nothing there is offered.

- **Lucille Quinny**

Better working and living conditions can be found by listening to the story of Lucille Quinny, a 36-years-old woman from Mumbai (India). Differently from Gabriella, before permanently living in Dubai since 2008, Lucille (Lucy for the closest friends) had never visited the city before but she moved since she felt oppressed in her parents' house where the main rule keeps being "until you live under this roof, you have to follow our rules" (L. Quinny, personal communication, May 14, 2022). She comes from a middle-class family, where tradition matters the most. She graduated at the "St. Andrew's College of Arts, Science and Commerce" where she got a bachelor's degree in management studies. After graduation she looked for a job in India but the best she got was a job with a pay equal to rupee 20.000 (which stands for euro 250.55), which was not enough for her to live alone and sustain herself in India (L. Quinny, personal communication, May 14, 2022). Thus, she decided to move in Dubai where her auntie and cousins were living.

The working conditions of Lucille are much more better than those of Gabriella, even if some aspects are to be improved: she works every day from Monday to Saturday from 9 AM to 6 PM (a total of 48 hours per week, excluding the one hour break for lunch) and she earns dirham 5,160 per month (the equivalent of euro 1,397.54) (L. Quinny, personal communication, May 14, 2022). This salary is not enough for living in Dubai: for example, she has to monthly pay dirham 2,200 as rent for her shared bedroom with another girl, with whom she has even the bathroom in common. With what is left she has to pay for the grocery and for her personal expenses, thus she can “survive” in the city but not properly live in. Every time she has a dinner out, a coffee out and/or an unexpected expense, she has to meticulously calculate what is left for the following days before the next salary. Even in this case, like the one of Gabriella, I think that it is not a decent and proper living for an adult woman. She is actually employed in the private company “Y-AXIS” and her task is to help clients who want to study and work abroad. The Countries that have been assigned to her are Canada, United Kingdom and Germany.

In addition to her salary, the Company provides her with a regular contract, a working visa that it renews every two years and the health insurance. Regarding this last point, it is important to underline that the health insurance granted to Lucille is the cheapest one, which means that if she has some problems, she can just go to a single specific clinic while the dental and eyes’ related problems are not covered (L. Quinny, personal communication, May 14, 2022). She likes her job and especially the way her employer behaves with her: he gives her so much importance, meaning that when he is not in the office, she is the one in charge to control and rule over the other fourteen employees since her employer trust her and the way she works. In addition to this and as a consequence so to say, she has been the only one to get an increase of her own salary.

Moreover, differently from Gabriella Camalo, if the private Company for which Lucille works decides to fire her without specific and valid reasons, the Company at hand has to pay her a sum equal to two months of work. On the other hand, if she decides to quit, she has to provide a one-month notice otherwise she has to pay a given amount of money to the Company (L. Quinny, personal communication, May 14, 2022). Contrary to the case of Gabriella, Lucille has a contract so that she can not end from one day to another the working relationship with the Company she works for.

But, even Lucille has to face some problems linked to the general characteristics of the labour market in Dubai: her working conditions are decent and she feels safe at work due to the nice office and space where she works in but she claims that she should be entitled to a better salary, a wider health insurance that covers much more medical problems and she would like to have two days off during the weekend, not just one (L. Quinny, personal communication, May 14, 2022). As in the case of Gabriella, the salary -even if in different proportions and amounts- is too low, so that she can not afford basic needs. In general, as immigrant worker in Dubai she would like to have three more rights: firstly, she does not want to be discriminated for her nationality in the workplace; secondly, according to her there should be a standard of payment, irrespective of one's experience but just based on the role one has to cover and thirdly, she would like to be entitled to holidays like local citizens (L. Quinny, personal communication, May 14, 2022).

For instance, when she worked as logistics' coordinator for a Japanese company that dealt with construction equipment, she experienced an act of discrimination by having the same role of other employees but a lower salary due to her nationality and origin. Following the second right that she would like to enjoy, she asserted that in Dubai there is not a standard salary based on the kind of task one has to perform: as Lucille told me, during the interviews some companies ask what one expects to be the future salary and they can even accept the said amount. According to her, experience should not be a parameter for choosing the amount of the pay, but the salary should be given based on the role performed. Lastly, the company she is working in does not respect the public holidays' days and dates: this year, the *Eid al-Fitr*, which means "Festival of the Breaking of the Fast", started on the 2nd May and lasted

for three days until 4th May. It is the national religious holiday celebrated to mark the end of the Ramadan, a month of fasting and prayer. This holiday is both for public and private sector employees who are entitled to leave but on Wednesday 4th May Lucille had to go to work because her private company counted Sunday 1st May as a day of festivity for *Eid al-Fitr*, even if it was not.

In Dubai it is severely forbidden to strike and to do collective bargaining and the only representation that workers have to supposedly claim their rights is the Ministry of Labour. Lucille does not feel protected by the government because, as she asserted, “for them we are nothing. If we are not happy about our work, we can look for something different or we can go back home. They do not care” (L. Quinny, personal communication, May 14, 2022). In order to complain against a particular thing that happens in one’s company, one needs to have facts that go against the rules. Being unhappy about the conditions of work is not a sufficient proof to get the attention from the Ministry of Labour.

For instance, her first job in Dubai was in a call center during the difficult financial and economic year of 2008. Due to the adverse economic conditions that the whole world was facing at that time, she was paid cash but when she got back to India for six months due to personal reasons, the company did not give her the gratuity she was entitled to. Once she was back from India, she went to a court where she claimed her right to obtain the gratuity and after a short process, the company had to pay her the missed gratuity (L. Quinny, personal communication, May 14, 2022).

This particular event that happened during the working career of Lucille Quinny shows that the worker is left alone, he/she has to be able to economically sustain his-/herself in the conditions that a case is brought into court. No workers’ organizations are present in the territory of Dubai, where claiming for own rights as immigrant worker is severely punished.

- **Basid Choudhari**

Completely different are the opinions, working and living conditions of Basid Choudhari, the 29-years-old Indian finance manager for the Italian Industry and Commerce Office since March 2015. Like Gabriella and Lucille, Basid is an immigrant worker who came in Dubai for improving his working career because in Mumbai (where he lived) there were not many job opportunities suited to his studies. However, the experiences he has and his opinions show a completely opposite view of the labour market of Dubai.

He graduated in 2014 at the “Mumbai University” with a bachelor’s degree in finance and commerce. He immediately told me that his family is not wealthy but that they have always supported each other. After the graduation, he reached his father and brother in Dubai, where he stayed for three months with a tourist visa and then he came back to the Emirate at hand where he found his first and unique job in the Italian Industry and Commerce Office in the UAE (B. Choudhari, personal communication, May 6, 2022).

He works nine hours per day, laughing he asserted “sometimes even more”, from Monday to Friday and every day he has one hour lunch break. The extra-hours he works during some days are not paid but the day after he can freely decide to arrive late at work or to go home before the due time in order to make up for the extra-hours of the previous day (B. Choudhari, personal communication, May 6, 2022).

Among the several responsibilities and tasks he has to perform, he has to pay attention in the budget preparation and presentation and in the production of set of accounts in a monthly basis, including journal postings, in preparing reports accurately, in accordance with company policy and accounting standards, in reviewing monthly management accounts and weekly forecasting reports (B. Choudhari, personal communication, May 6, 2022). His main task is to pay attention in the interpretation and analysis of financial data to improve financial performance. For these tasks and responsibilities he get a dirham 10,000 salary per month (which stands for euro 2715.58), an employment visa that it must be renewed every three years since the company is a semi-governmental one, an health insurance, a one month leave every year (he can decide by himself when to take vacation) and an unlimited contract (B.

Choudhari, personal communication, May 6, 2022). The salary he gets is the result of his basic salary (dirham 7000), transportation, food and housing allowances. Indeed, he lives in an apartment with his wife, brother, sister-in-law and parents in the Emirates of Sharjah, which is less expensive than Dubai.

It is immediately possible to understand that Basid works for a Company that provides him with many more benefits than those for which Gabriella and Lucille are employed. He firmly believes to receive a good salary and to work in decent conditions in a safe environment. When I asked Basid the questions “In your personal opinion, what are the rights that a worker like you should freely enjoy?” and “There are job organizations in Dubai that support and help workers like you?”, he looked at me quite astonished. At first glance it seemed to me that he did not understand neither the two questions nor the topic. It is a matter of fact that in Dubai, as already repeated several times, both collective bargaining and strikes are forbidden by the government but in this case, differently from Gabriella and Lucille, Basid strongly believes that that kind of behavior “is not the right one. For me it is just better to leave” (B. Choudhari, personal communication, May 6, 2022). The mentality of Basid is different, he does not conceive the idea of claiming one’s own rights in a Country that has provided him with a better life than that he would have had in India. Dubai has *de facto* improved his life and that of his relatives.

However, in common with Gabriella and Lucille, he does not feel protected by the State since he already knows that in case of need, the government would not help him. According to him, “you have always to secure your job” since “the State does not care about you” (B. Choudhari, personal communication, May 6, 2022). He knows to be under the “protection” of the Italian Industry and Commerce Office, where he works without pressure in a good working environment with a secure job. Although in the Italian Chamber there is no opportunity to improve his working position, he does not want to look for something else since he feels “protected” -the adjective he used- for everything. There has been a period when he searched for new job opportunities but the kind of contract that the companies offered him was just temporal and not permanent, like the one he has in the Italian Industry and Commerce Office.

Like the case of Lucille Quinny, but differently from Gabriella Camalo, Basid Choudhari has some “benefits” in case he decides to quit or he gets fired: in both cases, he would receive the end of salary benefit (the so-called gratuity) which will count for the 50-60 per cent of the entire salary.

II.II.IV Final considerations about the three interviews

Basid has no intentions to leave the Country because he truly has found a place that has bettered his working and living conditions. On the contrary, Gabriella is looking forward to leave the Country because she has no friends and family with her and, as it is more important to mention, her working and living conditions are not adequate for living a decent life that an adult woman should deserve. Lucille, so to say, finds herself in the middle of the two opposite: she will remain in the Country until she will be able to afford it. In case she will find herself forced to leave the Country due to economic and personal reasons, she will look for a better alternative, as she has always done.

Moreover, the three interviewed persons have two things in common despite their personal working experiences: all three came to Dubai in order to look for better social and working conditions because in their home Countries there were fewer opportunities. The question that can consequently arise is why they have chosen the Emirate and homonym city of Dubai: the answer is that for Lucille and Basid, both of them coming from India, it was cheaper to arrive in Dubai due to the territorial closeness than to migrate to other parts of the world that are much more expensive and far away for them. On the contrary, for Gabriella Dubai is really expensive compared to other cities of the world but she arrived in the city for a simple holiday and she felt in love with it.

Another opinion that they strongly share is that related to the role of the government: although their working and social differences, all three feel “abandoned” by the State since they perceive it as being indifferent to the needs of its immigrant workforce, irrespective of the tiers and levels within the labour market.

II.III Interview to the riders Mohammed Arsalan and Amcha and the riders' revolt

At the bottom of the social and working pyramid in Dubai there are those workers employed in the service and construction sectors; they are those who make up the named third tier of the Labour Market. These workers live in poor conditions without any rights and care provided by the government. Indeed, the government has created specific buildings outside the splendour of the city of Dubai that are the home of blue-collar workers. Among the many labour camps there is that of Jebel Ali Labour Camp, which hosts Mohammed Arsalan and Mohammed Amcha. These two riders come from Pakistan and arrived in the near Emirate having two different ideas but sharing the same goal.

• Mohammed Arsalan

Mohammed Arsalan is a 27-years-old young boy, who started to work as a rider for Talabat two years ago. He comes from Pakistan, where he used to work as auto-electrician before arriving in Dubai four years ago. He is the oldest brother of five siblings and his family can sustain itself thanks to the pension of his father who was a soldier for the Pakistan's army (M. Arsalan, personal communication, May 16, 2022). It follows that, as he declared, he arrived in Dubai in search for better job opportunities and experiences in order to professionally grow and not because he needed money at that time.

He likes Dubai, he proudly showed me his iPhone 12 Pro that was able to buy thanks to the money he earned (although I was a bit astonished at first glance since he lives in very poor conditions, being unable to send money back home to his family, but he did not give up the idea of buying one of the most expensive phones that exist in commerce), but the ideas and dreams he had before arriving have been destroyed by the hard reality. Mohammed Arsalan decided to personally pay for his own visa as free lancer -which costs dirham 5000 (the equivalent of euro 1,356.49) every two years- because, in this way, whatever commission he gets, he has not to give money to anyone else (M. Arsalan, personal communication, May 16, 2022). Indeed, Mohammed is not an employee of Talabat, he is an employee of "GG4", a private recruitment agency that recruits riders for Talabat.

This is simply the “kafala system” that has been explained in the previous section. Basically, “GG4” is an intermediary to which Mohammed could have asked for obtaining the visa paid by it (although, as previously stated, he decided to pay for his own visa in an independent way) and Talabat is the big international company which hires the riders. To sum up, Mohammed just provides a service to Talabat since he works for it, but he is not an employee of the international company at hand.

In addition to this, “GG4” does not provide him with the health insurance but if he has some problems, he can go to the cheapest clinic and after having paid, he can claim the refund to “GG4”. Normally, without an insurance that covers the costs, a medical visit in a basic clinic costs dirham 2000 (equal to euro 542.49) but the riders do not have so much money. However, how it can be easily imagined, the process for obtaining the refund back is long and inconclusive; thus being difficult to obtain the money back from the recruitment agency.

Immediately after his arrival in Dubai, Mohammed Arsalan has worked in the construction sector for two years but then he decided to switch to the delivery and service sector since he believed to have better working conditions (M. Arsalan, personal communication, May 16, 2022). In reality his situation has not improved, so to say it has worsened. He was able to send back home dirham 1800 (that is euro 488.34) for his family when he worked in the construction sector, while in these last two years that he works as a rider he has been unable to send money back home.

Mohammed works on a commission-base and every order makes him gain dirham 7.50 (that are euro 2.03) (M. Arsalan, personal communication, May 16, 2022). In a month he gains dirham 3000-3500 (so, euro 950.85) on average: of this salary he has to monthly deduct dirham 450 (euro 122.08) as rent for his accommodation (he lives in Jebel Ali Labour Camp, so that he has just a single room that he shares with other five men while the kitchen and the bathrooms are common spaces with many other men) and he has to pay by himself his own food and the fuel for the bike, which amount to dirham 600-800 per month (euro 217.04) (M. Arsalan, personal communication, May 16, 2022). As Mohammed explained me, the bike is generally rented since they do not have enough money to buy it and the maintenance is a responsibility of the company but the safety equipments are paid by the rider. In addition to this, it can happen that Mohammed gets a fine since he usually speeds the limit; the fine

amounts to dirham 600 (euro 162.78). What is left to him after all these expenses is dirham 700 (equivalent to euro 189.91) per month, which in turn does not result sufficient for sending money back home (M. Arsalan, personal communication, May 16, 2022).

Due to this impossibility, Mohammed has to face another difficulty, the inner personal one: since he works as a rider for Talabat, he has never called nor messaged his family because he feels a deep sense of shame due to its economic impossibility to send money to his mother and father. His mother has reached him out telling him to phone and/or message sometimes because they do not care about money, they care about him (M. Arsalan, personal communication, May 16, 2022).

Mohammed Arsalan even declared that for the moment he is not interested in looking for a woman with whom have a marriage and create a family: he has not enough money to care about himself, so that he can not afford to marry and to economically sustain a woman. What emerged from this interview is that these riders, and more generally all the workers of the third tier, face economic problems that have serious and strong consequences in their personal inner lives: the sense of shame and the renunciation of looking for a personal relationship with a woman. One has not to forget that before being immigrant workers, riders and construction workers are persons who face challenges, mostly of them being just consequences of their poor economic situations.

I even asked Mohammed Arsalan why he does not change the work, looking for something more profitable: he replied me by saying that it is not convenient for him to change a work that he started just two years ago. If he quits now, no other companies will hire him since the image that will be created around him would be that of an untrustworthy man. However, he is thinking to move to Malta or Barhein, where he will look for better working and living conditions.

Moreover, according to him, there are no other chances of a better and serious improvement of the living and working situation of workers like him. Mohammed told me that there are so many people who are willing to work as riders just to earn something, even if the salary is extremely low. Consequently, Talabat does not care for each single rider since it already knows that there are plenty of men ready to take the position of someone who quits. “For a

rider the conditions will never change nor improve because there are so many people willing to do it”, as underlined by Mohammed.

- **Mohammed Amcha**

A similar story is the one told by Mohammed Amcha but this 30-years-old man from Pakistan was much more shy and he feared to have consequences if he would have said something against Talabat. The only information that I was able to get from him has been relative to his family and to the payments he has to monthly face. Mohammed Amcha has arrived in Dubai four years ago since his family is poor and he wanted to improve the economic conditions in which they were living. In Pakistan his family has a farm and a couple of fields to cultivate but this is not enough to afford the daily expenses of a numerous family, like his one (M. Amcha, personal communication, May 16, 2022). In Dubai there was his uncle who was living and who helped him in a first moment when he arrived in the city. The first job he performed upon his arrival has been the one of garden maintenance and then he switched to rider for Talabat because he thought it was better, but at the end he realized that it was not (like Mohammed Arsalan).

As in the case of Mohammed Arsalan, he lives in Jebel Ali Labour Camp where he shares everything with other men. His monthly salary amounts to dirham 4000 (the equivalent of euro 1,086.69) and he works on commissions, each of them makes him gain dirham 7.50 (M. Amcha, personal communication, May 16, 2022). To his salary he has to monthly subtract dirham 350 (the equivalent of euro 95.09) for paying the rent of the room, between dirham 600 and 800 (it would be between euro 160.75 and 214.34) for paying the fuel of the bike and other expenses that he has to face (M. Amcha, personal communication, May 16, 2022). Although his information and story-telling is shorter and not detailed as the one of Mohammed Arsalan, it is immediately possible to understand that their living and working conditions are the same, they face the same personal problems and the challenges they have are not different.

These men arrived in Dubai with the main purpose of changing for the better not only their lives, but even the lives of their families and relatives. Dubai seems a city (as well as Emirate) that can improve one's conditions but in reality it is not like that: in Dubai, but it can be stated that it is a rule that works everywhere, not everyone has the same opportunities and possibilities. The national, personal and educational backgrounds seem to be a burden that one has to sustain and that will definitely define the future within the Emirate at hand. The sentence "nothing is free in Dubai", which several different people told me, depicts very well the life in Dubai: the city offers the best it can to the people who can provide it with their best abilities and knowledges. If someone lacks the abilities and knowledges required by the city, the life one has to face will be on the margin of society, being forgotten by everyone, government and State included.

II.III.I Riders' revolt and Talabat position

During the three months I spent in Dubai, there has been for the first time ever a riders' revolt due to their extreme poor working conditions. As it can be read in the article *UAE: Food delivery platform comes to a halt over work issues* written by Nasreen Abdulla for the "Khaleej Times", the riders "claimed they were being made to work longer hours. Certain others demanded to be made direct employees of the company rather than being employed through a contractor", while others "took to Twitter saying the per-delivery rate has been slashed significantly". On 10th May 2022 took place the strike by riders since they refused to cooperate until they would have obtained "better working conditions"¹¹⁰. So, these strikes were a result of the frustration which derived from a reduction in the riders' commission and a further extension of their working hours. Indeed, as it has been written in the article mentioned above, firms like Talabat and Deliveroo "reportedly cut order rates and increased the working hours of their drivers after the fuel price hikes"¹¹¹.

¹¹⁰ Abdulla (2022).

¹¹¹ Abdulla (2022).

The strikes against Deliveroo and Talabat happened with a week of distance one from the other and the reasons behind them have been the same. As a consequence of living in an highly digitalized era, this issue has been highlighted even through social media. Indeed, Talabat promptly posted on “Instagram” its new policies addressed to the improvement of the working life of its riders.

Furthermore, as it can be read in the article *UAE: Restaurants, residents report cancelled orders over lack of delivery riders* by Nasreen Abdulla for the “Khaleej Times”, the German multinational Delivery Hero Talabat has asserted that a week before the strikes “(...) rider pay satisfaction was well above 70 per cent, (...)”, adding that “we understand economic and political realities are constantly changing, and we will always continue to listen to what riders have to say (...)”. In parallel but separately, “Deliveroo UAE (...) said it was investigating claims that third party agencies had made riders pay for their own visas, which is against federal law”, as declared in the article *Talabat UAE says riders in Dubai refused to work amid calls for higher pay* by Rory Reynolds for “The National” journal paper.

Although it seems that apparently both companies involved in the strikes, namely Talabat and Deliveroo, have taken action to improve and foster the conditions of their workers, the reality is something different. Actually the riders work with the same salaries and the same duties that they had before the strikes, nothing has changed in their lives.

I personally think that the claimed actions performed by Talabat are inconclusive and with no practical, real and effective consequences for the riders. For example, among the new policies and activities that the Company promotes there is the one which ensures that 100 per cent of in-app customer tips will be instantly paid to the Rider App Wallet. It seems that the main responsibility is given to the customer, who is supposedly entitled (and responsible) to improve and better the lives of thousands of workers. On the contrary, it is not a customer’s responsibility to provide the rider with more tips since they should fairly be paid by the international company that hires them. Making the customer feel responsible is not a right and fair behaviour.

Lastly, but not least, even the third policy (out of the two fostered) seems to be promoted just for the sake of showing Talabat willingness to improve the working situation of its riders, while in reality it does not care. Providing 21 air-conditioned buses which will serve as riders rest stops and giving them free water during the hottest period of the year will never be implemented. This policy will never be put into practice because Dubai does not provide this service to its wealthier residents and locals citizens, it does not granted basic rights to its third tier workers so that imagining a service like that proposed by Talabat is simply non-sense and, among other things, difficult to carry out.

What big companies like Talabat and Deliveroo should do is to create a collaboration with the Government of the Emirate at hand in order to promote and foster basic rights. Why have not they raised the amount for each commission at 10 dirham instead of keeping it at 7.50 dirham? Why do not they provide the health insurance to their riders? Why have not they reduced the hours of work? Why do not they provide for the payment of fuel of the bikes, together with the safety equipments? What comes directly to their expenses is not taken into account, the only actions they claim to be willing to tackle with are not substantial for the real change of the lives of their riders.

On the other side, if the Emirate of Dubai claims to constantly look at the future for improving the life of its residents and national citizens and wants to establish itself as the city of the future, it should start from the care it gives to its immigrant workers: there could be no real and effective improvement unless the rights of everyone are not respected and fostered. It is time for Dubai to hear the needs and claims of its immigrant workforce in order to promote a society where everyone is included and no one is left behind.

II.IV Analysis of the previous interviews

II.IV.I Final considerations on the interviews and on the Three Labour Market Tiers

The interviews that I carried forward during my internship and stay in Dubai have one single common belief that is shared by all five immigrant workers: the lack of confidence on the State and the government since the five interviewed people strictly believe to not be one of the point of attention and care on which the government of Dubai focuses its attention most. Independently from the gender, nationality, kind of job performed, educational and economic background all five feel to be left alone as immigrant workers. Basically, all of them have found a new way of living in Dubai but in different ways: some of them have experienced an improvement and a development for the better of their living and especially working conditions (like the personal and working cases of Lucille Quinny and Basid Choudhari), while others have arrived in Dubai with the expectation of a better life that then resulted to be completely different, if not opposite, by making them working for few dirhams per month and living in basic and poor conditions (this is referred to the lives of Gabriella Camalo and of the two riders Mohammed Arsalan and Mohammed Amcha).

In order to mention the three tiers of the labour market that have been widely discussed in the previous sections and Chapter, I think that the final analysis can be as follow: Mohammed Arsalan and Mohammed Amcha make up the third tier since they are immigrant riders from Pakistan who do not enjoy so many rights (both in the social and working sphere), they are preceded by Gabriella Camalo who I think should be classified her too in the third tier due to the fact that she works with no signed contract, a very low salary and any health insurance is provided to her. To this, it should be added the fact that she lives in a shared apartment in Dubai Marina paying the rent for having just a single bed in the middle of the living room. Moving upward, from the third tier to the second tier, it can be found Lucille Quinny. I think she can not be classified in the third tier since her working conditions are far better than those of the immigrant workers already mentioned due to the fact that she earns an higher salary and she works in good conditions, which means that she has a contract, a granted visa and a granted health insurance (although this last one is the basic and cheapest one). Her living conditions too are better than those of the others even if they are worse than those of Basid

Choudhari and than to what the average mindset of a Western person coming from a rich and well-developed Country is.

What I found out with a bit of incredulity at first glance was that in Dubai is normal to share apartments with other people instead of having a complete house on one's own. Lastly, the top one of the interviewed at hand is represented by the working conditions of Basid Choudhari who finds himself in the second tier. He earns a decent salary, employed by a non-profit and semi-governmental organization which provides him with a permanent contract, health insurance, employment visa and good working conditions.

So, as a final consideration I think that it is important to take in mind that generalizing is not properly adequate when the immigrant and national workforce in Dubai is analyzed. The city and homonym Emirate at hand has a very wide and diverse workforce that is employed for and in different sectors, with different working positions and living conditions. I believe that the division of the Dubai Labour Market into three tiers that have been elaborated by Julia Connell and John Burgess in their work *The Labour Market, Immigration and the Building of Dubai* should be modified by diving the three tiers in "sub-tiers", each holding and being divided in different levels. For instance, not everyone who is in the second tier is a professional expatriate coming from the rich western Countries, it can be a professional expatriate from India, a poor country that is typically known for having a workforce that is generally suitable to be employed in the construction and service kinds of jobs. Rightly, the three tiers are general but I think that they should be divided into other inner parts so that they can be used for a fair and more realistic classification of the wide workforce that makes up the labour market of Dubai.

II.IV.II Work announcement in Internet

I was particularly interested in knowing how a job advertisement for riders could have been by searching in Internet. My curiosity was driven by the will to know whether the claimed offers are real, thus respecting what then would be in reality: low pay, no protection guaranteed and general poor working and living conditions.

What is declared into an internet announcement that I found out in Internet is a bit contrary to what then riders have to normally face: visa and fuel are provided by a so-called “reputed food delivery company”, whose name has not be mentioned. Based on what has been told me by the rider Mohammed Arsalan, the fuel must be self paid by the rider, who has to afford even other expenses linked to the bike, that are the safety equipment, any possible fines and food.

Indeed, the statement “food (...) by the Company till the license period” that can be read in the selected studied advertisement does not reflect the reality. Riders have to pay for their own food and even if the accommodation is provided by the company one should inquiry about the conditions where riders have to live. Providing an house where to stay is not enough: it should be underlined one more time that the hygienic conditions, the general living ones and the place itself are always at the limit of the decency since these men are forced to live by sharing small spaces with several other men in poor and overcrowded places, where neither the air conditioners are provided. In the previous line I used the verb “forced to” since these men arrive in Dubai with nothing, just with their hope of a better working and social future, several times being deprived of their own passports, of a contract written in their own native language and of their basic working and human rights.

Furthermore, other two points relative to the job announcement at hand have surprised me: firstly, it is written that the languages required are English and Hindi. In this way a first clear distinction has been made since -implicitly but voluntary- the announcement is addressed to immigrant workers coming from specific Countries, like India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Of course, is less probable (if not impossible) that men coming from the western Countries of the world know how to speak Hindi. I think that this is a clear example of discrimination: requiring just a specific language (precisely Hindi since English is widely spoken in the

Emirate of Dubai, preceded just by Arabic which is the national language) means that the announcement is consciously directed to some immigrant workers and not to everyone. This “exclusion” of immigrant workers who are native of Europe, United States of America and/or other western Countries is the consequence of their employment just in working sectors that require higher skills. It seems that the large majority of immigrant workers who come from underdeveloped, poor and Sub-Asian Countries are bounded to just low skills jobs.

Secondly, the duty hours of work are declared to be twelve which means that a rider has to perform his/her job much more the fair hours that are normally worked by other workers in other sectors. It means that a rider has little time for his-/herself since he/she has to work for the whole day, having little time to rest and to do personal things, taking into account that normally a rider has no day off. Among other things that are supposedly provided by the hiring company is its availability to suggest some “tips”. Of course, such thing can be seen as an act of kindness -as surely it is- but I asked myself if it would be better to provide fewer tips (whose usefulness I think is questionable) but more rights, like that of living in decent conditions, having more rest time and a wider health insurance and being granted protection during the working hours. I think that even riders would agree with this.

From the above analysis is it possible to affirm that the reality which riders have to face is generally different from what is described in the jobs’ announcement and from what is promised to them. It is really difficult to come back when one arrives in a foreign Country with the hope and will to start a better life for oneself and even for the own family. In the majority of cases the riders have to face personal and working obstacles that are not always able to overcome. This is a situation that is common not only among riders but among immigrant workers too. Leaving the own native Country, family, friends and traditions is not easy but for those immigrant workers who come from poor and underdeveloped Countries it represents a necessity and not just a personal decision driven by the will to change for the sake of the change itself. When no other opportunities are left in the home Countries, for many is better to leave hoping for the better.

II.IV.III ILO and the tips to migrant workers from India

The *International Labour Organization* has worked with the Member State of India in order to release in 2015 an official document called *Travel Smart - Work Smart: A guide for Indian migrant workers in the United Arab Emirates* for enabling the immigrant Indian workforce to understand how to face some problems, the rights that should enjoy and the duties they have to follow. Indeed, in the first page there is written that “Information (...) can help you feel more secure, work safely and profitably. It will also help you to avoid exploitation or abuse” and it is the graphically represented underlined sentence that is even more important to cite: “always remember, the best person to look after your interests in the United Arab Emirates is you!”¹¹².

By reading the booklet and starting from the first sentences it is immediately possible to recognize that the government of India wants to make its citizens aware of the fact that working and living in the United Arab Emirates is not as easy as one can think because “some encounter tough times”, as it has been stated in the booklet at hand¹¹³.

The booklet contains all possible warnings that can prevent the Indian workforce in the Federation of the United Arab Emirates from being exploited. In the first pages there are some general informations that are helpful to know before arriving in the Arabic Country: for instance, it is explained the “kafala” system, the needed documents in order to reach and enter the Country and all the aspects and rules related to the signing of a contract.

Following this, a series of rights that should be enjoyed as migrant workers in the United Arab Emirates are listed because “as a registered migrant worker of any age, you have the right to complain and seek protection if any of your rights are violated or if you have been abused by your employer”¹¹⁴. Among the several listed rights, there are even those of refusing to work overtime, of having rest time of at least one hour per day during working hours, of working days off during the official holidays of the UAE with full pay and of personally keeping one’s own documents.

¹¹² International Labour Organization [ILO] (2015).

¹¹³ International Labour Organization [ILO] (2015).

¹¹⁴ International Labour Organization [ILO] (2015).

These rights that should be supposedly granted to all immigrant workers and not just to those coming from India are not always respected, as it has been explained in the previous sections. For example, Gabriella Camalo and the two riders who have been interviewed have not an hour of break since they do not have it or, as in the case of Gabriella, the available break lasts just the time one takes for eating the lunch (less than an hour). In addition to these cases, Lucille Quinny had not enjoyed the holiday during the third day of *Eid al-Fitr* since her company required her to be in the office. To add one more example, as it has been explained by the two articles of “The Guardian” analyzed above and by Equidem, although it is one’s own right to keep the document with him-/herself, many immigrant workers have been deprived of their passport upon arrival. So, on paper the rights granted are many and they cover different topics but in reality the effectiveness of such rights is not respected at all.

The section that follows in the booklet at hand is the one concerning the way to defend one’s own rights. Basically, an Indian immigrant worker can choose between the Ministry of Labour of the United Arab Emirates and the Indian Embassy. As it has been explained by the above cases, it is difficult to gain the attention of the Ministry of Labour since the majority of immigrant workers do not feel protected and listened by it. In the paper at hand there is even a section called “Cultural organizations registered with the Indian Embassy” in which seventeen organizations are listed and named in order to make the Indian workers know that they can even rely on these organizations in case of need. The role of these associations is to “take care of the welfare of the Indian community and conduct cultural and welfare activities regularly, including sports activities”¹¹⁵. For example, in Dubai there are four of these associations, namely the “Tamilnadu Cultural Association”, “Kanrataka Sangh”, “Telugu Association” and “The Rasamayi Telugu Cultural Forum”.

¹¹⁵ International Labour Organization [ILO] (2015).

The other parts of the booklet are concerned with the responsibilities that migrant workers have and their general status, while other parts deal with specific topics and notes for female migrants and young migrants. Despite the usefulness of such booklet and the information it contains, the reality is different. Many immigrant workers (independently from their Country of origin) do not even know about the existence of such paper and in the case they know it, they can do little when rights are not granted to them as a matter of fact and when the Ministry of Labour is not really concerned with their working (and living) safety.

To sum up, the working conditions of the immigrant workforce -especially workers coming from specific poor Countries like India, Bangladesh, Pakistan etc...- are barely fair and their rights are not always respected. This clearly stands in contrast with the several advantages and facilities that the city of Dubai offers to foreign companies that want to both establish and/or run a business within the Emirate at hand. It is sadly surprising to see the several differences between the exploitation of the immigrant workforce and the several advantages enjoyed by foreign Companies. Again, Dubai has to offer whatever it has only to those that arrive there with the idea of bringing money and making it circulate within the Emirate, while for those who arrive with nothing, nothing will be given them back.

Chapter III: Foreign companies and investors

The main focus of this last Chapter will be the favorable conditions and advantages that foreign Companies enjoy once they decide to settle and run a business in the Emirate and homonym city of Dubai. Whereas in the previous Chapter the analysis has been pursued by taking into account the working conditions of migrant workers (especially those workers coming from the least developed and poor Countries), it is now the conditions of foreign companies in Dubai that are attentively studied and examined. Before looking into depth at the argument at hand, an introduction concerning the general topic of trade agreements and the relative clauses contained in them is needed in order to better understand the arguments and topics that will follow.

III.I Trade Agreements

A trade agreement is basically an instrument to regulate the economic and trade relationships between two or more States. Indeed, trade agreements can be of three different kinds: bilateral, when the States are just two; regional/plurilateral, when the States involved are more than two but they are limited in number, being it a special type of multilateral treaty and finally a trade agreement can even be multilateral, which means that it enters into force by more than two States.

In a nutshell, a trade agreement involves the liberalization of the market and the abolition of any barriers between the States that take part to it. But, an agreement of such kind can even contain some particular clauses, known as “social clauses”. As it can be deduced by the name, these clauses represent an instrument to minimize all the risks that can emerge and follow the opening up of trade: they are needed to promote social standards. A specific typology of social clause is represented by labour provisions that commit the trade partners to comply with certain minimum labour standards and to enforce and maintain domestic labour laws. In other words, social clauses are a link between economic aims and social aims.

These kinds of labour provisions tend to be concentrated in those agreements that involve Countries from the North and those from the South (North-South Trade Agreements) but nowadays there is an increasing trend to integrate the labour provisions into trade agreements among developing and emerging Countries (known as South-South Trade Agreements). To bring numeral examples and in order to understand it better, over 80 per cent of all agreements that came into force since 2013 contain social clauses and free trade agreements with labour provisions grew from four in 1995 to eighty-six in 2019¹¹⁶. In addition to this, as of December 2020 there were one-hundred-seventy trade agreements in place (covering one-hundred-thirty-five economies) that include labour provisions, nearly half of which came into existence after 2008¹¹⁷.

The primary aim of the inclusion of such labour standards and social clauses in trade agreements is to protect and promote human rights and sustainable development through the effective implementation of labour standards. This is even followed by the likewise important aim to ensure fair competition and to level the playing field for global competitors. It is important to highlight that additional means to monitor the enforcement of labour standards in domestic laws are created when such obligations are incorporated into a trade agreement, even if governments may already have incorporated them in their domestic laws. Furthermore, trade agreements might trigger the need to adopt and implement new legislation to effectively implement labour standards, which might have a significant impact on employers and businesses¹¹⁸.

Moreover, a further distinction and qualitative analysis can be made when social provisions are present in trade agreements. Labour provisions can be distinguished between a variety of two since they can be conditional kind of provisions or/and promotional conditions. The former implies that the compliance with labour standards will have economic consequences, like sanctions or incentives; while the latter does not link compliance to economic consequences but provides a framework for dialogue, cooperation, and monitoring.

¹¹⁶ Brino (2022).

¹¹⁷ Brino (2022).

¹¹⁸ Brino (2022).

The effects of promotional provisions depend on the political context of the signing Countries and the related existence of a comprehensive framework for the various activities explained in the agreement.

To be even more precise and to make the distinction between conditional and promotional elements clearer, it is important to highlight that they both represent two mechanisms used in trade-linked labour provisions but while conditional provisions are based on sanctions and incentives in order to eliminate or increase trade preferences, foster the development cooperation and reduce technical assistance; promotional elements are based on dialogue and cooperation which both imply development assistance, knowledge sharing, bilateral and/or plurilateral dialogue and monitoring.

The critical side of such social clauses and relative labour provisions is represented by the enforcement mechanisms: in fact, they are not included in all agreements and are not frequently activated, the social partners are not involved during the settlements of articles, principles and guidelines that can be found in the writing of an agreement are sometimes missed and generally speaking, trade parties prefer to settle complaints on an amicable basis rather than through dispute settlement¹¹⁹.

Although such social clauses are very important in order to put the attention on the rights of workers all around the world by promoting social rights at global level, they still are missed in some agreements and/or are not properly developed during the writing and decision phase. For the future agreements it is possible to identify some elements which could contribute to render more useful the social clauses in terms of promotion of social rights at global level: for instance, it would be very useful to increase the transparency in the negotiation, to involve stakeholders, to improve the role of social partners in the negotiation processes but also in the follow up activities and finally to redefine the role of the *International Labour Organization* in the design, implementation and enforcement activities¹²⁰.

¹¹⁹ Brino (2022).

¹²⁰ Brino (2022).

III.I.I The commercial relations between the European Union and the member Countries of the “Gulf Cooperation Council”

As it can be read in the official website of the European Union, the six member Countries of the so-called “Gulf Cooperation Council” (GCC) -namely Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates- represent a very important region both for trade and investment. Indeed, the “Gulf Cooperation Council” region is “the EU’s 6th largest export market and an important source and destination of investment for EU Member States”.

As a matter of fact, The European Union is the second biggest trade partner of the “Gulf Cooperation Council”, representing 12.3 per cent of the “Gulf Cooperation Council’s” total trade in goods with the world in 2020¹²¹. The “Gulf Cooperation Council’s” imports coming from the EU in 2020 was equal to 17.8 per cent and as a consequence, the European Union ranked the “Gulf Cooperation Council” as the number one partner for import¹²². In 2020, the European Union was the fourth biggest export partner of the “Gulf Cooperation Council” due to the fact that 6.9 per cent of the “Gulf Cooperation Council’s” exports went to the European Union¹²³.

Furthermore, the European Union-“Gulf Cooperation Council” total trade in goods in 2020 amounted to euro 97.1 billion: among these, the European Union’s imports were worth euro 29.6 billion and they were led by fuel and mining products, as well as chemicals¹²⁴. On the other hand, the European Union’s exports were a total of euro 67.5 billion and they were mostly made up by machinery and transport equipment, chemicals, agriculture and raw materials¹²⁵.

¹²¹ European Commission (n.d.).

¹²² European Commission (n.d.).

¹²³ European Commission (n.d.).

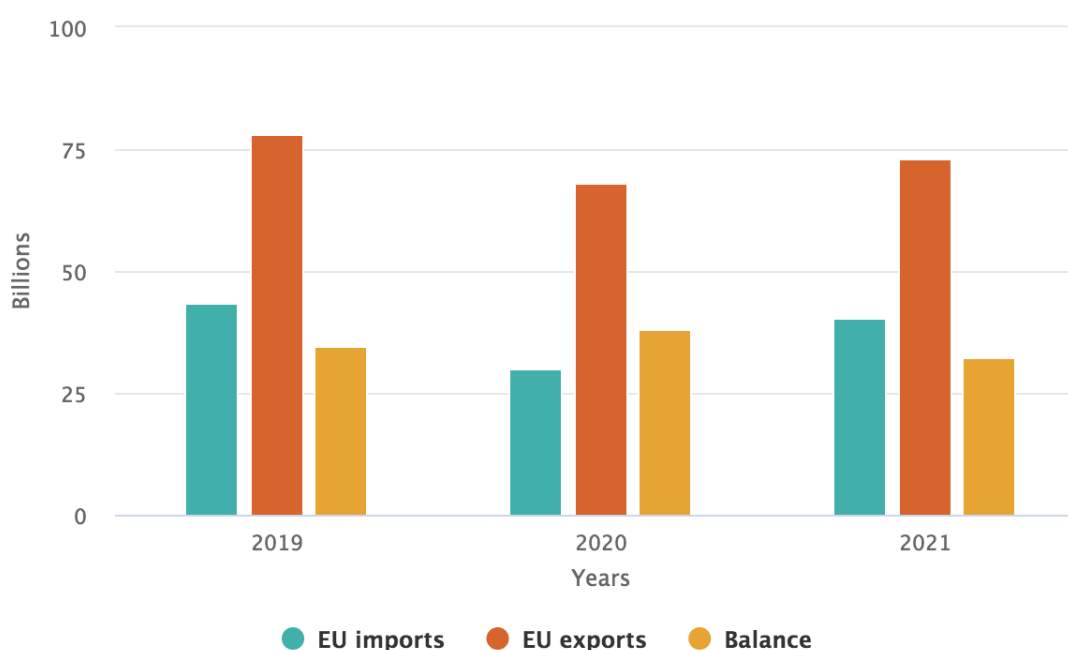
¹²⁴ European Commission (n.d.).

¹²⁵ European Commission (n.d.).

About the topic of services, it is important to highlight that two-way trade in services between the European Union on one hand and the “Gulf Cooperation Council” on the other hand amounted to euro 51.7 billion in 2019¹²⁶. Among these, the imports of services of the European Union represented euro 18.0 billion and the exports were around euro 33.7 billion¹²⁷. In 2018, total European Union foreign direct investment outward stock in the “Gulf Cooperation Council” region amounted to euro 76.9 billion¹²⁸.

In the below picture it is possible to see through the graph the differences in imports and exports during the years 2019, 2020, 2021 of the European Union in respect of the “Gulf Cooperation Council’s” member Countries.

Figure III.I: Trade in goods represented by European Union’s imports and exports reported in euro’s billions



Source: European Commission, n.d. (Retrieved from official website https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/gulf-region_en)

¹²⁶ European Commission (n.d.).

¹²⁷ European Commission (n.d.).

¹²⁸ European Commission (n.d.).

Apart from the economic relations between the European Union and the six member Countries of the “Gulf Cooperation Council”, which have been shown to be profitable for both parties, it is not possible to find nowadays a written trade agreement between the two subjects at hand. The first attempt has been made in 1990 when both the European Union and the six member Countries of the “Gulf Cooperation Council” launched the negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA). To be precise and clear about the topic, it is important to highlight that free trade does not mean fair trade. As it has been explained in the video *Free Trade vs. Fair Trade*, the latter implies the movement of people, consumers, farmers and businesses that aims at changing the terms of trade in order to let them become more dignified, just and equitable. Fair trade creates long-term partnership, commitment and friendship and it evolves around the role played by consumers too.

Like the majority of Free Trade Agreements even the one started in 1990 by the European Union and the Countries’ members of the “Gulf Cooperation Council” was meant to provide for the progressive and reciprocal liberalization of trade in goods and services but the negotiations were suspended in 2008 after the uprising of several challenges. The only agreement duly signed and completed between the parties at hand has been the so-called “EU-GCC Cooperation Agreement”, dated back 1988.

III.I.II EU-GCC Cooperation Agreement

The main aim of the Agreement is the settlement of political and economic cooperation between the European Union and the “Gulf Cooperation Council” Countries. After having created a Joint Council and a Joint Cooperation Committee, it seeks to improve both the trade relations and the stability “in a strategic part of Europe’s neighbourhood”, as it has been affirmed in the official website of the European Union¹²⁹. The two parties involved meet on an annual basis to discuss trade, investment and regional cooperation within the “European Union-Gulf Cooperation Council Joint Cooperation Committee” held in Riyadh or Brussels.

¹²⁹ European Commission (n.d.).

The Agreement, which came into force starting from 25th February 1989, contains twenty-four articles that deal with the topics of trade, investment, agricultural field, industrial field, science and technology, and finally even with energy. As it has been written above and rightly remarked in the following lines, such agreement is the result of primarily economic reasons which aim for promoting economic development in the territories of both involved parties. *Article 1* deals with the “general objectives”, which are mainly those of exchanging available information on short- and medium-term prospects and forecasts for production, consumption and trade; of putting forward market surveys and trade promotion by both parties on their respective markets and on other markets and of developing concrete and effective training. Among all articles and clauses developed, those of social and labour kinds are missed. Although the Agreement at hand has been pursued for economic and political reasons, no particular attention has been given to the conditions of workers, their rights and other kinds of social clauses. For example, *Article 4* cites as follows:

In the field of agriculture, agri-industry and fisheries, the Contracting Parties shall strive to encourage and facilitate, inter alia:

- *the stepping-up of exchanges of information on developments in agricultural production and on short and medium-term forecasts of production, consumption and trade on world markets,*
- *the promotion of contacts between enterprises, research institutions and other agencies in order to stimulate joint projects in agriculture, agri-industry and fisheries.*¹³⁰

The agricultural sector is the one where the participation of human work is highly visible and still needed. Despite this, no attention is given to social and labour clauses because one of the main aims of this Agreement is to promote “the broadest possible economic cooperation from which no field shall be excluded in advance”, as underlined in *Article 2*. This is preceded by what has been emphasized in the preamble, where it is declared that both parties involved recognize “the establishment of contractual relations between the community and the GCC

¹³⁰ Official Journal of the European Communities (1989).

Countries” that “will help to promote overall cooperation between equal partners on mutually advantageous terms in all spheres between the two regions and further their economic development (...)”. Once again, great attention is given to the economic ties that will follow from such Agreement, whereas the social and labour ones are not neither taken into account.

A further project that has followed the “EU-GCC Cooperation Agreement” has been launched in May 2017 with the name “EU-GCC Dialogue on Trade and Investment Issues”, which has seen the involvement of the private sector too. This first of the two developed Dialogues tackles with trade and investment-related issues by enhancing cooperation on matters of mutual interest, such as market access irritants, regulatory requirements and ways to encourage greater two-way trade and investment flows¹³¹. A second Dialogue has been promoted in 2019 with the name “EU-GCC Dialogue on Economic Diversification”. It has been developed with the main aim of creating connections and of building partnerships based on the exchange of the European Union experience and expertise to assist Countries of the “Gulf Cooperation Council” in their economic diversification strategies¹³². This last project has been of great importance for helping to identify new business opportunities and areas of economic cooperation between the two regions at hand.

III.I.III The European Union and the United Arab Emirates

Although no particular agreements have been signed between the European Union and the single State of the United Arab Emirates, the relationship between the two subjects at hand has always been characterized by both economic and political ties. From an economic point of view, the United Arab Emirates represents the “biggest investment partner” for the European Union between all the other Countries that are part of the “Gulf Cooperation Council” and it is also the second largest trading partner in the region¹³³. It can be said that this derives from the fact that the United Arab Emirates is one of the strongest and more stable economies in the whole Middle East.

¹³¹ European Commission (n.d.).

¹³² European Commission (n.d.).

¹³³ Delegation of the European Union to the United Arab Emirates (2021).

As it can be read in the article *Relations with the EU: The European Union and the United Arab Emirates*, released in the official website of the European Union, in 2020 the total bilateral trade between the two sides amounted to dirham 149 billion (that are euro 34,7 billion), among these the European exports amounted to dirham 111.7 billion (which corresponds to euro 26 billion), and imports were equal to dirham 36.9 billion (the equivalent of euro 8.6 billion). The exports from the European Union to the United Arab Emirates were highly diversified and they were and are still focused mostly on industrial products like power plants, railway locomotives, and aircrafts, electrical machinery and mechanical devices.

Since the trade between the two partners at hand has always been stable and steady over the years, both of them are willing to continue to expand their markets with each other, looking for high quality products delivered by both the European Union and the United Arab Emirates. In the last line of the above mentioned article, it is underlined the will of both parties to ensure a long-lasting free and fair trade among the two since they are both interested in keeping the multilateral trading system operating efficiently.

The relationship between the European Union and the United Arab Emirates from a political point of view is similar to the economic one: stable and centered on common political and regional interests. The European Union and the United Arab Emirates have a “joint interest in ensuring stability in the Middle Eastern region”¹³⁴: indeed, after having proved to be a solid and reliable partner for the European Union in different fields and areas, such as counterterrorism, energy, environment, climate change, non-proliferation, economic diversification and above all in trade; the United Arab Emirates’ activities on both regional and global scenes have progressively increased.

As it has been underlined in the previous paragraphs, there are no particular agreements (of any kinds) between the European Union and the United Arab Emirates. Although they have developed a diplomatic relationship during the years, being it showed by the European Union opening of the European Delegation in Abu Dhabi in the second half of 2013 as a testimony of its commitment to enforce bilateral political and economic cooperation and on the other way around, the United Arab Emirates hosts the embassies of 26 European Union’s Countries,

¹³⁴ Delegation of the European Union to the United Arab Emirates (2021).

there are no written agreements between them. The only agreement that has been signed by both Regions in order to fix their economic and political relations has been the above mentioned “EU-GCC Cooperation Agreement”, signed in 1988.

III.II Advantages that foreign companies have to run and/or settle a business in Dubai and the reasons why Dubai wants to attract them

It is now of extreme importance to focus the attention on the several advantages and benefits that foreign companies enjoy in case they decide to set, run or enlarge a business in the Emirate and homonym city of Dubai. Before going into depth with the analysis, I think that a brief introduction of the concept of “Corporate Social Responsibility” (CSR) is needed to better understand the concepts that will be explained in the following sections.

III.II.I Corporate Social Responsibility: an evolving topic

It is not easy to explain through a single definition what really is “Corporate Social Responsibility”: basically, it can be said that it is justice for both current and future generations. In the video clip *What is Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)?*, the Professor and Director of the Institute for Business Ethics at the University of St. Gallen, Thomas Beschorner explains that this concept does not question a company’s business activities but its usage prevents morally reprehensible practices that hurt employees and that damage the companies themselves and the societies where they are in. “Corporate Social Responsibility” refers to the way companies make profits and not about how they spend their profits.

Differently from hard law, “Corporate Social Responsibility” is a sort of soft law, that means the need of collective and individual commitments to comply with certain social and ecological standards¹³⁵. The concept refers to the way companies can contribute to a “good society” through “good business” practices¹³⁶. Indeed, Howard Rothmann Bowen, an American economist and worldwide known as the father of “Corporate Social Responsibility”, defined “Corporate Social Responsibility” in 1953 as “the duty of businessmen to pursue those policies to make those decisions, to follow those lines of action that are desirable according to the objectives and values recognized by society”¹³⁷. When talking about “Corporate Social Responsibility” society stands at the centre together with the way companies behave in its respect.

Some years later, in 1979, A.B. Carroll gives its own definition of the concept of inquiry, writing of “Corporate Social Responsibility” as a “set of the economic, legal, ethical and discretionary expectations that society has towards organizations in a given historical period”¹³⁸. According to him, corporations and business have four main duties and obligations toward society. He conceptualized the “Corporate Social Responsibility” into four different parts, based on the idea that companies have not only economic and legal obligations, but ethical and philanthropic responsibilities as well. He asserted that in order to have a legitimate “Corporate Social Responsibility”, it has to address the entire spectrum of obligations toward society, including the most fundamental one: the economic obligation.

Other important economists have provided their own definition of such evolving topic, thus this shows that over the past decade and during the years, “Corporate Social Responsibility” has become a social phenomenon and a compliance requirement. Even the European Union has expressed its idea about such topic in 2001 through the publication of the *Green Paper*, defining “Corporate Social Responsibility” as the “voluntary integration of the social and environmental concerns of companies in their commercial operations and in their relations

¹³⁵ Thomas Beschorner, University of St. Gallen (n.d.).

¹³⁶ Thomas Beschorner, University of St. Gallen (n.d.).

¹³⁷ Brino (2022).

¹³⁸ Brino (2022).

with the interested parties” and as “a concept whereby companies decide voluntarily to contribute to a better society and a cleaner environment”¹³⁹.

In line with this, in the Resolution on “Corporate Social Responsibility” released by the European Commission on 25th October 2011, it is explained that “Corporate Social Responsibility” is the “corporate responsibility for its impact on society”¹⁴⁰. This definition was the result of a series of considerations and objectives, being them the will to maximize the creation of added value for shareholders and stakeholders; identify, prevent and mitigate any negative consequences of corporate transactions on the environment; the idea of business operations and core business that must take place in order to achieve the integration of social, environmental, ethical, human rights and consumer issues and the requirement for any socially responsible behavior to be in compliance with legislation and collective bargaining¹⁴¹.

In a nutshell, the promotion of “Corporate Social Responsibility” is needed in order to assure that trade and investment go hand-in-hand with decent work. Affirming that “Corporate Social Responsibility” is an evolving topic means that it has traditionally been understood as a purely voluntary, enterprise-driven initiative that referred to activities that were considered not only to comply but to exceed compliance with the law whereas nowadays, it is seen as an increasing “legalization” and is becoming an element of the regulatory toolbox of governments (completely in contrast with the previous idea that defined “Corporate Social Responsibility” as a private and completely voluntary view)¹⁴².

To sum up, “Corporate Social Responsibility” includes the adherence to international standards, the adoption of voluntary codes of conduct, social labelling and social budget etc... and the compliance with domestic laws (even if those laws are poorly enforced). In fact, its main functions evolve around the promotion of minimum standards of protection (especially

¹³⁹ Brino (2022).

¹⁴⁰ Brino (2022).

¹⁴¹ Brino (2022).

¹⁴² Brino (2022).

in Countries with low regulatory systems) and of virtuous selection of business partners to avoid law shopping practices, the best practices of corporate marketing and around the obtaining of regulatory and economic benefits (in case the company proves to be socially responsible)¹⁴³. Being attentive to the social sphere and all the linked arguments to it is not a primary point of focus for the government of the Federation of the United Arab Emirates, whose main and most important aim is to become the most active economic and investment hub around the whole world.

III.II.II “United Global Emirates” Campaign and the reasons why the United Arab Emirates represents a perfect place where to invest

As it has been briefly mentioned above, the United Arab Emirates as a whole is more concerned about economy, investment and profits than about social issues. In line with its inner will of the Federation at hand, it has been launched a media campaign called “United Global Emirates”, which provides information about the economy and investment opportunities of the Country of focus. Indeed, this campaign mainly underlines the ability of the United Arab Emirates to keep pace with the changes that can occur and its will to maintain its position as one of the most active economic and investment hubs around the world¹⁴⁴.

This campaign has been created in order to attract “foreign investment and talents to the UAE and promote the UAE as one of the world’s most dynamic, competitive and innovative business hubs”, as it can be read in the United Arab Emirates’ Government portal, an official guide to living, working, visiting and investing in the Federation. In the promotional video of this campaign, the United Arab Emirates is described as “the land of opportunities” and “Arab” is substitute with “Global”, thus becoming “United Global Emirates”; being it the name of the campaign. This last point is particularly important since it clearly depicts the Federation as one opened to welcome investments and corporations -as well as little businesses and companies- coming from all around the world. The main points that are

¹⁴³ Brino (2022).

¹⁴⁴ The Official Portal of the UAE government (2022).

stressed are what the Emirates can offer: unlimited business incentives, low custom tariffs, zero per cent income tax and a global dynamic environment where one-hundred-eighty nationalities live together in a peaceful way. In addition, it is even underlined how no idea is impossible and it encourages those companies that want to invest and set and/or run a business in the United Arab Emirates to “be part of our story”, providing an idea and feeling of support, help, cooperation and assistance.

The “United Global Emirates” campaign is built on the idea that “impossible is possible” in order to make clear the idea and strong conviction that the nation is like a magnet for investment, creativity, innovation and achievement: in other words, a place where big ideas can be transformed into reality¹⁴⁵. This “land of opportunities” offers many different services, infrastructures, resources and legal frameworks for international investors, entrepreneurs and professional talents.

As it has been affirmed in the United Arab Emirates’ Government portal, the United Arab Emirates is entering a new phase of growth and has set as future aim that of becoming one of the best in the world by the year of its Centennial¹⁴⁶. Being “the best in the world” means providing promising sectors for investment and an outstanding lifestyle, thus establishing the Federation as an ideal destination for living, working and investing for everyone who wants and can afford it.

This stands clearly into contrast with the minimum and poor attention that is given to the foreign and immigrant workers. In particular, as it has been emerged by the interviews that I have done during my internship in Dubai, immigrant workers feel left aside by the Government of this particular Emirate at hand since there are not specific policies developed in order to sustain, support and help them during their new working and living experiences in Dubai. This is a consequence of the fact that immigrant workers, specifically those coming from the less developed Countries, do not arrive in the Emirate of inquiry with the only

¹⁴⁵ The Official Portal of the UAE government (2022).

¹⁴⁶ The Official Portal of the UAE government (2022).

purpose of investing and bringing new money to the homonym city but they just arrive with the hope of improving their own living and working conditions.

In the official website of the Italian Industry and Commerce Office in the UAE, the article *10 reasons to invest in the UAE: the reasons why Dubai is such an attractive city for opening up a business*, which has been published on 7th September 2021, sets a list of reasons that explain why it is convenient, attractive and favorable for foreign industries and companies to set up and run a business there. Below it can be found a simple list of the most important advantages (among the many) that are met before and after one has decided to run a business in Dubai:

1. Infrastructures
2. Geographical position
3. Business friendly tax policies
4. Expat-friendly visa regulation

As it has been widely explained in the first Chapter of the present thesis, the infrastructures that can be found in Dubai are one of the best in the world. Everything is connected and easily reachable, thus making the setting and opening of a business in Dubai more accessible than anywhere in the world. This is even linked and correlated (and so to say even complementary) to the strategical geographical position of Dubai: the Emirate and homonym city is a middle point that creates links between the western and eastern parts of the world, between cities like London, Hamburg, Moscow and Hong Kong.

On the other hand, from an economic point of view, Dubai even offers business friendly tax policies which means that taxations for single persons, investors and companies are almost null. In fact, during the video of the “United Global Emirates” champaign it is reported that the city offers zero per cent income tax; not forgetting that there are some exceptions, being them foreign banks and petroleum’s companies.

Moreover, another point that makes the opening up of a business in Dubai easy and quite simple is its exceptionally expat-friendly policies. For instance, setting, opening and running a business in one of Dubai's free zones makes it easy to quickly get a residency visa for both family members and employees as well. It is even important to highlight that having a visa means having more advantages and benefits, like the ability to open a local bank account, long-term house leases, freedom of movement and efficient visa application for other Countries and regions, including "Schengen Countries".

These benefits are underlined even by Shahid Shakeel, writer of the article *Five Reasons Why Dubai Is A Hub For Entrepreneurs Looking For Business Growth Post The COVID-19 Crisis* for the journal "Entrepreneur: Middle East". In the article it is underlined the way the city and Emirate of Dubai handled with the problem of Covid-19, avoiding any kinds of backward steps and overcoming the challenges that could emerge after the opening of a business. Surprisingly (maybe not a lot), after several years of pandemic and the striving of many economies to regain stability after the outbreak of the pandemic, "the UAE's economy is well on its way to normalcy, even recording its strongest growth in the last two years"¹⁴⁷. The government of the United Arab Emirates changed actions and developed multiple generous packages to help the business community: for example, Dubai presents itself as a dynamic ecosystem and a city of the future by implementing technological reforms a decade before the pandemic struck and by applying the latest technological tools, such as blockchain, virtual reality, and artificial intelligence, but also by investing in making it sustainable for its residents, their families, and visitors alike¹⁴⁸.

Furthermore, differently from the past policies and rules, the recent amendments eliminate the need for a foreign business owner to mandatorily partner with an Emirati sponsor who would own 51 per cent of the company's shares¹⁴⁹. Actually, international investors can enjoy absolute legal control over their company's finances and operations in the United Arab Emirates. In addition to this, after the outbreak of the pandemic and differently from the

¹⁴⁷ Shakeel (2021).

¹⁴⁸ Shakeel (2021).

¹⁴⁹ Shakeel (2021).

European Union which has levied and increased the corporate tax, in the United Arab Emirates the corporate tax has not been and is still not levied¹⁵⁰.

Moreover, the city at hand is the home of professional incubators which help and provide efficient diversified services that are required after an enterprise is settled, opened and run. The corporate services that can be found in Dubai are integral to the formation, development and functioning of any business and/or organization because they serve as professionals for the handling of crucial governmental procedures, such as documentation, paperwork and approvals¹⁵¹.

III.II.III The so-called “free zones” (FZ)

In the “International Review of Research in Emerging Markets and the Global Economy” the publication of *Development of Free Zones in the United Arab Emirates*, written by Yang Qifeng and Hazem Shayah, explains that free zones are a designated area that eliminate traditional trade barriers (such as tariffs) and minimize bureaucratic regulations, thus making commerce and trade easier and more efficient. Indeed, creating a free zone is the result of the will to enhance a Country’s global market presence by attracting new businesses and foreign investments.

The free-zones, although with different names -like "Export Processing Zone” (EPZ), “Free Trade Zone” (FTZ), “Special Economic Zone” (SEZ) , “Free zones” (FZ) and “Maquiladora”- are present in many parts of the world and the economic benefits that derive from them are always the same. The advantages gained by the opening up of such kinds of zones are direct employment creation and income generation, export growth and export diversification, foreign exchange earnings and foreign direct investment, government revenue, indirect

¹⁵⁰ Shakeel (2021).

¹⁵¹ Shakeel (2021).

employment creation, skills upgrading, female employment, technology transfer and regional development¹⁵².

The development of “free zones” in Dubai is the result of a diversified economy, which has been developed within the Emirate at hand once oil was not sufficient anymore to attract new investments and to develop the economy at its best. Indeed, in 1980 the first free zone in the United Arab Emirates has been established at Jebel Ali (Dubai), being it exempted from all the licensing, agency, emiratization, national ownership, and other domestic regulations that regularly apply to customs territory¹⁵³. Nowadays, 80 per cent of the United Arab Emirates’ non-oil exports come from the free zones¹⁵⁴. In the below table it is possible to see fourteen free zones that can be found in Dubai.

Table III.I: Free Zones in Dubai

Jebel Ali Free Zone	Techno Park
Dubai Maritime City	Dubai Airport Free Zone
Dubai Cars and Automotive Zone	Dubai Internet City - Tecom
Jumeirah Lake Towers	Dubai Textile City
Gold and Diamond Park	Dubai Media City - Tecom
Dubai Flower City	Dubai Studio City - Tecom
. Dubai Logistics City	Dubai International Academic City -Tecom

Source: Qifeng & Shayah, 2015.

The opening of the first free zone in Jebel Ali has fostered the opening up of several other free zones in the whole Federation due to its incredible success in attracting foreign investment and technological expertise. In the specific case of the Emirate of Dubai, the government launched several new free trade zones intended to establish it as a global center for trade, research and development of technology and financial activities¹⁵⁵.

¹⁵² Shayah (2015).

¹⁵³ Shayah (2015).

¹⁵⁴ Shayah (2015).

¹⁵⁵ Shayah (2015).

Moreover, the several advantages offered by the free zones in the United Arab Emirates (like the excellent communications access and distribution facilities, the absence of corporate taxes and personal income taxes, the quick approval procedures and the full repatriation of both capital and profits) and the fostered policies (like the absence of a minimum export requirement in its zones), promote the establishment and running of several foreign enterprises and companies.

As it has been explained in *Development of Free Zones in the United Arab Emirates* by Yang Qifeng and Hazem Shayah, actually there are just three types of companies that can be found inside the free zones: free zone company (which permits the engagement in global trade), offshore company (that permits only international trading and services outside the Federation at hand) and limited liability company (which allows local trade and services in addition to global trade).

However, the presence of these free zones in the whole Federation of the United Arab Emirates and especially in the Emirate of Dubai brings several advantages and benefits not only to foreign companies that decide to invest in the territory or to alternatively start a business there. Even immigrant workers can enjoy some benefits by their establishment (in those cases they work in such zones): for instance, during my interview to Lucille Quinny she asserted that in case an immigrant employee breaks a contract, she/he will not get a working-ban. An employee who works in a no-free zone and gets a working-ban in case of a break of the contract is not allowed anymore to work except in free zones.

Thus, the development and opening of free zones bring several advantages and benefits to those companies that decide to establish and run a business in the United Arab Emirates. They are a clear example of how much important foreign companies are for the whole Federation and for the Emirate of Dubai itself. Dubai has always looked at the future with the hope of being globally recognized as the city of economic opportunities. In respect to this, several programs and policies have been launched, the last one being the “2030 Dubai Industrial Strategy”.

III.II.IV 2030 Dubai Industrial Strategy

The “2030 Dubai Industrial Strategy” has been launched by the Vice-President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, who asserted that its main aim is to leverage

our advanced infrastructure, enabling an environment to transform the UAE into a global platform for innovative industries and a destination of choice for international companies seeking an integrated and favourable environment for growth and sustainability¹⁵⁶

Indeed, the Strategy at hand has been developed in order to elevate Dubai into a global platform, where knowledge-based, sustainable and innovation-focused businesses can easily flourish. This ambitious project is the result of the will of the ruler of Dubai to make the Emirate and homonym city the main homeland for innovators, a favourite place to live and work in and a preferred destination for visitors, highlighting that Dubai will affirm itself as a global economic hub. The main focus for rendering Dubai such an attractive economic land (both for visitors and workers) evolves around the concepts of knowledge, science and research, which all together form the foundation for the development of industries.

However, above knowledge, science and research stand the two pillars of innovation and creativity that build the basis for an integrated and diverse economy led by the industry and manufacturing sectors. As a consequence of this belief, the “2030 Dubai Industrial Strategy” has been and still is put forward with the help of numerous industry experts from more than twenty-five government entities and the private sector. Unsurprisingly, the development of the “2030 Dubai Industrial Strategy” was led by Jebel Ali Free Zone Authority (Jafza) and Dubai Industrial Park in Dubai Wholesale City with support from the Executive Council of Dubai.

¹⁵⁶ Wam (2016).

Part of its development has occurred in a free zone of Dubai since the project at hand focuses on strengthening industrial integration by creating an attractive environment for the strategic industries. This represents the main aim of the Strategy, which is pursued by connecting the target sector with educational and research institutions in order to stimulate innovation and creativity¹⁵⁷.

In the article *Mohammed launches 2030 Dubai Industrial Strategy* published in “Emirates 24|7” (a news website and a television news program that is part of “Dubai Media Incorporated”) on 26th June 2016, it is asserted that the Strategy at hand lies on five key objectives that serve as the foundation for the industrial future of the city. The five key objectives are those that follow:

1. To increase the total output and value-addition of the manufacturing sector
2. To enhance the depth of knowledge and innovation
3. To make Dubai a preferred manufacturing platform for global businesses
4. To promote environmentally-friendly and energy-efficient manufacturing
5. To make Dubai a center for the global Islamic products market

In addition to these five key objectives, the “2030 Dubai Industrial Strategy” has further identified six priority sub-sectors, that are aerospace, maritime, aluminum & fabricated metals, pharmaceuticals & medical equipment, food & beverages and machinery & equipment. For instance, in the aerospace sector Dubai can play a pivotal role through manufacturing spare parts for aircraft and providing maintenance and repair services. In this respect, Dubai will then set itself as a global hub for aviation, thus increasing the market added value and job creation while stepping-up the levels of research and development in this sector at the same time¹⁵⁸.

¹⁵⁷ Wam (2016).

¹⁵⁸ Wam (2016).

As it has been explained since the first Chapter of this thesis, the economy of the Emirate and homonym city of Dubai has always been characterized by a wide diversification: in the present years it has articulated a clear vision of leadership for a post-oil future and it wants to establish a diversified knowledge-based economy. According to the “2030 Dubai Industrial Strategy”, the industrial sector is expected to grow by an additional dirham 18 billion by 2030, thus creating 27,000 new jobs, while exports are expected to increase by dirham 16 billion¹⁵⁹. In addition to this, investment in research and development will increase by an additional dirham 700 million by 2030¹⁶⁰.

Generally speaking, as it has been underlined by the Deputy CEO and Chief Commercial Officer of Jafza Ibrahim Mohammed Al Janahi, the “2030 Dubai Industrial Strategy” has assigned specific tasks to every economic institution, whether free zones or industrial zones, and it has established policies which will ensure a steady pace of growth in all sectors¹⁶¹. The Strategy at hand will attract more global industrial companies to the free zones and it will provide incentives to successful businesses based within the zones.

Being an attractive land full of economic, industrial and investment’s opportunities has always been the primary goal of Dubai, which has always looked at the future by diversifying its own economy and by creating attractive policies for those coming from other parts of the world. This notwithstanding, it has even been showed how this marvelous plans come at the expense of those immigrant people who arrive in the land with the hope of a better future for their own. Again, Dubai can offer its visitors, citizens and business people the best it can only if something is given it back.

¹⁵⁹ Wam (2016).

¹⁶⁰ Wam (2016).

¹⁶¹ Wam (2016).

III.III Analysis of two practical case-studies: “Italian Yellow Directory in the Gulf” and Frattin Auto S.r.l.

As it has been underlined so far, Dubai represents an important commercial hub in which the strategic geographical position, advanced logistics, well-developed infrastructures and the favorable taxation system have made it a general headquarter where important small and big companies all around the world have decided to set and run their businesses.

As it has been highlighted by Mauro Marzocchi (the General Secretary of the Italian Industry and Commerce Office in the UAE) in the presentation paper called *Italian Yellow Directory in the Gulf*, the United Arab Emirates is a Country continuously growing with ambitious projects, which lead to an enlargement of its area of commercial influence that actually extends itself from Eastern Africa to India (passing through the Middle East).

Furthermore, as reported by the General Secretary Mauro Marzocchi, the *leitmotiv* that stands at the basis of such important expansion is peace. In the United Arab Emirates as a whole more than ninety per cent of the population comes from foreign Countries, but the difference in culture, habits, religion and traditions does not represent an obstacle for the Country at hand. On the contrary, peace is what has substantially driven the commercial and industrial expansion of the Federation.

This has been possible thanks to the long-term and enlightened vision of the rulers of the Emirates, who have pursued numerous diversified policies that enabled them to not be entirely dependent on oil, which represented the main source of power and richness in the past years. In the specific case of the Emirate and homonym city of Dubai, the past and present investments in different fields like commercial, industrial and tourist’s infrastructures have allowed the rapid growth and evolution of the Emirate.

III.III.I “Italian Yellow Directory in the Gulf”

A Country of the European Union that is the second supplier of the United Arab Emirates, second only to Germany, is Italy. The exports have been always particularly high: for instance, in 2019 the exports were equal to euro 4,6 billion and after a slow recession that happened due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, which reduced the Italian exports to the territory of the United Arab Emirates to 15.5 per cent, in the month of August 2021 the levels of exports have exponentially grown, being them equal to 27 per cent¹⁶².

Due to this favorable environment, the Italian Industry and Commerce Office has launched the program “Italian Yellow Directory in the Gulf”, which started on June 2022. This important program represents “a direct bridge between the Italian companies of multiple different sectors and the distributors who are active in the area of the Gulf”, as it has been stated by the General Secretary Mauro Marzocchi in the paper *Italian Yellow Directory in the Gulf*.

The project at hand does not have a temporal end and for this reason it is an important point of reference for all the distributors who work in the area of inquiry. The main aim of the project is to provide clear visibility, presence and the formation of new contacts for all the “Made in Italy”, thus creating important opportunities of business for all the Italian companies that decide to expand their market in the Middle East¹⁶³.

As it has been previously mentioned, Dubai represents an important point of reference for all those foreign companies and industries that set up and run their business in this Emirate. The importance derives from being positioned in a strategic point because the Emirate and homonym city of Dubai represents both the first market of exports and sales for the “Made in Italy” brand in the Arab world and it is even a point of access for other strategic markets, namely those of Asia, Africa and the entire MENA region. To make a clear understanding of the MENA region, it is important to remember that it stands for “Middle East and North

¹⁶² Italian Industry and Commerce Office in the UAE, personal communication, June 12, 2022.

¹⁶³ Italian Industry and Commerce Office in the UAE, personal communication, June 12, 2022.

Africa”, that comprehends eighteen Countries that can be divided into three zones: the North Africa zone (Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Algeria and Morocco), the Middle East (Jordan, Israel, Iraq, Lebanon and Syria) and that of Arab Peninsula (Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Iran, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Yemen and Saudi Arabia).

The promotion of such project occurs in five different Countries, being them the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman and Kuwait. The “Italian Yellow Directory in the Gulf” project works around five fundamental steps: firstly, the project is based on a business to business (B2B) platform where all Italian companies that adhere to the project are added in, so that they can be found, visualized and searched by the local distributors; secondly, the project provides a representative office directly in Dubai, precisely in the headquarter of the Italian Industry and Commerce Office in the UAE (that is located in the downtown); thirdly, a supportive secretary office and companies’ representatives will be guaranteed to the Italian companies that take part to the project; fourthly, the Italian Industry and Commerce Office in the UAE will grant them legal, fiscal and customs’ support, together with certifications that will be valid both in Italy and in Dubai; lastly, a marketing office will promote the platform as a whole through the use of marketing campaigns and principal initiatives in the main social networks¹⁶⁴.

The participation to this project has seen many different companies belonging to sectors like food & beverage, fashion, jewelry & beauty and home infrastructures & interiors. The companies that adhere to the project at hand are many and they have shown to be particularly interested and willing to expand their markets in the Middle East: being part of the “Italian Yellow Directory in the Gulf” project represents a big opportunity for the Italian companies to be visible to many local distributors that in turn can help them with the settlement, expansion and running of their business.

¹⁶⁴ Italian Industry and Commerce Office in the UAE, personal communication, June 12, 2022.

III.III.II Frattin Auto S.r.l.

During the months of June, July and August 2021 I did an internship as technician of operative export marketing by Frattin Auto S.r.l. The group at hand is a multi-brand car's dealer that has operated in Veneto and Lombardy regions for several different years, having it five locations in the provinces of Padua, Vicenza, Milan and Venice.

Beside the objective and constant belief to provide its clients and customs with well-functioning and highly-performing vehicles (being them cars, vans, etc...), the main aims and policies of Frattin Auto S.r.l. evolve around the term of "expansion". Indeed, during my training experience in the cited company I underwent several practices to promote their cars in different parts of the world, both inside and outside the European Union.

A foreign market which represents an important point of focus for Frattin Auto S.r.l. is that of the United Arab Emirates, and in particular that of Dubai. In fact, during my internship in Dubai my previous employer and export manager of the company at hand Christian Fietta has come to the Emirate of focus in search of new opportunities and occasions to take advantage of in order to open the market of the company for which he works even in Dubai.

Mr. Christian Fietta has provided me with a list of the reasons why the idea of investing in Dubai is so good and apparently profitable. Beside an economic reason (which is surely the most important one), there are others that are of equal weight when one has to decide whether to open a business in Dubai or not. According to Mr. Christian Fietta, the reasons are the following¹⁶⁵:

1. Logistics hub for automotive trade worldwide
2. Customers with important money possibilities (this consequently leads to luxury car sales)
3. A reliable Country
4. Hub that can be reached in a short time

¹⁶⁵ C. Fietta, personal communication, May 18, 2022.

5. Their own acquaintance in the logistics sector (who is already operating in Dubai)
6. Possibility to export their brand worldwide and in particular in the Arab region
7. Customers who demand luxury product

All the points addressed by the export manager of Frattin Auto S.r.l. are the summary of what has been explained so far: Dubai is a peaceful Country where one-hundred-eighty diverse nationalities live together in respect of each other, thus rendering the Emirate and homonym city at hand a “reliable Country”, as underlined by Mr. Fietta.

Moreover, thanks to the richness that is over present in Dubai, the kind of market that can be found there is specific for some kinds of customers, that is wealthy people who can afford to buy luxury cars. Indeed, it is “normal” to see just some specific brands of cars, like “Rolls Royce”, “Ferrari” and “Lamborghini” that speed on the roads of the city.

In addition to this, as it has been previously underlined, Dubai finds itself in a strategic position since it represents a proper link between the West and the East. Establishing a market in the Emirate of Dubai, consequently means to have better opportunities to enlarge it even in other Countries of the Middle East and Arab region in general. Of the same importance is even the big logistics’ capacity that has to be found in Dubai: for instance, the Jebel Ali port represents an important point (and actually the biggest one in Dubai) where imports and export arrive in Dubai and leave from it.

III.IV The dichotomy between immigrant workers and foreign companies

The choice of investing in Dubai is a consequence of the many advantages and benefits that the Emirate itself (and homonym city) offers to those foreign companies that decide to establish, set and run a business there. Some benefits are intrinsic and natural, like the favorable geographical position, but many others are the result of a forward-looking, growth- and profits-based policies of the governors who have made Dubai the city of the future where every possibility can flourish in a concrete way.

The companies that decide to invest in Dubai do not come only from Italy (as the reported examples previously provided), but it is possible to see several businesses of foreign tradition and nationality. This is surely a clear consequence of the kind of Emirate that Dubai is: the nationals represent a little portion of the total population (almost ten per cent), whereas the foreign citizens make up the ninety per cent of the entire population, which in turn is made up by more than one-hundred-eighty different nationalities .

The economic benefits that face several (if not all) successful foreign companies are not the same that are offered to immigrant workers: based on the Country of origin and on the kind of job performed, there are several disadvantages met by them (more than benefits). Immigrant workers are not offered with tax's facilitation, help and support and economic incentives for them and their families. This creates a clear dichotomy between immigrant workers and foreign companies that decide to continue and/or start their lives and economic operations in Dubai.

III.IV.I The existent dichotomy between exploited immigrant workers and foreign companies & investors

In the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* the word “dichotomy” is explained as the “formal separation that exists between two groups or things that are completely opposite to and different from each other”. Indeed, in the working environment of the Emirate and homonym city of Dubai exist two main opposite poles, which in between there can be found other categories and typologies of workers: on one side there are the migrant workers coming from the poor and less developed Countries (like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh etc...), while on the other side there are the foreign (and, so to say, migrant as well) investors and big companies that set, establish and run their business in the Emirate at hand.

What makes these two “groups” being completely opposite and formally separated by each other is simply the numerous advantages that one group meets at the expense of the absolute lack of benefits which are not enjoyed by the other group: foreign companies and investors are tempted by the Emirate’s government itself to foster their business in Dubai since what it offers is extremely advantageous and profitable, like the absence of the income tax and the easy way for getting the visa both for working and living there. This stands in absolute contrast with what is not offered to immigrant workers who perform low-skills jobs and who are continuously underpaid. For instance, riders are forced to live at the margin of society, in specific labour camps where buildings are overcrowded and overheated with a monthly salary that is scarcely sufficient for financing their daily lives.

It is in this land where everything appears to be perfect and wonderful that some “errors of the system” are present: the whole governmental and economic system perfectly works for those that have to offer something to the place that hosts them, while it does not work at the same way for those who arrive with just big hopes and wills but without nothing to give it back.

III.IV.II Minimum wages and wage protection

On 8th January 2019 the *International Labour Organization* has published a paper called *Minimum wages and wage protection in the Arab States: Ensuring a just system for national and migrant workers* in order to make a clear note for policymakers of the Arab States to enable them to initiate a systematic and evidence-based process for setting and adjusting minimum wages in their respective Countries.

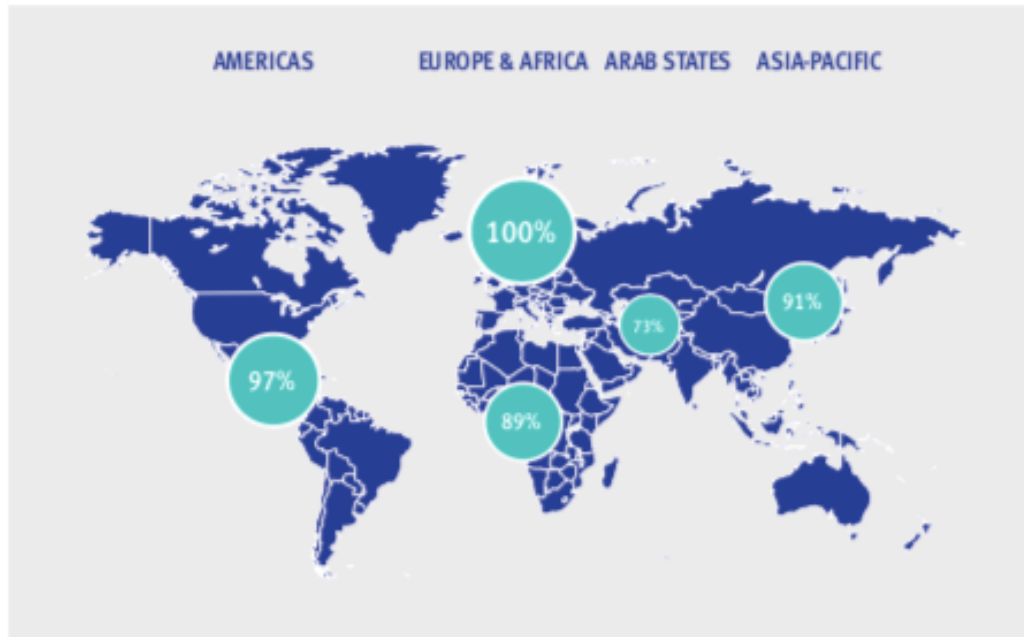
The paper at hand has been the result of an attentive analysis: in the studied Arab Countries the majority of the workforce comes from foreign Countries -indeed, just in the Federation of the United Arab Emirates more than ninety per cent of the workforce is made up by immigrant workers, being them many more in numbers than national citizens- so that, according to the *International Labour Organization*, it is important to ensure decent wages for all workers and to implement substantial mechanisms in order to eliminate delayed and non-payment of wages¹⁶⁶. This can be made in an easier way by ensuring minimum wage, which has been hardly put into place by the Arab Countries, each with its own policies and rules.

In general, the Arab States region is the only one in the world with the lowest percentage of coverage of minimum wages. As it can be seen by the below picture, in the America continent the coverage is equal to approximately 97%, in Asia and Pacific region the minimum wage is covered by nearly 91%, in Africa region the percentage of coverage of minimum wages reaches about 89% while in Europe the coverage is 100%, which means that the minimum wage is granted to all workers without any distinction¹⁶⁷.

¹⁶⁶ International Labour Organization [ILO] (2019).

¹⁶⁷ International Labour Organization [ILO] (2019).

Figure III.II: Percentage by region of the coverage of minimum wages



Source: Minimum Wage Guide by ILO, 2017.

The United Arab Emirates is a Country that, together with Yemen and Saudi Arabia, does not offer a minimum wage application. In the other Countries of the Arab Region there are some particular cases and exceptions: for instance, Qatar offers the national coverage for minimum wage for all workers, whereas in Oman just national are entitled to receive a national minimum wage coverage¹⁶⁸.

Setting minimum wages means reducing inequality and properly protecting workers against unduly low pay. Indeed, as it has been underlined by the *International Labour Organization* in *Minimum wages and wage protection in the Arab States: Ensuring a just system for national and migrant workers*, a minimum wage policy should be broad in scope, effectively applied, regularly adjusted, developed through the help and advices of members of the representative organizations of both employers and workers and it should take into account the needs of workers and the economic factors.

¹⁶⁸ International Labour Organization [ILO] (2019).

III.IV.III The missed ratifications of the *International Labour Organization* “Minimum Wage Fixing Convention” in 1970 and the *International Labour Organization* “Protection of Wages Convention” in 1949

The lack of a policy that ensures the coverage of minimum wage in the United Arab Emirates is the consequence and probably even the cause of the reason why the Federation has not ratified both the *International Labour Organization* “Minimum Wage Fixing Convention” No.131 (C131) in 1970 and the *International Labour Organization* “Protection of Wages Convention” No.95 in 1949.

To make the point of the first mentioned Convention, it is important to analyze both *Article 1* and *Article 3*. The first point of *Article 1* cites as follow:

Each Member of the International Labour Organisation which ratifies this Convention undertakes to establish a system of minimum wages which covers all groups of wage earners whose terms of employment are such that coverage would be appropriate.

The explanation of the importance and establishment of a minimum wage coverage is then explained in *Article 3*, which underlines the importance of taking into account both the economic reasons and the needs of workers’ families.

The elements to be taken into consideration in determining the level of minimum wages shall, so far as possible and appropriate in relation to national practice and conditions, include:

- (a) the needs of workers and their families, taking into account the general level of wages in the country, the cost of living, social security benefits, and the relative living standards of other social groups;*
- (b) economic factors, including the requirements of economic development, levels of productivity and the desirability of attaining and maintaining a high level of employment.*

While the first explained Convention refers in general to the coverage of minimum wage without any particular distinction between migrant and national workers, the second mentioned Convention is much more attentive to the needs of migrant workers. In particular, the evidence of such attention to the migrant workers' method of being paid is underlined in *Article 4*, which declares what follows below:

1. *National laws or regulations, collective agreements or arbitration awards may authorise the partial payment of wages in the form of allowances in kind in industries or occupations in which payment in the form of such allowances is customary or desirable because of the nature of the industry or occupation concerned; the payment of wages in the form of liquor of high alcoholic content or of noxious drugs shall not be permitted in any circumstances.*
2. *In cases in which partial payment of wages in the form of allowances in kind is authorised, appropriate measures shall be taken to ensure that:*
 - (a) such allowances are appropriate for the personal use and benefit of the worker and his family; and*
 - (b) the value attributed to such allowances is fair and reasonable.*

The *International Labour Organization* "Protection of Wages Convention" No.95 in 1949 provides important information and relevant guidance for those Countries where it is common for migrant workers to live in accommodations provided by their employer, and to have food, clothing, toiletries and transport costs covered. The Convention at hand allows for the partial payment of in-kind allowances when the value of such allowances is fair and reasonable¹⁶⁹.

Although these Conventions have not been ratified by the United Arab Emirates, this Country has tried to develop an innovative method for making the transfer of money effective, correct and secure: the so-called "Wage Protection Systems" (WPS).

¹⁶⁹ International Labour Organization [ILO] (2019).

III.IV.IV Wage Protection Systems (WPS)

The United Arab Emirates has been the first Country ever in 2009 (then upgraded in 2016) to develop a Wage Protection Systems (WPS), which is an electronic salary transfer system that requires employers to pay their workers' wages through banks, currency exchange centers or financial institutions¹⁷⁰. The systems at hand have been developed in order to eliminate wrong, unethical and unscrupulous practice of withholding wages of migrant workers by some employers. In this way, the Wage Protection Systems ensure an official record of payment that can be monitored¹⁷¹.

However, despite the good initial intentions that have been the reasons for the development of such analyzed systems, there are some critics about their effectiveness. According to many critics, the fallacies of such systems are to be found in three main problems: firstly, the systems serve more as a wage information and notification system than a protection system as a consequence of a lack of effective enforcement in cases of breach; secondly, the Wage Protection Systems do not currently address wage manipulation, being it miscalculation of overtime, end of service gratuity payment or annual leave payments; and thirdly, they do not protect workers against employers' inability to pay wages¹⁷².

In the last pages of *Minimum wages and wage protection in the Arab States: Ensuring a just system for national and migrant workers*, the *International Labour Organization* advocates for eight different methods in order to ensure that workers are paid on time and in a correct way. These advices are:

1. Efforts to promote the financial literacy and inclusion of migrant workers and to ensure that links exist between wage protection and remittance sending services
2. Efforts to ensure that banks (or any other financial service providers) are effectively providing their services to workers and clients, not only yo employers

¹⁷⁰ International Labour Organization [ILO] (2019).

¹⁷¹ International Labour Organization [ILO] (2019).

¹⁷² International Labour Organization [ILO] (2019).

3. Revision of pre-paid salary cards' modality in order to better understand how exploitation can be detected
4. Strengthening the labour inspection departments' mandate and their ability to monitor the employers
5. Easy access for workers to complaints mechanisms
6. Introduction of several mechanisms to protect workers' wages in case of the inability by the company to pay
7. Strengthening the Wage Protection Systems through better integration of workers' contractual information (including basic wage, allowances and/or deductions)
8. The Wage Protection Systems should be addressed even to domestic migrant workers and to all kinds of workers

The Wage Protection Systems is a mechanism that should be improved and better studied in order to really guarantee an effective method of payment for workers' monthly salary.

III.IV.V The actual working conditions in Dubai

As it has been underlined so far, the working conditions in the Emirate and homonym city of Dubai are different and even opposite when taking into account the two main poles that make up the total workforce. Although some little improvements have tried to be made, like the development of the Wage Protection Systems, Dubai and the whole Federation of the United Arab Emirates in general remain a place where the attention given to migrant low-skilled workers is very low. In fact, they are not granted with special protection, advantages and benefits. This is a *de facto* evidence that many ratifications and conventions -like those regarding the work usually performed by migrant workers and the minimum wages' policies- are still not ratified by the Country at hand.

On the other side, foreign companies and businesses are more than welcome in the Country at hand since its main goal is the one of constantly looking at the future by becoming an international economic, financial, innovative, technological and tourism's hub where every kind of business -independently from the Country and place of origin- can flourish in a profitable way.

Having the great and ambitious goal of becoming a city and Emirate of the future does not mean just focusing the attention on the economic side but it means looking for new, just, ethical and right policies that foster the working and living conditions of everyone, apart from the kind of work daily performed. In a city like Dubai the difference between working groups and the existence of the two "poles" is a consequence of the rapid growth rhythms undergone by it and that always will exist. It is very important to highlight that every worker should be protected in an equal way and no distinctions should be made between job performed and Country of origin: only in this way the Emirate can claim to be the land of the future.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Dubai represents “the land of opportunities” -as it willingly describes itself in the “United Global Emirates” campaign- but not for everyone. Since the discovery of oil and years before of it, Dubai together with Abu Dhabi have “always attracted various flows of migrants”, as it has been stated in the paper *Demography, Migration, and the Labour Market in the UAE* by Françoise De Bel-Air. Indeed, as it has been repeated several times throughout the whole paper, in the Emirate and homonym city of Dubai more than 180 different nationalities live peacefully together by tolerating each others’ cultures, traditions, religions and habits.

But, it is important to underline that this peaceful coexistence does not mean the respect of each single human being who lives and works in the Emirate at hand. The wide diversification of the population brings with it several other differences in the workplace: for instance, in the whole United Arab Emirates in 2010 foreign nationals made up 88.5 per cent of the Country’s total population, most of whom came from Asia and especially from India, whereas in the single city of Dubai in 2011 foreign nationals accounted for the 96 per cent of the whole city’s employed population¹⁷³. The difference concerning immigrant workers and nationals is then reflected even in the particular cases of private and public sectors: the private sector sees the participation of foreign national workers who make up the 99.5 per cent of the whole employed population, while in the public sector is favored the employment of national citizens; being it clearly visible by the rates of the non-Emirates workers who make up just the 40 per cent¹⁷⁴.

From a clear division between foreign workers and national citizens who are actually employed and how many of them are respectively employed in the private and public sectors of society, it is needed to briefly discuss the inner divisions between foreign workers who constitute the majority of the labour force in Dubai. The Emirate at hand, differently from Abu Dhabi, is an inclusive land that apparently offers its national and foreign citizens the best

¹⁷³ De Bel-Air (2015).

¹⁷⁴ De Bel-Air (2015).

opportunities. In reality, this is not the case since it is well visible a clear division and distinction of the kinds of works performed by its population. In respect of this, three different tiers of the labour market can be identified and analyzed.

Dubai has been developed through a very short time thanks to its initial rudimentary economy, oil revenue and few institutions. The creation of large buildings, wealth and magnificence that characterize it have been frequently designed at the expense of the well-being of expatriate laborers, who were forced and still are forced to live in conditions of extreme poverty. For the huge numbers of workers currently employed at all levels in Dubai, it is possible to make a distinction of three tiers that make up the labour market in the Emirate: in the first tier there can be found local Emiratis (who have to be employed for minimum 15% on each company due to a quota imposed on them after a 2010 governmental law), the second tier is the one characterized by the presence of professional expatriates, which means that foreign workers coming from well-developed and rich Countries can be employed in important economic, financial and other kinds of sectors and finally, in the third tier there are the construction and, generally writing, low-skilled workers who come from mainly South Asia Countries like India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Even the regulations that govern the good functioning of the workforce are segmented and diverse, reflecting in this way the division of the labour market itself. In the paper written by Julia Connell and John Burgess that is called *The Labour Market, Immigration and the Building of Dubai* it is explained that there are regulations for the national Emiratis who are employed in the public sector, there are rules and norms for those who are expatriate and other low-skilled workers and there are even regulations governing domestic service workers. So, it is clear that in “the land of opportunities” there are opportunities but they are not the same for everyone. Dubai has so much to offer due to its willingness to become an important and central commercial, financial, touristic and investments’ hub but this offer is not open to everyone but just to those who are able to give it back something profitable.

In this way a clear dichotomy emerges, that is a difference between two completely opposite ideas or things that are generally said to be two opposite “poles”. The two poles of the existent dichotomy in Dubai are figured out by immigrant workers who are daily exploited in their working and social lives and foreign companies and investors who meet several distinct benefits and advantages once they decide to set, run and/or enlarge their business in the Emirate of focus.

In fact, the former pole of the dichotomy is forced to live in labour camps located far away from the rich buildings, fancy hotels and restaurants that can be found in the city. Low-skilled workers from poor and under developed Countries live in overcrowded and overheated apartments that host many of them in the area of Jebel Ali. This has been concretely testified by two riders who I have personally interviewed during my stay in Dubai: both Mohammed Amcha and Mohammed Arsalan (who come from Pakistan) live in poor conditions in the Jebel Ali labour camp, gaining just dirham 7.50 for each commission (which correspond barely to euro two). They arrived in Dubai with the idea of improving their lives and those of their relatives but at the end they found out that it is not a real “land of opportunities”. If one is not educated with a rich and diverse social, economic and educational background and if the Country of origin is not rich, well-developed and strong, Dubai makes one face several challenges and obstacles that do not enable one person to create a stable social and working life. This has further been declared even by other interviewed people from other Countries, who have experienced the other facade of the city, the one that does not grant anything for free.

Immigrant workers (and workers in general) do not have some important rights that workers from other Countries easily enjoy and take them for granted: for instance, the Federation of the United Arab Emirates has not ratified the *International Labour Organization’s* Conventions about the right to collectively bargain and to freely organize. To be more precise on the matter, “Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention” (C087) and the “Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention” (C098), dated 1948 and 1949 respectively, have not been ratified by the Country which joined the *International Labour Organization* on 25th April 1972. These are just two examples, to which others can be added: *International Labour Organization* “Minimum Wage

Fixing Convention” No.131 (C131) in 1970 and the *International Labour Organization* “Protection of Wages Convention” No.95 in 1949 have also not been ratified by the United Arab Emirates.

In a nutshell, the Federation of the the United Arab Emirates and the more particular case of Dubai have clearly shown that it is not given importance to the rights of low-skilled immigrant workers and/or to those of workers coming from the least developed Countries. In Dubai, not everyone is considered in an equal, fair and right way in respect to other people and institutions. The major concern of the Emirate at hand that wants to establish itself as the land of the future where the “impossible is possible” is to bring advantages and profitable benefits from and to those who wants to invest in the land.

Linked to this, the other pole of the dichotomy must be taken into account: investors and foreign companies that decide to set, run and/or enlarge their business in Dubai meet several favorable and advantageous policies. In the article *10 reasons to invest in the UAE: the reasons why Dubai is such an attractive city for opening up a business*, which has been published by the Italian Industry and Commerce Office in the UAE on 7th September 2021, it is explained that the city at hand offers well-developed infrastructures that make everything connected and easily reachable, business friendly tax policies, which is translated into almost null taxations for single persons, investors and companies (like the settlement of zero per cent income tax) and expat-friendly visa regulation, which enables people who get a visa to open a local bank account, to have access to long-term house leases, to be free on movement and to be granted with efficient visa application for other Countries and regions. In addition to this, Dubai has a favorable geographical position since it is a secure link between the East and the West, opening the market to those western companies and investors that decide to enter in the Middle East market.

Outlining this, added to the big desire to become the city of and for the future, the Vice-President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum has launched (among the many) the last “2030 Dubai Industrial Strategy” with the main purpose of transforming the United Arab Emirates into a global platform for innovative industries and an important destination of choice for international companies which look for a favorable and open environment to growth and

sustainability. This reflects the five main goals that stand at the basis of such strategy, being them the increase of the total output and value-addition of the manufacturing sector, the enhancement in depth of knowledge and innovation, the making of Dubai as a preferred manufacturing platform for global business, the promotion of environmentally-friendly and energy-efficient manufacturing and lastly, the creation of Dubai as a center for the global Islamic products market, as it has been explained in *Mohammed launches 2030 Dubai Industrial Strategy*, published in “Emirates 24|7” on 26th June 2016.

This has been practically be shown by the little (in respect to the whole market) project advanced by the Italian Industry and Commerce Office in the UAE, “Italian Yellow Directory in the Gulf”. The project is based on the idea that providing clear visibility, presence and the formation of new contacts for all the “Made in Italy” means creating important opportunities of business for all the Italian companies that decide to expand their market in the Middle East. There were more than 600 Italian industries and companies that joined the project at hand and what they have in common is their willingness to expand their business in “the land of opportunities”.

So, “the land of opportunities”, as Dubai calls itself, grants real and profitable opportunities only to those that invest in the Country and that bring new money, ideas and possibilities to the Country, whereas those who arrive with the idea of improving their own working and social lives are condemned to live at the margin of society because what is offered to them is barely sufficient to provide them with a job.

What I can say from my personal experience in Dubai is that the Emirate is constantly looking to new ideas and projects to develop in order to create a stable society that can offer its tourists and citizens (both nationals and immigrant) the best it can when taking into account attractions, infrastructures and internal policies but the problem is that all this is not offered to everyone who arrives in the land. Coming from rich and developed Countries with a personal strong educational background is the first “criteria” that will determine the way one will live in Dubai. On the contrary, if this “criteria” is missed -remembering that it is just by chance to be born in a rich Country rather than a poor one- the things offered are limited both in quality and in quantity.

Dubai surely is a city of the future because projects like *Aladdin City* and *Dubai Parks and Resorts* (just to mention some of the many) are clear examples of a city that wants to create modern and innovative attractions and places, going it hand in hand with highly digitalized metros and technological police offices where everything is done by robots that help people having questions or particular requirements. Being a safe city with a very low percentage of crimes and offenses makes Dubai a step forward to other cities (and in general, to other Countries as well) where criminality is over-present. The way of living is surely good, in every corner there are many restaurants, bars, attractions and activities to do but it is not enough for being a city of the future if basic social rights and social policies are missed. The ones with low skills and poor educational and economic background must not be left aside or “be used” just for creating the benefits that then will be enjoyed by the richest. Policies that safeguard their social and working life should be fostered and once implemented a real city of the future will emerge. Not allowing workers of their basic rights, like the one of collective bargaining, is the result of an undemocratic society that is governed just for the sake of making profits; but profits should never be a priority of a State, social and working basic rights should.

In a city of and for the future no dichotomy, no exploitation and no favoritism should ever exist. Being profitable does not mean making a portion of the population suffer for the social and working conditions offered to it: it is possible to be both profitable and equitable with and for everyone.

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