MIGRATION, IDENTITY, AND THE SPATIALITY OF SOCIAL INTERACTION IN

MUSCAT, SULTANATE OF OMAN

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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Utilizing Henri Lefebvre's theory of the production of space as a framework for exploration, this research is concerned with the social and cultural impacts of modernization and international migration to Muscat, Oman focusing on the production of space and its role in the modification and (re)construction of culture and identity in the everyday. While the Omani state is promoting a unifying national identity, Muscat residents are reconstructing and renegotiating culture and identity in the capital city. Individuals are adapting and conforming to, mediating, and contesting both the state's identity project as well as to the equally, if not more, influential social control that is the culture of gossip and reputation. What's emerging is a distinctly Muscati culture.

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This thesis is dedicated to Susan W. Hardwick.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This research is concerned with the impact of modernization and labour migration to Muscat, Oman on the state's nation-building efforts, focusing on production of space and its role in the modification and (re)construction of culture and identity. Utilizing Henri Lefebvre's theory of the production of space as a framework for exploration, I am concerned with the daily spatial practices, perceptions, preferences, and social behaviours of city residents, Omanis and expatriates alike, and how, and to what extent, culture and identity are affected by these everyday spatial encounters, specifically socialization, in an increasingly cosmopolitan urban setting.

Significance of the Study

Globalization and Migration

Though migration is not a new phenomenon, its character has changed. "The world is experiencing unprecedented interconnectedness in terms of the speed of such connection, their extensity (the reach of these connections), and their intensity (the density and strength of those connections)" (Samers, 2010, 71). Migration has become more politicized, and its impacts are more widely experienced. Castles and Miller (2009) identify six trends in international migration. The *globalization* of migration increases the number of countries affected by migration and "countries of immigration have entrants from a broad spectrum of economic, social, and cultural backgrounds" (p. 10). The volume of international migrants is *accelerating* worldwide, and there is increased *differentiation* of migrant types and motivations. The *feminization* of global migration,

particularly labour migration, is a trend that could be attributed to increased economic participation, or the preference for female workers in destination countries. The above trends result in *growing politicization* of migration in domestic, regional, and international politics and policies, making the study of migration, and its social and cultural impacts, pertinent and practical.

Existing literature suggests that the biggest impact of globalization will not be from top-down implementation of neoliberal policies, but the biggest impact on culture and identity will happen at the daily level, through day-to-day interactions and cultural exchanges with the other. Thus, a spatially-oriented research endeavor examining the everyday, lived experiences of individuals would prove a useful alternative to the traditional state-centric, systemic and fragmented approach to the study of migration, identity, and social transformation.

Space and Place

Space is fundamental to understanding the impact of globalization. "At the crossroads between individual agency, collective imagination, and global migration, space is [the] point of entry into analyzing migration." (Bruslé and Varrel, 2012, p. 2)

At its core, migration is a spatial phenomenon, and the nature of globalization and transnational mobility has altered the already complex interactions between space, migration processes, and individual migrants. In the context of this increased mobility there are new forms of relationships with space. Individuals are part of both a global network of social/spatial relations as well as social/spatial relations in their current location of residency. Multi-locality is a normal part of life, and migrant identity is founded on experiences had in multiple, sometimes distant, places.

There is a growing trend in the study of globalization, transnationalism and migration to treat space as a social construct rather than an immaterial background. In addition to state-building, migration processes and migrants themselves are involved in place-making and the production of space. Places, created through social interactions and the attachment of value and meaning, are never fixed and incredibly dynamic. People form attachments to place and modify it in various ways. This dynamism is definitely the case in the context of globalization, characterized by increased communication and exchange of ideas, goods, and people. "The specificity of place also derives from the fact that each place is the focus of a distinct *mixture* of wider and more local social relations." (Massey, 1994, p. 146)

Urbanization and the Scale of the City

The city is a fitting scale in the study of transnational migration and space for two main reasons. Firstly, global rates of urbanization have been rapidly increasing since the 20th century. Urbanization is defined as the increasing proportion of the population that resides in urban areas as opposed to rural areas. According to a publication from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, over half of the world's total population (54%) resided in urban areas in 2014, compared to 30% in 1950. By 2050, the UN has projected that 66% of the world's population will reside in urban areas. (UNDESA Population Division, 2014) Though urbanization rates vary spatially, at all scales, the overall global trend of urbanization elevates the importance of the city-level scale of analysis in social scholarship.

Secondly, cities, not states, are the core of economic, cultural, political, and social activities, further highlighting the importance of this scale in the investigation of social

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change and the role played by migration and urban development in the transformation. Because the majority of the world's population is urbanized, the city is, and will continue to be, the site of significant social transformation. Lefebvre (1991), like Karl Marx, sees modern urban life, characterized by domination, monotonous labour and routine, as alienating but views urbanization as a trigger for social transformation and the production of a new society.

The potential for societal transformation is particularly heightened in the face of transnational migration. Brickell and Datta (2011) consider cities,

"as site of translocality par excellence, harbouring places of origins, settlement, resettlement and transit. Situated within the intersections between place and displacement, location and mobility, settlement and return, cities are critical to the construction of migrant landscapes and the ways in which they reflect and influence migratory movements, politics, identity, and narratives." (p. 16)

Everyday lived experience

Henri Lefebvre (1991) argued that the dominant western conception of space "mandated a notion of space as a Euclidean geometric space" that continues to inform scientific explorations of space, characterized by identification, distinction, and classification. (Watkins, 2005, p.210) The spaces created in this manner, though, are abstract mental constructions, and have therefore "become disassociated from the physical and social realities of lived experience." (Watkins, 2005, p.210)

Defined by Henri Lefebvre (1991), the everyday is a set of functions connecting systems that otherwise appear distinct and unrelated. He described the everyday as "the sole surviving common sense referent and point of reference" and defined everydayness as "a denominator common to existing systems…" (p. 9) He concludes,

 "the everyday is therefore the most universal and the most unique condition, the most social and the most individuated, the most obvious and the best hidden." He argued that

the repetitive and dynamic modern everyday can be analyzed as "the uniform aspect of the major sectors social life." (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 9)

Emphasizing the importance of exploring and critically analyzing the everyday, Lefebvre writes "it is monstrous to reduce 'lived experience'" and, "that a recognition of the inadequacy of pious humanism does not authorize the assimilation of people to insects." (p. 11) Research on labour migration to the Gulf had tended to view migrants as "an 'apolitical,' 'transient,' and 'disposable' workforce convenient for patrimonial rulers trying to overcome the dilemmas of modernization" (Chalcraft, 2012, p. 67). This global systemic approach to the study of migration effectively collapses migrant lives into economic terms. The economically-focused, collective approach to the study of migration and migrant communities " ignores the agency exercised in the daily lives of migrants, and removes possibilities of community formation, political agency, and cultural hybridity, emotional attachment, consumption, leisure activity, and other forms of belonging from South Asian experiences in the Gulf" (Vora, 2013, p. 11).

Exploring the daily lives of migrants and their lived experiences in specific places (location, locale, and sense of place) is a counterpoint to the "…inflationary tendencies of some writings on globalization" (Bruslé and Varrel, 2005, p. 5). As Watkins (2005) describes it, "an abyss has opened up between the theories of space and the empirical world of actions, interactions, and understandings, leaving our lived experiences estranged from the conceptions that purport to represent them." (p. 210)

Oman

There has been significant academic interest in the role of globalization in urban transformation, but "cities drawn into the undertow of global developments do not, as might be expected, become immersed in placeless uniformity, but constantly develop

new differentiations." (ETH Studio Basel, 2013, p. 7) The rapid development in the Arabian Gulf, commencing in the 1970s with the discovery and extraction of oil and gas resources, has "created new types of urban environments with new meanings and goals." (ETH Studio Basel, 2013, p. 7)   In this regional context, Oman stands apart in both its historical context and approach to modernization and development, and context matters. Oman has a rich and sustained history of global connectivity, more so than any other state in the Gulf. Oman had a widespread trading network across the Indian Ocean, including colonies on the western coast of Indian and, more extensively, East Africa. As the hub of Oman's seafaring and trade-related activities, cosmopolitan mercantilism is a defining feature of Muscat's history. This has influenced not only the ethnic composition and culture of the city, but also the national narrative that affects contemporary popular views of diversity and belonging amongst the local population.

With the rise of British dominance in the Indian Ocean, Oman fell into a state of economic decline. Coupled with the benign neglect of several sultans and the imposition of stifling domestic policies, development essentially halted. It wasn't until the former Sultan's forced abdication in 1970 that development resumed. Thus, urban and social transformation in Muscat, Oman can be more or less temporally delineated making it a good case study for the subject. Through the context of Muscat, we can gain more insight into urban transformation in the context of globalization more broadly. In addition, because the importation of foreign labour is a critical component of Oman's development, we can more gain more insights into the role of migration in social transformation more broadly.

Research Questions

To reiterate, this work is concerned with exploring the social and cultural impacts of
modernization and international migration to Muscat, Oman through an exploration of the
everyday and the role of social space in the modification and (re)construction of culture
and identity. To explore the influence of migration to Muscat and the state's identity
building project upon culture and identity, the following questions must be addressed:

- What is the role of the state in the production of space and identity?
- How are residents engaged in the production of space and challenging the
  conceived/dominating space of the state?

Methodology

Research Design

The research design reflects the exploratory intent of the research endeavor. The
design is partially naturalistic, given that the goal was to uncover reality, whatever may
emerge, without manipulation, controls, or constraints. In a similar vein, the research was
also designed to be flexible, so that as new avenues of inquiry emerged they could be
further explored. It is qualitative rather than quantitative so that interactions, perceptions
exceptions, alterations, and experiential plurality, all of which produce space, are not
overlooked. The methods employed are largely ethnographic in order to analyze lived
experience and explore individual attitudes, perceptions, and conceptualizations of
cultural elements (and the relationships between them). This research focuses on the role
of social space in the transformation of culture and identity, and is structured with Henri
Lefebvre's theory of the Production of Space in mind. In his work, Henri Lefebvre (1991)
outlined three separate but inseparable and interrelated aspects of space that comprise

social space: *spatial practices,* being perceived space, *representations of space,* or conceived space*,* and *spaces of representation,* lived space. Lefebvre (1991) emphasized that these three aspects of space are continuously informing and being informed by the others, and that all three aspects of space must be considered as a whole.

Spatial practices, or perceived space, relates to individuals' spatial performances, and "…ensures the levels of cohesion and competence required for the everyday functions of society…" (Watkins, 2005, p.213) According to Watkins (2005), "these *spatial practices* include everyday routines and evolved social conventions of tolerable behavior." (p. 213)

Representations of space, or space that is conceived, is "the conceptualized space constructed out of symbols, codifications and abstract representations" including forms of power, ideology and ideological content in codes and symbols, and is "…the manifest representation of our mental constructs of the spaces of our rational, abstract understandings." (Watkins, 2005, p. 212)

Spaces of representation refers to the space of lived experience "that forms, informs and facilitates the deviations, diversity and individuality that are a fundamental aspect of any social encounter" and "this distinctiveness is achieved in conjunction with, while not being completely constrained by, the stricture of the *representations of space* and the *spatial practices* that have developed to provide the necessary cohesion and competence for successful social interaction." (Watkins, 2005, p.213)

According to Lefebvre's (1991) conception, "social space simultaneously

1. Has a part to play among the forces of production, a role originally played by nature, which it has displaced and supplanted;
2. Appears as a product of singular character, in that it is sometimes simply consumed (in such forms as travel, tourism, or leisure activities) as a vast

commodity, and sometimes, in metropolitan areas, productively consumed (just as machines are, for example), as a productive apparatus of grand scale;

3. Shows itself to be politically instrumental in that it facilitates the control of society, while at the same time being a means of production by virtue of the way it is developed (already towns and metropolitan areas are no longer just works and products but also means of production, supplying housing, maintaining the labour force, etc);

4. Underpins the reproduction of production relations and property relations (ie ownership of land, of space; hierarchical ordering of locations; organization of networks as a function of capitalism; class structures; practical requirements);

5. Is equivalent, practically speaking, to a set of institutional and ideological superstructures that are not presented for what they are (and in this capacity social space comes complete with symbolisms and systems of meanings – sometimes an overload of meaning); alternatively, it assumes an outward appearance of neutrality, of insignificance, of semiological destitution, and of emptiness (or absence);

6. Contains potentialities – of works and of reappropriation – existing to begin with in the artistic sphere but responding above all to the demands of a body 'transported' outside itself in space, a body which by putting up resistance inaugurates the project of a different space (either the space of counter-culture, or a counter-space in the sense of an initially utopian alternative to actually existing 'real' space)." (pp. 348-349)

Multiple *ad-hoc* ethnographic methods were used in order to holistically explore the these six attributes of social space, and attempt to mitigate the potential for error in analysis on part of the researcher in that the data collected through the use of one method can be corroborated or contradicted by the findings uncovered through the use of another method. The various methods were employed to uncover the three fields in Lefebvre's trialectic model of the production of space. Interviews, photos, mental maps and observatory walks were employed to explore the physical (perceived space: spatial practices, daily routines, buildings and monuments, symbols, etc). Archival research, interviews, and mental maps were used to explore the mental (conceived space: prejudices, opinions, attitudes, etc). Finally, participant observation, with some support from interviews, was employed to uncover social space (lived space: interactions, etc).

Data Collection Instrumentation

The theoretical framework of data collection relates to Lefebvre's conception of space and its production as a triad:

- *Perceived Space/Spatial practices*: Mental maps, oral interviews, and participant observation
- *Representations of Space/Conceived Space*: Archival research, mental maps, and interviews
- *Spaces of representation/lived space*: Interviews and participant observation

Data Collection Approach and Procedure

Archival research. Archival research was first employed to explore global, regional, and state migration trends and figures, including which states are predominantly labour-importing or labour-exporting, the flow of remittances, and migrant population sizes. For the global migration trends, for example, data compiled and presented by the United Nations (UN), the International Organization on Migration (IOM), and the World Bank were referenced. For migrations trends and figures specific to the Gulf states, The Gulf Research Center's *Gulf Labour Market and Migration* (GLMM) database was the chief source referenced.

Archival research was then an avenue to gain insight into the production of space through historical dialectics and cultural accumulation, and the formation of the state. Archival research was also employed to uncover the contemporary political, economic and social environment of Oman with regards to nation-building and state-building methods and immigration policies. Demographic information, including the governorate's total population, the ratio of migrants to national residents, age, gender, occupational fields, and migrant national origins was explored. The same information was gathered for Muscat city in particular. Archival sources for such information

included surveys the state census, and other data compiled by the state and subsequently produced state reports. The Ministry of Manpower, Royal Oman Police, and the National Center for Statistics and Information were the primary archival sources used to explore state and city trends and figures. Given the spatial dimension of my research, data from Muscat's Geographic Information Systems office was explored. This source of spatial data provided specific locations for sites of social and cultural importance in the traditional sense, like community-specific (largely meaning national origin, like Filipino, or Indian) schools and religious institutions and prominent civic sites.

To guide my understanding of the local context, local news like *Times of Oman* and *Muscat Daily* were repeatedly referenced to explore the social environment. Articles relating to immigration, including changes in visa requirements, visa bans, and other residency-related policies were considered. Similarly, articles that pertain to the Omanization of the workforce, and developments in labour nationalization policies were included. News relating to state-building and or discussing recent infrastructural and institutional developments were explored for the same reason. Local news articles providing insight into the social and cultural environment of the city were also explored. Articles relating to cultural and artistic events were read, as well as those relating to crime prevention, from drug-busts and the deportation of expatriates for obscene acts.

Facebook and Instagram were also archival sources of information. I followed *Times of Oman* on Facebook and Instagram, and read through conversation threads to gain familiarity with current developments and the various perspectives held. Similarly, I followed and perused entertainment-oriented social media pages like *Muscat Tips* and *Muscat Memes*, which are tailored for young city 'locals'.

Given the level of state censorship and control of local media, the local news articles have to be considered critically. However, understanding the state influence in the media allows one to identify elements of both state and nation-building strategies and the dissemination of that narrative to the general public. The level of state censorship and surveillance limits the reliability of the information gathered from conversations and comments on social media. This might be mitigated a bit by the anonymous nature of digital media, but I think it is insignificant with regards to reliability. In any case, discourse analysis and reading between the lines can uncover underlining threads.

Interviews. Semi-structured interviews are one of the primary sources of data for this research endeavor. Through this method, insight into representations of space (conceived), spatial practices (perceived space), and representational spaces (lived space) can be achieved. In designing and structuring the interview, consideration was given to questions that would elicit information about the participants' individual attributes, perceptions, behaviours, routines, and personal beliefs. The design and schedule of the interview will reflect this grouping. The interview schedule was somewhat of a pyramid structure, beginning with easy-to-answer questions about their attributes, and ending with questions that solicit critically reflective answers. The types of questions varied, and include descriptive, opinion, and structural. Some secondary questions will likely be prompts for clarification, nudging, and categorizing.

The primary interview questions relate to four broad themes:

1) <u>individual attributes</u> relating to age, country of origin, length of residency, level of educational attainment, local presence of family, and whether the participant is second or third generation

2) <u>spatial practices, patterns, perceptions, and preferences</u> for both national and foreign participants, including areas of conspicuous migrant residency, initial migrant settlement and the presence of social networks, and areas avoided or preferred by Muscat residents for social, economic and recreational activities;

3) <u>cultural interaction</u>, including the frequency and context of these interactions, perceptions of others' that arise from such interactions, and cultural transmission. Lastly,

4) <u>identity and belonging</u>, relating social interactions with perceptions of self and self-identification, identification of 'home'.

Participant selection. Participant selection was a combination of purposive, snowball, and convenience sampling. Because of the dynamic and temporal nature of the research themes as well as a desire to make this project more projective and foretelling, younger individuals between the ages of 18 and 35 were ideal participants. Given that the production of space is a process, a younger group of city residents would allow for some speculation on syncretic identities and the nature of social relations in the next few decades. Older individuals with longer residencies in Muscat who could convey their knowledge about temporal changes to the social, cultural, and political environment were also sought. Because of the comparative and intercultural orientation of this research, an even number of participants of foreign and national origins was an objective. Additionally, given the gendered nature of the society, a group of participants with an even ratio of males and females was also an aim.

Participant solicitation. Initial contact with most participants occurred in social settings. I extended a request for participation after some degree of informal social

engagement. For other participants, the arrangement was more impersonal, given that local friends would approach their friends or colleagues on my behalf with requests for participation. Invitation to participate were extended in an individualized manner. To foster comfort and ease, I provided participants with insight into my research during the invitation so as to remove any anxiety that might be the result of ambiguousness and unknown motivations. I briefly conveyed the nature of questions that I would ask, and the rationale behind asking them.

Interviews were conducted during the summer of 2015 between the 4th of July and the 28th of August. Interviews were largely conducted in public spaces, like coffee shops, restaurants, and shisha cafes. Five interviews were conducted at the participant's place of employment. Two interviews were conducted in the private residences of the participant. The majority of the interviews were conducted one-on-one, with three interviews being held with two participants simultaneously for contextual and cultural reasons, specifically gender-related. The duration of interviews lasted between 25 minutes to upwards of two hours. The length of a typical interview was roughly an hour.

At the start of all interviews, I introduced myself, reintroduced the project, outlined my research objectives, and explained the confidential nature of the conversation and how the confidentiality of the interview content and any relating notes or files would be maintained, in strict accordance with the Protection of Human Subjects protocol regarding anonymity and informed consent. For those meetings arranged through a mutual acquaintance, more time was spent warming up and establishing rapport prior to conducting the interview. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for dialogue and follow-up questions. Though I had my structured interview questions in

hand, the interview evolved into something more conversational once the individual attributes, like age and occupation, were recorded and we got into more meaningful questions of personal importance to the participants. Given the formal nature of societal interactions, I intentionally kept the vibe of the interviews as informal as possible for the comfort of the participants, just to reaffirm my liberal and tolerant orientation and lack of judgment so as to elicit further honesty.

Because I was introduced to the majority of these individuals by others in the same social network, the participants in this study may not be representative of the city's population in terms of national origin, age, lifestyle or interests. Attempting to make the group of participants more representative of Muscat's residents, other avenues of participant solicitation were taken, tapping into the professional network of local friends. As a means to increase validity and reliability, rather than relying on a specific contact and gaining access to his or her particular social circle, I purposefully sought out those who appeared to have different backgrounds, beliefs, and lifestyles than participants I had interviewed thus far in my data collection.

Content analysis of transcriptions was used to identify terms and phrases frequently repeated or those reiterated by other participants. Descriptive and categorical codes were used to uncover manifest messages. Broader concepts and themes were used as codes to analyze more latent information conveyed. Individual attributes give context to participants' perceived (spatial practices), and conceived space. There are many variables that effect the extent of social and cultural interaction between migrant and host communities, beginning with individuals' attributes, including their ethnic origins, age, length of residency, level of educational attainment and occupation. An individual's

country of origin or ethnic background can influence their reception amongst the local

population which has its own pervasive perceptions of 'others'. This reception will also

influence their willingness to assimilate into or associate with the local population, in turn

effecting the level of cultural transmission. Age is also an important individual attribute.

Because of the cultural identity confusion and increased assimilation is typically

demonstrated by second and third generation immigrants, specifying sequence is a

fundamental element to be included. The younger foreign residents will have not made

the initial decision to migrate to Oman, and will likely lack, or at least have weaker, ties

to the family's country of origin, especially if the individual has always resided in the city

of Muscat. Similarly, length of residency for migrants could potentially increase cultural

exchange and assimilation. If residency in Muscat has been lengthy, transnational identity

could account for the maintenance of culture of origin and limited acculturation.

Educational attainment impacts the socioeconomic standing of migrants within the host

community, which would entail different reception than that experienced by an unskilled

labourer. Likewise, the occupation held by migrant workers would influence the

frequency and extent of professional interaction with the local population.

Spatial practices, preferences, and perceptions of the city (including its

inhabitants) can give insight into popular sentiments, existing social and cultural

conflicts, and conceived space, both in the minds of the participants and the urban

planners. Perceptions of the Others' culture could also identify which aspects of culture

are being adopted or transmitted, dependent upon their perceived value. Similarly, the

behavioural accommodations made to respect the local culture or adhere to societal

expectations can potentially impact the individual's identity ascription. Perceptions of

Self and self-identification can assist in the evaluation of cultural change occurring, and the importance to the individual of belonging, or not belonging, to a broader community. It can be argued that the need to belong to a larger community is necessitated by marginalization and discrimination of migrants, or sentiments of vulnerability and the sociocultural threat of a significant foreign population.

The importance of participatory research cannot be understated. Any chance to increase the level of involvement of city residents who are more knowledgeable than myself, and therefore any chance to increase the validity of knowledge produced, was seized. Oral methodological approaches involve the participants in the production of data and the construction of knowledge, and therefore contribute "to the redistribution of power between the researched and the researched." (Jung, 2014, p. 987)

With regards to the study of identity and migration, the methods employed to collect data are often verbal, and usually oral. These approaches include interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, and the collection of narratives. However, considering issues associated with language familiarity and proficiency, for both the participant and the researcher, verbal communication has the potential to be limited and misinterpreted. Attempts were continuously made to be somewhat repetitious, asking similar questions or rewording questions to gauge consistency in responses. This was an attempt to address both misinterpretation and variation in participants' presentation of self.

Oral approaches to data collection, as previously mentioned, have faults relating to language familiarity and proficiency. This can result in limited communication and the information provided has the potential to be misinterpreted. Some participants may have found it easier to express themselves through the sketching of a mental map than through

verbal communication. In his discussion of the utility of mental sketch mapping, Jack Jon

Gieseking (2013) cites the work of Howard Gardner and his theory of multiple

intelligences. Gardner (2011) theorized that individuals have a dozen different types of

intelligences, including linguistic, logical-mathematical, and spatial. He states that

society generally values linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences above others.

Gieseking (2013) postulates that "it is inevitable that researchers have ignored a wealth of

data by not considering these multiple intelligences." (p. 714).

     Mental Mapping. Given the spatial nature of this project, it is imperative that a

tool is employed that elicits geographic conceptions and perceptions of place. Mental

maps are the most effective visual method to reveal such geographic information. Mental

maps were sketched the summer of 2015 between the 4th of July and the 28th of August.

Maps were drawn following the conclusion of the interview, and therefore the locations

of this method are the same as for the interviews. The mapping exercise was largely

conducted in public spaces, like coffee shops, restaurants, and shisha cafes. Five maps

were produced at the participant's place of employment. Two maps were drawn in the

private residences of the participant. The majority of the interviews were conducted one-

on-one, with three mapping exercises being held with two participants simultaneously.

The duration of map sketching was short, lasting anywhere between 10-30 minutes.

     After the conduction of the verbal interview, participants were provided sketch

paper with dimensions of 11 inches by 14 inches and a weight of 70lb. Participants were

also provided a set of drawing pencils of various softness and an eraser. Fearing too much

influence on the produced map, very little direction was provided, and participants were

simply asked to draw a map of Muscat and to include places they consider important or frequent regularly.

Because the intended goals for the spatial component of this research project is to uncover spatial practices and identify spaces wherein interaction between expatriates and Omanis occur, and the fact that the maps are supplementary to participant interviews, I use few analytics in my reading of the mental maps. What I consider in reading the maps will be limited to what features, physical and human-built, are included and excluded, as well as the labels and comments written by the participants. These features include paths, landmarks, nodes, districts and edges. The size of the drawn features, and the orientation of map elements and the map in its entirety will also be considered. A comparison of participants' produced maps will identify areas of overlap, and spaces within which contact, brief or extensive, between city residents of various origins occur.

Once spaces of interaction were identified, a review of interview content allowed for these spaces to be categorized in terms of the extent of the interactions within these spaces as conveyed by the research participants. These categories of extent include spaces characterized by high, moderate, or low levels of interaction. Within these categories, the general nature of the interactions will serve as subcategories. Those subcategories include social and professional interaction. Within each categorized space, the meaningfulness of the interaction in terms of collective identity development and cultural syncretization will be considered.

As mentioned, interviews involve participants in the production of data and the construction of knowledge, and therefore contribute "to the redistribution of power between the researcher and the researched" who are experts on the subject of their lived

experience. (Jung, 2014, p. 987) The inclusion of a visual method to supplement the oral interviews further involves these experts in the research process through the production of that visual data.

Mental mapping is a methodology that has been employed to retrieve participants' perceptions and conceptions of place. Mental maps have also been used to explain how perceptions of place influence individuals' preferences and spatial choices and behaviors (Gould and White, 1974). Kevin Lynch (1960) pioneered the tool of data collection and analysis to understand how people perceive relationships between space and both the physical and social elements contained within. Lynch outlined five mental map features: landmarks, paths, points of interest which he termed nodes, boundaries he referred to as edges, and sections of coherence, which he termed districts. (Powell, 2010, p. 540).

In an attempt to further involve participants directly in the research project through the production of visual data, mitigate problems associated with oral methodologies, and, mostly importantly, in an attempt to adequately capture participants' realities and truths, mental mapping, or mental sketch mapping, was employed as a supplemental data source. This approach can assist in uncovering spatial practices (perceived space) and help identify places of social importance. Mental mapping is both a visual and spatial method that allows one to view the participants' realities from another vantage point. Participants draft tangible maps derived from their cognitive maps of space and the information, emotions, and ideas they hold, whether real or imagined. (Downs and Stea, 1974)

Mental mapping provides another instrument to measure the spatial patterns, perceptions, and preferences disclosed in the interviews. Evidence of settlement

clustering and relatively demarcated community formation would give insight into the robustness of migrant networks. The presence and size of social networks would sustain 'home' culture, or, at least, lessen the level of acculturation or assimilation of migrants into the dominant culture.

Settlement patterns can also be indicative of negative migrant reception and separation. The residency preferences and areas avoided by the local population would also aid in understanding the nature of reception or foreigners, as well as the extent of social and cultural exclusion. Spatial separation of local and foreign populations within the city would be indicative of limited daily interactions, and therefore cultural transmission, perhaps facilitating the maintenance of 'original' identity, or dual identity. The avoidance of foreign neighbourhoods would be indicative of social and spatial exclusion, and, of course, the frequency of cultural exchange. The identification of migrant neighbourhoods as those participants tend to avoid may be indicative of discriminatory social and spatial exclusion based on perception.

The analysis of the data provided by mental maps has traditionally been quantitative. A mental map is assumed to "transparently reflect people's cognitive worlds and each part of a map can be separated, resorted, and extracted selectively," leading research towards statistical analysis (Jung, 2014, p. 989). The information contained within a mental map is too contextual and its construction too experiential for statistical analysis to be sufficient in extracting the information existing within. Similarly, the sketching of these mental maps is influenced by the participants' interpretation of the task prompt, allowing for discrepancies in the intended and understood significance or meaning of map features, resulting in flawed conclusions. Mental maps "are subjective

texts that differ greatly from other kinds of maps such as thematic maps produced by the technologies of geographic information systems: the elements, layout, inclusion and exclusion in the mental map as a whole represent the subjectivity of the drawer." (Jung, 2014, p. 989)

The analysis of mental maps limits the participatory nature of the research, considering that "it positions the researched as a passive information giver, while the researcher is an initiator, processor, and interpreter." (Jung, 2014, p. 989) Given the contextual, experiential, and meaningful character of the information conveyed through mental mapping, quantitative analysis sustains the patriarchal researcher-researched dynamic more so than a qualitative approach. Jung (2014) emphasized intertextuality and reflectivity in the analysis of mental maps, given that meaning is determined contextually and in reference to other elements, including the researcher. Awareness of oneself as a researcher, and the understanding that my knowledge is the product of power, definitely impartial, and potentially wrong, may improve the accuracy of map interpretation.

Participant Observation. Participant observation is an approach to more fully understand the context of place, and the daily experiences of foreign and Omani communities in Muscat: the social space. Observatory walks through different neighbourhoods was employed to take in the built environment, including architecture and signage. Participant observation was undertaken between the 4th of July and the 28th of August in 2015. I would sit and observe in high traffic public areas in various neighbourhoods of the city. I would do my grocery shopping at all the supermarkets mentioned with frequency during interviews. I would accept invitations to private gatherings, and invitations to accompany participants to social gatherings in both public

and private spaces. Some sites of observation include recreational or leisurely social spaces like bars, nightclubs and hotel lounges as well as restaurants, coffee shops, shisha cafes. Sites of observation also included public and private beaches, parks, shopping malls, supermarkets, and private residences.

During these observational situations, I behaved as if I was a disciple of experience and all attempts at assimilation were undertaken. For the most part, not wanting to make myself conspicuous, and suspicious, I waited to take notes on my observations until arriving back to my residence. The social context had informed me that such documentation of activities would without question cause individuals to adjust their behaviour and edit their conversations.

Throughout my participant observation, I would consider the social dynamics of those also occupying the space firstly. I would also consider style of dress, preferences of music, movies, food and drink. I would listen for vernacular language use, and note instances interpreted as being indicative of cultural syncretism and identity reconfiguration amongst participants. With regards to the mundane everyday routines of city residents, like grocery shopping for example, I would consider the products available (link the country of origin), and pricing. I would also gauge the customer crowd, with consideration given to behavioural adaptations and accommodations, languages used or preferred, dress and attire.

For the analysis of observed social interactions, my approach was largely similar. I would first gauge the crowd, any behavioural adaptations witnessed, languages used and preferred, and what style of dress and attire was worn. I would then consider musical preferences, food and beverages being consumed, and the company kept and preferred by

individuals. I would then attempt to evaluate the nature and extent of social interactions and how meaningful they may have been, based on body language, facial expressions, and enthusiasm.

Participant observation is a socially informative ethnographic method that allows for more extensive understanding in a social context. It provides a lens to identify spatial behaviour separate from the verbal responses of participants, and presumably, more objective. Taking note of the residents frequenting these locations, the style of dress, and languages heard in the spatial context can corroborate the stated spatial behaviours and attitudes from interview participants. Participant observation is limited by lack of familiarity and context. One cannot discern place of origin for people observed based on their appearances, or languages spoken. I'm certain culturally and geographically-specific jokes went unnoticed. In addition, when acceptable behviour in public is controlled, is what I'm observing in some spaces natural or prescribed behaviour? It is sometimes difficult to discern.

Research Limitations

The limitations of this research can largely be attributed to the researcher. With only three years of non-immersive study, my Arabic language skills are conversational at best, which put limitations on verbal communication. I am white and Western, which alone greatly affected the way I was perceived, received, and accommodated by those encountered, including research participants. In my experiences living and working abroad, I understand that, though I was treated more hospitably than necessary, the information (hopefully initially) disclosed to me may not be wholly candid, given the uncertainty stemming from my exclusion from the community. I am also female, which,

in a society where a defining characteristic is a segregation of the genders, is significant. That influenced how I was received and perceived, by both men and women, as well as my own behaviour, particularly during participant observation. My gender excluded me from some private spaces and required most interviews to be conducted in public spaces, or, if conducted in a private setting, with a second participant, which in turn influences the content of the interviews.

In the spirit of positionality, the fact that I am a migrant myself had a positive influence and strengthens my research. More blatant and practical is the ease of entry into social networks. Luckily, I had some exposure and experience in the local context prior to field research. Between 2009 and 2011, I resided in Muscat for six-months out the year. My father's occupation brought our family there, and so between university semesters I would 'go home' for several months at a time. I had kept in touch with a couple of former work colleagues, and they warmly assisted me, even introducing me to a participant or two. In addition, two of my most important social connections were Omani females with whom I attended high school in Johannesburg, South Africa. They too assisted in the recruitment of participants. Our connection to South Africa ended up being helpful. I met one South African who then continuously introduced me to other South Africans at functions and gatherings, as if I had some connection to them because of our past residency there. In social situations, when asked why I was visiting Oman, disclosing my transnational migratory upbringing seemed to change the character of those encounters. I hesitate to say it was a form of collective identity, but there was a sense of solidarity from that shared experience. In any case, it definitely created a rapport.

Fundamentally though, my migratory background afforded insights and understanding that I'm not certain a researcher without that experience would have. This topic is my life and I know it well because I lived it. However, because of the error inherent in interpretation and perception, I take care to acknowledge my positionality when discussing findings uncovered through observational methods. All attempts were made to mitigate the limitations of this research, beginning fundamentally with the variety of approaches to and methods of data collection, as discussed. It was an attempt to overlap methods and corroborate findings to ensure validity and reliability of this research endeavor.

However, Henri Lefebvre (1991), in his attempt to unify theory and practice (both of inhabitants and architects) through the reconstruction of a shared spatial 'code', states that "the working out of the code calls itself for an effort to stay within the paradigmatic sphere: that is, the sphere of the essential hidden, implicit and unstated oppositions" as opposed to "the sphere of explicit relations…of operational links between terms… ordinary discourse…" (p. 65) Lefebvre argues that this code must correlate with a system of knowledge that,

"situates itself…vis-à-vis non-knowledge (ignorance or misunderstanding); in other words, vis-à-vis the lived and the perceived. Such a knowledge is conscious of its own approximativeness: it is at once certain and uncertain. It announces its own relativity at each step, undertaking self-criticism, yet never allowing itself to become dissipated in apologias for non-knowledge, absolutely spontaneity or 'pure' violence. This knowledge must find a middle path between dogmatism on the one hand and the abdication of understanding on the other." (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 65)

With this in mind, instances where I do not understand the intended meaning of a participants' statements, are am unsure of how collected data should be interpreted, feelings of uncertainty and ignorance and blatantly stated.

Thesis Overview

Lefebvre (1991) discusses the problematic of space and states that the in the analysis of space and the social interactions embedded within space "the ideologically dominant tendency divides space into parts and parcels in accordance with the social division of labour" and because of these "partial representations….knowledge is confounded, integrated unintentionally into existing society's framework. It is continually abandoning any global perspective, accepting fragmentation and so coming up with mere shards of knowledge." (p. 91) Also, because the concept of space denotes and connotes all possible spaces, real or conceived, he also states that observation isn't enough in that it doesn't consider "the representational space that inhabitants have in their minds, which plays an integral role in social practice." (p. 93) Lefebvre proposes that the mental, physical, and social components of space must be understood together, but "for the mental and the social to be reconnected, they first have to be clearly distinguished from one another, and the mediations between them reestablished…" (299)

This thesis is an attempt to distinguish between the mental, physical, and social components of space in order to reconnect them to approach space in a unitary manner. The thesis will begin with a review of relevant literature, followed by a discussion of migration and development at the global, regional, and state scale in chapter 3. Following Henri Lefebvre's guidelines for understanding social spaces, representations of space at the level of the city will be examined in chapter 4, including both the representations of the state and individual participants. Chapter 5 examines the representations of space at the neighbourhood level, again including the conceived space of both the state and Muscat residents. This includes also the physical/material elements of the state's

production of space. Chapter 6 discusses the spatial practices of participants, and includes

an examination of the mental maps, more active representations of space. Social space,

particularly locations of socialization, will be discussed in chapter 7, and, finally, the

impact of nation-building and migration upon identity will be discussed in chapter 8.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Space, Place, and Culture

John Agnew defined place as location, locale, and sense of place. Locale refers to "the material setting for social relations – the actual shape of place within which people conduct their lives as individuals." (Cresswell, 2004, p. 7) Drawing from the philosophy of phenomenology, Yi-Fu Tuan (1977)contributes to the discourse of human attachment to place with the emphasis on biological sensory experience. Concerned with how people come to know the world through the senses, Tuan stresses the emotional nature of humans, and challenges the positivist approach to human geography that separates the feeling being from the inhabited physical environment. Tuan underscores the role of human experience in differentiating space and place through the attachment of meaning to the latter.

Tuan defines experience as "a cover-all term for the various modes through which a person knows and constructs a reality" (Tuan, 1977, p. 8). Included in this term are passive and active modes of reality construction, notably the senses. Experience involves both learning from the external world, which is passive, and actively seeking out "…the unfamiliar and experiment[ing] with the elusive and the uncertain" (Tuan, 1977, p. 9). Tuan further discusses the role of both emotion and thought in human experience. Stating that emotion affects thought, and thought affects experience, Tuan emphasizes the subjective nature of reality by inseparably joining emotion and thought, both of which are

"ways of knowing" (Tuan, 1977, p.10). Experience is not limited to sensations, but is influenced by thought and, importantly, feeling.

Differentiating the concepts of space and place, Tuan says, "place is security, space is freedom: we are attached to the one and long for the other" (Tuan, 1977, p. 3). He that places are a kind of object that define space, and that place arises from extensive experience of and the ascription of value to space. He states that "objects and places are centers of value…to attend to them even momentarily is to acknowledge their reality and value" (Tuan, 1977, p. 18). But a place can only "achieve concrete reality when our experience of it is total, that is, through all the sense as well as with the active and reflective mind" (Tuan, 1977, p. 18). Places can lack the weight of reality because of limited experience, but humans "can become passionately attached to places of enormous size, such as a nation-state" without direct experience (Tuan, 1977, p. 18).

The discussion of the role of biological sensory experience in the creation of place and the recognition of the human species as emotional, feeling beings are a significant contribution of Tuan. The idea that experience can be considered what is learned from dealings with the external world mirrors the conceptualization of culture as learned behaviour concerned with meaning. (Sewell, 1999, p. 41)

He contributes to our understanding of the reciprocal relationship between humans and the physical environment through the illustration that humans not only modify their inhabited space but are affected by the manifestations of place. His reading helps to critically analyze the relationship between cultural practices and the physical environment because though he agrees that "culture is uniquely developed in human beings [and] strongly influences human behavior and values," Tuan argues that culture is

not an adequate enough approach, given the existence of shared behaviours independent from culture, to comprehend the ways in which humans understand place and attach meaning to it (Tuan, 1977, p. 5).

Given the variance of human experience, Tuan's claim that concrete reality is only possible with total experience is unstable. He says that at first a neighbourhood is "…a confusion of images to the new resident; it is blurred space 'out there.'" (Tuan, 1977, p. 17) A neighbourhood becomes place as significant locations or objects within are identified and given value. Even briefly noticing objects and places is to acknowledge their reality and value. Until then, it is only space. Long-term residency in a place does not result in its concrete reality until we can reflect upon our experiences within it, but places "lack the weight of reality" when we do not know it intimately (Tuan, 1977, p. 18). So then place is space that has been directly experienced and been given value and meaning.

To complement the neighbourhood, the nation-state is a provided example of an expansive place that humans become attached to despite "limited direct experience" with it. (Tuan, 1977, p.18) I found it difficult to conceptualize the nation-state as place. If space is a network of places, and places are directly experienced, one could consider the nation-state to be mythical space, which Tuan (1977) describes as a "...fuzzy area of defective knowledge, surrounding the empirically known; it frames pragmatic space." (p. 86) Tuan continues to say that in our modern world "…groups share a common store of hazy knowledge (myths) concerning a far larger field – the region or nation – in which their own local areas are imbedded…though inaccurate, it is necessary to the sense of reality of one's empirical world." (Tuan, 1977, p. 88)

The attempt to discern place from space leads one to question the ontological existence of place. Mitchell argues that culture "is a victim of infinite regress," that if it exists ontologically, then it "...must be definable in an internally coherent and inclusive manner." (Mitchell, 1995, p. 107) Tuan states that "the ideas of space and place require each other for definition," and that we cannot define one without referring to the other, equally undefinable concept. (Tuan, 1977, p. 7)

The problem of scale in the definition of place also lends to the idea of infinite regress. Both the neighbourhood and a place of residency within it are objects/places, as is a room within the place of residency. If an expansive territory like the nation-state can be considered place because of felt attachment, then the attachment of value to the planet is reason enough for it to be considered place. Indeed, any named location is a particular object about which humans feel deeply. This raises the question at what scale is place situated, and if there are limitations as to what can be considered place.

Tim Cresswell (2004) unpacks the concept of place, and says there are many different manifestations of place because places are ongoing creations that "…are being made, maintained, and contested." (p. 5) In addition to the where and material form, place must also have a sense of place, or "the subjective and emotional attachment people have to place." (Cresswell, 2004, p. 7) For Cresswell places are spaces that have been made meaningful. He states that when humans invest meaning into space, in the context of power, then place is created, but that this conception of place "is confused someone what by the idea of social space, or socially produced space – which, in many ways, plays the same role as place." (Cresswell, 2004, p. 10) This is comparable to what Tuan says, that humans "…try to embody their feelings, images, and thoughts in tangible material"

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the result of which is architectural and sculptural space." (Tuan, 1977, p. 17) There is a modification of both culture and place wherein individuals, attempting to convey their human experiences, are directly involved. Place, then, like culture, is a human construction that in turn acts back on humans as they experience the environment.

To Mitchell (1995) culture "is seen as an attribute of (or attributable to) distinct, bounded, localized social entities…culture is 'an image of the world, of oneself and one's community" (p. 105). It is a way to render the complexity of the human experience orderly. The same argument can be made about the concept of place; that it is a way of organizing "undifferentiated space" for the purpose of creating an orienting image of the world, within which community and self are located. (Tuan, 1977, p. 7). Mitchell (1995) states that "the stuff of culture…is elusive, best approached obliquely in terms of the processes through which meanings are constructed, negotiated, and experienced" (p. 106).

Landscape, Culture, and Power

With regards to relations of power in the process of culture and place-making, Mitchell discusses "critical infrastructure" and the individuals responsible for the production of culture. (Mitchell, 1995, p. 111) He defines the critical infrastructure as "those workers whose job it is to implement ideas about culture, to solidify culture in place, to produce what gets called 'culture,'" This includes art critics and creative types, Mitchell states the practices of the critical infrastructure translate art and intellectual works into "reified culture." (Mitchel, 1995, p. 111) He goes further to argue that the critical infrastructure creates cultural capital; It is their role to ensure that cultural goods and practices become commodities and are "…incorporated into systems of capital

circulation and that they become known as emblems of culture." (Mitchell, 1995, p. 111) and that "what gets called culture is thoroughly implicated in the continual reproduction of everyday. It is inseparable from relations of production and consumption – and of power." (Mitchell, 1995, p. 112)

With a critical geography approach, Tim Cresswell (2004) provides insight from social theory and social analysis and contributes to the discourse of ideology and transgression with the emphasis on the role of place in the constitution and maintenance of ideology. Stressing the idea that society both produces and is reproduced by space, Cresswell attempts to explain "how and why place is a powerful force in…ongoing hegemonic and counterhegemonic struggles." (Cresswell, 2004, p. 13)

In the third chapter of *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression*, entitled The Crucial 'Where' of Graffiti, Tim Cresswell provides support for his claim that the examination of place in cultural and social processes can aid in the understanding of ideology and power in effecting the everyday behaviour of individuals. Cresswell demonstrates that the practice of graffiti results in the transformation of the meaning of New York by challenging the hegemonic ideology's image of the city. With particular attention given to the dominant power's response to graffiti, he argues that the "investigation the 'out-of-place' metaphor points to the fact that social power and social resistance are always already spatial." (Cresswell, 1996, p. 11)

Tim Cresswell outlines with what definition of ideology he is operating. Goren Therborn argues that ideology establishes and models "how human beings live their lives as conscious, reflecting initiators of acts in a structured meaningful world" which include defining what exists and does not exist, what is good and appropriate (as well as what is

not) and what is either possible or impossible. (Cresswell, 2004, p. 14) This allows for a defense of the ideological stance on a given subject, making ideology not just a system of beliefs and values, but riddled with various power dynamics, making ideology "meaning in the service of power." (Cresswell, 2004, p. 14)

Cresswell also states that ideology is not a class phenomenon, and that there is positional ideology, which "subjects one to, and qualifies, one for, a particular position in the world of which one is a member" and there is inclusive ideology that defines the individual as a member, like nationalism. (Cresswell, 1996, p. 15) This is a significant point to understand for the discussion of graffiti, in that positional ideology makes an individual not only aware of their own position but also aware of those in different positions: 'others'. Positional ideology allows for one to be aware of what's in-place through the awareness of what is out-of-place, a crucial geographic metaphor, showing that ideological contestation has always had a spatial component.

So it is established that ideology, in deciding what is appropriate, and good, and possible, greatly affect the actions of individuals. These practices are carried out after one has read the place, and behaves accordingly. However, by altering practices within a place based on what ideology deems appropriate, practice therefore informs place. This idea of appropriate practice makes actions seem "…natural, self-evident, and commonsense." (Cresswell, 1996, p.16) However, practice " is simultaneously a form of consumption…and a form of production….By acting in space in a particular way the actor is inserted into a particular relation with ideology." (Cresswell, 1996, p. 17) Cresswell (1996) states that "meaning is invoked in space through the practice of people who act according to their interpretations of space, which, in turn, gives their actions

meaning." (p. 17)This is a fluid and mutating process. But the crucial point to be made about commonsense is that it is a mechanism of domination, or *doxa*. It fosters an adherence to a *perceived* natural order, when in reality it is a method of reproducing an object condition, an "established order," despite individuals' subjective beliefs. (Cresswell, 1996, pp. 18-19) *Doxa* become orthodoxy when individuals begin to question the legitimacy of commonsense through the awareness of alternatives.

Cresswell (1996) argues that the reactions to graffiti, evident in language use, by the media, the government, and individual citizens signaled the existence of a fear that there was disorder in the city. He writes,

"Reaction to graffiti describes it as a threat to order- as out of place- in two main ways: (1) by suggesting through a mass of metaphors and descriptive terms that graffiti does not belong in New York's public places and (2) by associating it with other places- other contexts- where either the order is different and more amenable to graffiti or disorder is more prevalent." (Cresswell, 1996, p. 37)

The words used to suggest that graffiti was out of place in New York includes words such as dirt, pollution, and garbage. The spatial component of such word choice is evidence of graffiti's out-of-placeness, given that, for example, "the meaning of dirt is dependent on its location." (Cresswell, 1996, p. 38)

Dirt isn't necessarily disgusting if it's in its proper place, but becomes disgusting when it is where it should not be. The meaning of dirt depends on its position to other things, there, then, exists a symbolic order or hierarchy. "Symbolic orders are constructed through and by power, and filth represents the 'objective frailty' of that order. When graffiti is labeled as filth it is an acknowledgment of the threat that it poses to order." (Cresswell, 1996, p. 39) Another similar choice of language is to refer to graffiti as a disease, plague, or contagion. Cresswell states that "implicit in the use of disease terms in the anti-graffiti rhetoric is the idea of separation and confinement. The

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causes of disease need to be isolated; carriers need to be quarantined. Like dirt, a disease is a disorder with spatial implications." (Cresswell, 1996, p. 41)

Cresswell identifies "the paradox of graffiti as art" in that at the same time the practice of graffiti was criminalized, othered, and recognized as anarchic by the government authorities, it was taken out of the public spaces and into art galleries by the 'authorities' of culture. (Cresswell, 1996, p. 50) This placed graffiti in its appropriate place, making it art instead of "a tactic of the marginalized," as it was now conforming to the dominant ideology's idea of proper place. "In effect, the art world has transformed and commodified graffiti by displacing it." (Cresswell, 1996, p. 50)

This relates to Don Mitchell's argument about cultural mediation by the critical infrastructure. Cresswell states that as graffiti was being reconstituted as art "by the secular magic of displacement." (Cresswell, 1996, p. 52) This relocation from the streets to the art galleries can be seen as a strategy of the dominant ideology to undermine the challenge to the current order that the practice of graffiti poses. "The criminality of graffiti," Cresswell argues, "…lies in its being seen, in its transgression of official appearances. To take this and put it in a gallery negates its criminality as well as its meaning" (Cresswell, 1996, p. 58). Money is being spent to remove graffiti from public places but money is also being spent to be added into private places. Indeed Mitchell was also in agreement, arguing that "what gets called culture is thoroughly implicated in the continual reproduction of everyday. It is inseparable from relations of production and consumption – and of power." (Mitchell, 1996, p. 112)

The questioning of *doxa* is a fundamental form of resistance to and struggle with the hegemonic ideology. Transgression is the crossing of a boundary between what the

dominant ideology describes and good or appropriate. Transgression becomes resistance when the intentionality of the transgressor is purposeful, or intent on challenging or changing the hegemonic orthodoxy. In the third chapter, Cresswell argues that the material defacement of the city infrastructure is not the real issue at stake, it is the image of New York City that is most critical. The presence of graffiti, giving the impression of disorder, is "….destroying the proper significance (meanings) of the carefully controlled facades of the urban environment." (Cresswell, 1996, p. 46) Graffiti is made criminal because "…it subverts the authority of urban space and asserts the triumph (however fleeting) of the individual over the monuments of authority." The built environment, upon which graffiti is drawn, are the concrete constructions of appropriate meanings, as reasoned by the dominant ideology. This "hegemonic landscape is one that is never static and fixed but always, sometimes minutely, changing as a result of the continuing struggle between dominant and subordinate cultural groups." (Cresswell, 1996, p. 57) Place is used by both to either dominate or resist the other, and

The practice of graffiti is contesting this meaning and creating their own. Cresswell provides insight into power relations and ideological contestation of place, and the reciprocal effect of place and practice, and how this alters culture. Indeed, the subordinate ideology effectively challenged and altered the image of New York City, as is evident in "the choice by Disney World (the supreme court of representations) to represent New York City not with the Empire State Building or the Statue of Liberty but with a graffiti-covered subway train." (Cresswell, 1996, p. 37)

Place and Identity

Identities are not static or immutable, or singular, but are acquired through a lifetime of lived experiences. They are negotiating and constructed in the public sphere, where locality, space, and place influence the identity created. David and Bar Tal (2014) summarizes that social identity is formulated through the categorization of individuals into groups, the categorization of the self into a group, designation of meaning, and the characterization of other groups in comparison. The second a desire to distinguish one's own social group from other groups. *Collective identity* is "a joint awareness and recognition that members of a group share the same social identity" (David & Bar Tal, 2014, p. 356). The nation is such a *collective identity*. It is "a community of people whose members are bound together by a sense of solidarity, a common culture, a national consciousness" (Castles & Miller, 2009, p. 42).

National identity is fluid and dynamic, and feelings of belonging to the nation are based on elements that vary. Guibernau i Berdún (2007) outlines five dimensions of national identity: psychological, cultural, territorial, historical, and political. National identities also exist at various spatial scales, and the state is contemporary in relation to other longstanding affiliations. The spatial identity of a nation is "composed of land deemed essential to its security and vitality" (Kaplan & Herb, 1999, p. 3). This land consists of the actual inhabited space, the terrain that defines the group in a significant way, historical legacy of a territory, and specific natural or strategic importance. (Kaplan & Herb, 1999, p. 3).

The debate within the literature on the concept of the nation can be divided into two broad camps. The primordialist perspective of nationalism views nations as

inevitable entities that arise organically; a "collective answers to the call of the blood" (Herb, 1999, p. 14). Commonalities can be identified amongst the varying explanatory theories of the nation, the first of which is the stronger loyalty evoked by the nation in its members than other communities. The membership is "collectively self-defined," and its cohesiveness is in large part dependent on an *us-and-them* distinction, wherein us is superior to them. The second commonality of the nation has a long shared history, real or myth, giving legitimacy to the community. Lastly, the nation has either a destiny or shared goal to "enforce and preserve the unique character of its community" (Herb, 1999, p. 16). There is a desire to distinguish one's own social group from other groups.

Constructivists see nations as artificial creations, or "*imagined communities*" (Anderson, 1991). The process of nation formation is undertaken by individuals for a purpose. The nation is defined as a project of the elites, the result of structural changes, a discourse of domination, and "bounded communities of exclusion and opposition" (Herb, 1999, p. 15). In *Imagined Communities* Benedict Anderson (1991) ultimately argues "that the very possibility of imagining the nation only arose historically when, and where, three fundamental cultural conceptions, all of great antiquity, lost their axiomatic grip on men's minds." (p. 36) These three cultural conceptions include the idea of sacral scripted language as the only access to the truth, the concept that society was naturally centered on a divinely-ordained monarch, and lastly, the idea of temporality.

Anderson provides a working definition of the nation as "an imagined political community…imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign." (Anderson, 1991, p. 6) Anderson states that it is imagined because the members will never know the majority of the nation's other members, yet have an image or sense of unity. The nation is also seen

as limited because it has confining, finite borders, and, lastly, is imagined as sovereign because the concept was created in the age of Enlightenment, which was eroding the legitimacy of divinely-ordained rule. Lastly, the nation is imagined as a community because it is "conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" despite the inequality and exploitation that likely exists within. (Anderson, 1991, p. 6)

The rise of the concept of the nation occurred during the century of Enlightenment, which was characterized by rationalist secularism and the decline in religious modes of thought. Religion served to explain human suffering and respond to "obscure intimations of immortality, generally by transforming fatality into continuity," connecting the dead with the yet unborn. (Anderson, 1991, p. 11) So, Anderson argues, what was required then, with the rise of secular rationalism and the decline of religious thought, "…a secular transformation of fatality into continuity, contingency into meaning…" and the idea of a nation was best suited for this end. (Anderson, 1991, p. 11)

Each religious community, the Islamic Ummah, and Christendom, for example, were not territorial in nature but "…imaginable largely through the medium of sacred language and written script." (Anderson, 1991, p. 13) Each community saw itself and central and was confident in the sacredness of its language, to say that it had privileged access to divine power. Coupled with this was the idea that society was organized hierarchically rather than horizontally. The result was "…a conception of the world, shared by virtually everyone that the bilingual intelligentsia, by mediating between the vernacular and Latin, mediated between earth and heaven." (Anderson, 1991, pp. 15-16)

The decline in the religious community was the result of explorations that "widened the cultural and geographic horizons and men's conception of possible forms of

human life." (Anderson, 1991, p. 16) This exposure and exploration fosters the idea of the territorialization of faith and society. This was also accompanied by the demotion, at a quick pace, of sacred language in favour of local vernacular. In addition, "the automatic legitimacy of sacral monarchy began its slow decline in Western Europe" during the 17th century. (Anderson, 1991, p. 21)

Anderson states that, "beneath the decline of sacred communities, languages, and lineages, a fundamental change was taking place in modes of apprehending the world, which, more than anything else, made it possible to 'think' of the nation" (Anderson, 1991, p.22). He argues that the visual and aural mediation of religious conceptions to the illiterate masses over a vast territorial area meant that "…however vast Christnedom might be…it manifested itself *variously* to particular Swabian or Andalusian communities as replications of themselves." (Anderson, 1991, p. 23)

With this came the idea of simultaneity, which is "…traverse, cross-time, marked not by prefiguring and fulfilment, but by temporal coincidence, and measured by clock and calendar." (Anderson, 1991, p. 24) Prior to this idea of simultaneity, Anderson argues that medieval Christians had no conception of history as a chain of cause and effect events. The result of this is the conception was individuals are embedded in societies, or sociological organism, and the sociological entity is also embedded within the mind. (Anderson, 1991, pp. 25-26). Seeing the sociological organism moving through this empty time "is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation, which also is conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history." (Anderson, 1991, p. 26)

Anderson's ultimate argument is that nationalism and the nation is a constructed cultural artefact arising out of a specific historical context, marked by the decline in

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religious conceptions and modes of thought and world exploration. Anderson provides a working definition of the nation as "an imagined political community…imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign." (Anderson, 1991, p. 6) Anderson states that it is imagined because the members will never know the majority of the nation's other members, yet have an image or sense of unity. The nation is also seen as limited because it has confining, finite borders, and, lastly, is imagined as sovereign because the concept was created in the age of Enlightenment, which was eroding the legitimacy of divinely-ordained rule. Lastly, the nation is imagined as a community because it is "conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" despite the inequality and exploitation that likely exists within. (Anderson, 1991, p. 6)

Anderson argues that nationalism and the nation is a constructed cultural artefact arising out of a specific historical context, and that nationalism served to replace religious thought as a unifying and loyalty-creating sentiment. National consciousness is often deployed by state and local actors for a specific political end. Connor would agree, citing the speeches of national elites as evidence that nationalist sentiments and "the stirring of national consciousness is…a ploy utilized by aspiring elites…" (Anderson, 1991, pp.73-74) It is persuasively argued that modernization, industrialization, and capitalism created the need for membership to a larger community in "societies that were stratified by class" to address the void of belonging that resulted from modernization. (Herb, 1999, p. 14) In this light, nationalism can be seen as "a sociological necessity" (Herb, 1999, p. 14)

National Identity and Place

Given that space and place are central to human experience and attachment, territory is an essential component of constructed national identity, helping "weld

together fragmented individual and group experiences into a common nation story. The territory creates a collective consciousness by reinventing itself as homeland" (Herb, 1999, p. 17). The goal of preserving the exceptionality of the community is what politicizes the nation. Whereas a nation is a community that shares a common history with a distinct culture, the state "is a legal and political organization with the power to require obedience and loyalty from its citizens" (Castles & Miller, 2009, p. 42). The goal of the nation-state is to create a homogenous population and construct a distinct national identity to foster feelings of belonging. The construction of one national identity within the state as critical for stability and the retention of power and authority. This is of particular importance in nondemocratic systems, like the monarchical Gulf States, where legitimacy of the ruling family, or families, is questioned given the lack of popular participation. But spatial identities of the state and the nation are not aligned, but blurred, overlapping, and muddled. Spatial identity "manifests itself in spatial forms that are distinct from the spatial identity associated with the state" and continue to diverge and evolve (Kaplan, 1999, p. 35).

David Kaplan (1999) argues that the acceptance of the sovereign territorial state structure promoted the process of nation-building. The modern state challenges "the primacy of national identity although it has enabled national identity to assume its present characteristics and dominance" (p. 33). That is to say, legitimacy and recognition afforded to states compels "stateless," or non-territorial entities like the nation, "to accommodate themselves to a state-centric order" to gain recognition. This in turn promotes the process nation-building, seeing the nation-state as "the best guarantor of political stability." (Kaplan, 1999, p. 33). Loyalty to the state is dependent upon the

legitimization of the national identity it constructs. The state fosters a unitary national identity through social, cultural, and political means. Creating a national identity involves disseminating an image of the nation, the creating and spread of cultural symbols, values, and rituals to reinforce a sense of community belonging. The institutional use of a national language, and promotion of national dress are ways in which the image of the nation is reinforced, and belonging to the nation strengthened.

The territorial state is a vehicle to carry out nation-building activities, specifically through territorial control (Kaplan, 1999). The role of territories in identity formation is the active transformation of the elements within the territory. The state modifies territory to meet this objection of national identity by symbolic and material modification of territory. This could entail the placement of monuments or symbolic representations of the shared history throughout the state, large-scale development projects of high visibility, and specific language used for signage (Kaplan, 1999, pp. 21-23).

Globalization, Place, and Identity

International migration is both driven by and a component of globalization, thus making it an important context for understanding contemporary migration. "The world is experiencing unprecedented interconnectedness in terms of the speed of such connection, their extensity (the reach of these connections), and their intensity (the density and strength of those connections)" (Samers, 2010, p. 71). Many scholars view globalization as a transformation of the global economy through the spread of neoliberal ideology, resulting in the homogenization of culture, the opening of economies to foreign investment, promotion of export-led industrialization, and the privatization of public goods. (Samers, 2010, p. 72). Globalization and "the inter-state economic activity have a

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profound effect on territorially-based identities, giving rise to bifocal identities, biculturalism, and other non-territorial alternatives to national identity." (Kaplan, 1999, p. 42-43). The academic preoccupation with migration results a failure to account for the plurality of individual experiences regarding identity and belonging. Discussion of migrants also tends to view migrants as temporary, despite the fact that in many locations "the South Asian-dominated neighbourhoods…are into their second, third, or even fourth generation." (Vora, 2013, p. 3)

Research on labour migration to the Gulf largely focuses on oil development as the defining determinant of migration, despite the presence of a longstanding historical relationship between South Asia and the Gulf and robust social networks. Migrants' decisions are motivated by purely economic reasons. This approach to migration views migrants as "an 'apolitical,' 'transient,' and 'disposable' workforce convenient for patrimonial rulers trying to overcome the dilemmas of modernization." (Chalcraft, 2012, 67)

According to Baubock (2008) transnationalism "refers to processes and activities that transcend international borders" and these activities and processes occur "within the limited social and geographic spaces of a particular set of countries…" and, notably, "involves non-state actors." (p. 2) Technological advancements of communications and transportation have greatly facilitated transnational migration. Dependency Theory argues that the underdevelopment of the third world is the result of resource (including labour) exploitation through colonization, and that this exploitation is being continued in the postcolonial period through the domination of the former colonial powers in the global political economy and the implementation of policies and regulations with unequal

beneficial outcomes. World Systems Theory (Amin 1974, Wallerstein, 1984) arose from Dependency Theory, and emphasized the multinational corporate presence within the less-developed 'periphery' and the acceleration of urbanization, population displacement, and growth of poverty that ensued. (Samers, 2010, p. 26) This approach viewed international migration as another way for the core capitalist economies to maintain dominance over the periphery and the continuation of their dependence on the core. Dual Labour Market Theory emphasizes factors that pull migrants to certain locations rather than the factors driving individuals to emigrate. Piore (1979) that the presence of a dual labour market, consisting of a primary and secondary sector, in rich countries drives migration. The primary sector is has the hire-paying occupations with better working conditions and opportunities for advancement. This sector is dominated by national workers. The secondary sector is dominated by migrant workers and consists of low-paying, and unstable positions with poor working conditions and little opportunity for promotion. Because it is difficult to attract the national population to these secondary sector occupations, employers look to foreign workers to fill such roles in the economy. (Samers, 2010, p. 65) Reich, Gordon, and Edwards (1973) proposed Labour Market Segmentation Theory to address the oversimplified and inaccurate aspects of the Dual Labour Market Theory. A grouping of job positions, or segments, within the labour market have differing pay rates, working conditions, and promotional opportunities. A worker's assigned segment is based on their individual attributes, including level of educational attainment, language skills, and qualifications, but also stereotypes of race, nationality, and gender, and employer assumptions about worker suitability based on these stereotypes, which could have positive or negative outcomes for the worker.

(Samers, 2010, p. 130) Peck (1996), arguing that segmentation of the labour market can be explained by the demand for labour (based on production requirements), regulations (immigration and labour), and social factors (like the role of families), added a crucial component to this theory; The processes responsible for the segmentation of the labour market are locally constituted, emphasizing the importance of space and locality in the character of the labour market. (Samers, 2010, p. 131).

Michael Samers (2010) discusses the dismissal by geographers of the idea that globalization eradicates culture diversity and uniqueness of 'place' and informs and determines local happenings. "Rather, the global is in the local, and the local is in the global, and we should instead speak of a 'global sense of place.'" (Massey, 1994) Because of the human capacity for abstraction and attachment, globalization and transnationalism have amplified the rise of bifocal identities, multiculturalism, and other non-territorial alternatives to national identity (Kaplan, 1999, pp. 42-43). The term diaspora is commonly used to reference transnational immigrant communities originating from the same homeland who maintain cultural linkages and social networks once settled. There are, according to Baubock, four elements to diaspora which include,

"traumatic dispersal from a homeland; resistance against full assimilation and retention of a distinct group identity in countries of settlement across multiple generations; horizontal ties of solidarity and joint activity between groups of the same origin settled in different places; and homeland-oriented projects to shape that country's future by influencing it from abroad or by returning there" (Baubock, 2008, p. 2)

The impact of transnational migration on national identity varies. Baubock (2008) discusses the challenges of transnational migration on both sending and receiving countries. He mentions political threats and divided loyalties, and the outbound flow of remittances as potential challenges to the state. The variables at play include the volume of migrants to the same locality and the robustness of social networks, time-scale of

immigration, the ethnicity of the migrant, her skills or economic standing, attitudes and institutions of the receiving state, and values of the host population. (Guibernau i Berdún, 2007, p. 63) These factors are unique to the location of destination for migrants, and thus the migration experience and its impacts on identity vary by destination.

Social networks are the ties that bind all migrants and non-migrants with and between the countries of origin and destination, but are a way of mediating between larger structural forces and individual agency. Networks connect the societal and individual migration motivations. The settlement patterns of migrants are dependent upon several locality-specific factors. Community formation can be influenced by economic factors, like cost of living, and social factors, including existing migrant social networks. In environments where racism and discrimination are strong, residential concentration persists. The degree to which migrants assimilate into the dominant, national culture is dependent upon their reception in the destination country. Samers (2010) quotes Goss and Lindquist (2005), who reject the idealized concept of migrant networks, providing an alternative view of these connections as migrant institutions, described as,

"A relatively permanent feature of social life that results from the regularization of social interaction for the purposes of overseas employment and which in turn regulate interaction and structures of access to overseas employment through the operation of institutional rules and resources. It is usually a complex institution consisting of knowledgeable individuals and the agents of organizations (from migrant associations to multinational corporations…and other institutions (from kinship to the state)." (Samers, 2010, p. 105)

In whatever case, migrant networks are an important component of transnationalism, or the binding of widely dispersed migrants through multiple cultural, ethnic, social, and political ties. Transnationalism has been conceptualized as "the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link

together their societies of origin and settlement" (Samers, 2010, p. 94). The settlement patterns of migrants have an impact on identity as well, and are dependent upon several factors. Community formation can be influenced by economic factors, like cost of living, and social factors, including existing migrant social networks. In environments where racism and discrimination are strong, residential concentration persists. The degree to which migrants assimilate into the dominant, national culture is dependent upon their reception in the destination country.

In addition to the impact place has on migrant settlement patterns and feelings of belonging, Tara Polzer Ngwato (2011) argues for the acknowledge of place to as an important component in "understanding migrant–host relationships and the integration process, specifically how both 'migrant' and 'host' group identities can be constructed in relation to each other and in relation to the spaces they respectively (are seen to) occupy. (p. 570) Management of the foreign population includes different methods of exclusion and marginalization. One of the "most enduring legacies of the nineteenth century was the introduction of a new notion of citizenship, whereby political loyalty was directed towards a particular territorial entity" (Choueiri, 2005, p. 301). Conferring rights of membership, citizenship in the nation-state context, and excluding others from rights and benefits afforded to the nation is an important component of nation-building (Guibernau i Berdún, 2007, p. 25). "Planning and zoning…seemingly harmless development projects can be exposed to carefully designed nation-building strategies that serve the interest of one nation at the expense of another" (Herb, 1999, p. 23). For example, social separation has been purposefully planned in Dubai's urbanization through the placement of shopping malls in areas that are accessible only by cars, further highlighting the

socioeconomic differences between the native and immigrant communities. Research on

migrants' public spaces in Dubai, characterized as "transitory spaces," are intended to

discourage the formation of "spatial attachments to a city that is not meant to be theirs"

(Elsheshtawy, 2008, p. 10).

Social exclusion and cultural marginalization involves material exclusion, like

exclusion from salaried occupations, hire education, and social welfare services, or a

broader exclusion, from government reports or media representations, effectively

rendering migrant communities invisible. (Samers, 2010, p. 266). The self-definition and

othering of migrant workers is of importance in the Gulf, simply because local

populations are usually small in comparison to the foreign population.

Cultural marginalization, often a response to perceived threats to cultural security,

further excludes immigrant communities. Peck (1996), arguing that segmentation of the

labour market can be explained by the demand for labour (based on production

requirements), regulations (immigration and labour), and social factors (like the role of

families), added a crucial component to this theory; The processes responsible for the

segmentation of the labour market are locally constituted, emphasizing the importance of

space and locality in the character of the labour market. (Samers, 2010, p. 131). The

rentier mentality amongst a host population alters the popular perception of the Other, in

turn affecting the reception of migrants and therefore settlement choices and the degree

of acculturation.

The Global City

It has been argued that migration from poor states to richer states would not have

happened if 'global cities' did not develop, migration has aided the development of these

cities. Global cities are products of "the increased mobility of capital and labour and they are the sites of new notions of membership, solidarity, and violence" (van der Veer, 2004, p. 177).

Global cities emerged in the 1970s as centers for multinational corporations and 'producer services', creating a demand for highly skilled labour, but in turn creating a demands for low-income migrant labour , "a veritable army of low-income migrants [that] increasingly work in the restaurants where the wealthy dine, clean the homes and offices where the wealthy live and work, and care for their children and elderly parents" (Samers, 2010, p. 74) Existing literature also argues that the presence of a low-income migrant workforce within these cities perpetuates the segmentation of the labour market, and reinforcing the demand for cheap migrant labour.

Cultural engagement within the global city is largely reactive to the dislocations of migration. New collective identities are constructed in the encounters with the Other, "which is often anonymous and indifferent, but sometime violent when spatial markings of identity are violated." (van der Veer, 2004, p. 177). Exclusion of and cultural hostility towards foreign populations, arising out of perceptions of the foreign other, greatly influence the sense of belonging for migrants, and in response, migrants can adopt the dominant culture, reject it entirely, or negotiate both cultures, influencing the representations of the 'local' culture. (Samers, 2010, p. 269)

The global city can be *cosmopolitan* rather than parochial which is "…first of all an orientation, a willingness to engage with the Other. It entails an intellectual and esthetic openness toward divergent cultural experiences, a search for contrasts rather than uniformity" (van der Veer, 2004, p. 167) Exclusion inhibits feelings of belonging and

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limit migrant loyalty and attachment. With regards to loyalty, considering the

problematic nature of even defining identity, the location of 'home' is less important than

feeling at home where one resides. Accepting this to be true "does not require that people

abandon their legacies, only that they recognize the historicity of their cultural identities,

and that those identities are subject to change in the course of historical counters."

(Dirlik, 2004, p. 157). In essence, identity is not a given based on cultural background,

but is a matter of identification of self and community. Therefore, state and civic loyalty

is a matter of self-identity and a sense of belonging.

CHAPTER III

BACKGROUND

Oman: An Introduction

The Sultanate of Oman is located in Southwestern Asia in the Persian Gulf,

bordering Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. To its south and east is

the Indian Ocean. The terrain is rugged and mountainous, with an incredibly expansive

coastline. The climate of the coast

is hot and incredibly humid.

Muscat, the current capital city and

most populated governorate, is

located along the coast in the

northeast of the country on the Gulf

of Oman. It is from this area of

coastline that maritime trade

connections were generated

between Oman, the Gulf, the Indian

subcontinent and eastern Africa.

Figure 3.1: Political Map of Oman
Source: Central Intelligence Agency (2014)

According to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI),in 2016

the total Omani population is estimated to be 2,427,825, and increasing quite steadily

given the age structure of the population. However, the total population of Oman is

estimated to be just over 4 million with the inclusion of the population of migrants within

the territory, estimated at 1,986,226 (See Figure 3.2).
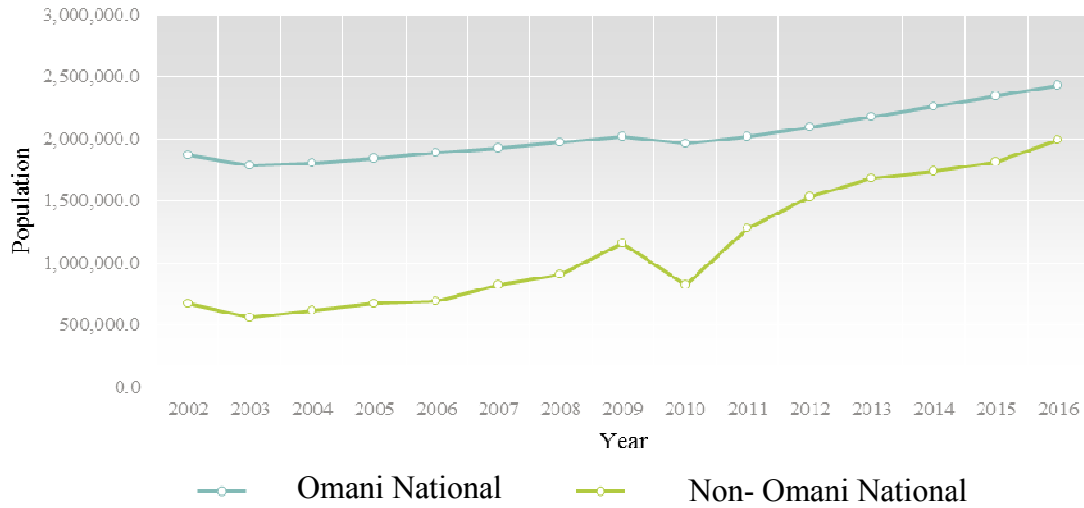
Figure 3.2: Omani and Non-Omani population estimates, 2002-2016
Source: National Center for Statistics and Information (NCSI)

There are eight provinces or governorates, or *wilayat*, of Oman (Figure 3.3). Along the coast, Muscat is its own governorate. North of the capital city along the coast is the *Batinah*, which extends to the city of Sohar. *Musandam*, a peninsula jutting into the Strait of Hormuz, is another. From Muscat to Sur, the southern portion of the greater coast extending slightly inland, is known as the *Sharqiyah*. As for the interior of the country, the *Dakhliyah* is due west of
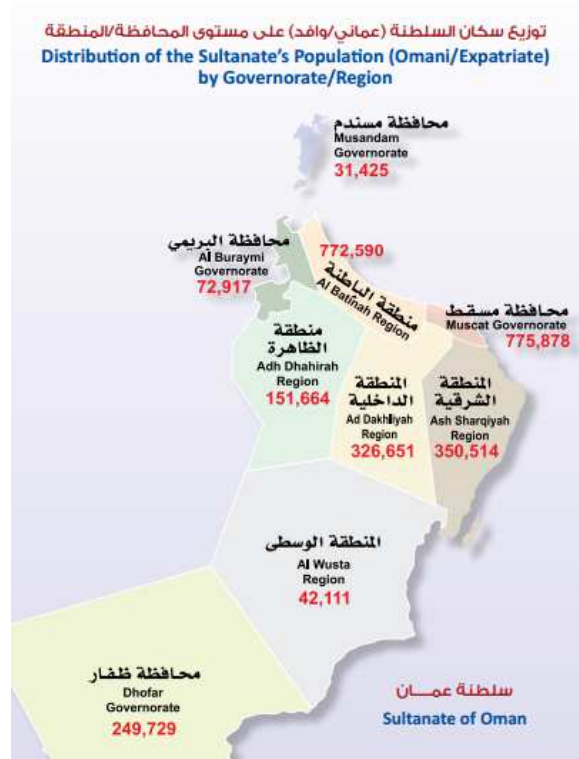
Figure 3.3: Distribution of Oman's Population by Governorate; Source: NCSI (2010)

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Muscat across the Hajar range. North of the *Dakhaliyah* is *Dharirah and Buraimi*, which is largely part of the 'Empty Quarter' of the Arabian Peninsula. South of the *Sharqiyah* region is the *Wusta* governorate

Just to the west of Muscat, the capital, running parallel to the coastline, is the *Hajar* mountain range, "which separates the two main axes of the traditional Omani nation – the coast and the interior – from one another" (Jones and Ridout, 3). The *Hajar* mountain range has influenced, and continues to influence, the distribution of the population. The climate of the interior is drier than the coast, and because of its isolation, the interior of the country relied on and livestock shepherding and subsistence agriculture, where possible, rather than trade connections. As evident in the topographical map (Figure 3.4), there is very little land in Oman that is viable for agriculture. The plateau area referred to as *Jabal Akhdar* (Green Mountain), given its elevation and cooler temperatures, allows for terraced agriculture. The southernmost part of Oman in *Dhofar*

Figure 3.4: Topographical Map of Oman
Source: ETH Studio Basel (2013)

which, like *Jabal Akdhar*, allows for cultivation of crops given the presence of mountains that limit the encroachment of dessert, and the region's seasonal monsoon rains (Jones & Ridout, 2015, pp. 3-6). However, the northern coastal plain, the *Batinah* plain, holds the majority of the territory's agriculturally viable land, and not surprisingly, the majority of the population is settled in this area. (Figure 3.5: Population Density)

In addition to influencing population settlement and distribution, this mountain range also influences cultural, social, and political life within the territory, The *Hajar* mountain range is a significant barrier to travel, and has played a significant role in the diverging nature of society between the 'traditional' interior and the cosmopolitan port cities along the coast. There has always been political and economic distinctions made between the coast and the interior of Oman, particularly important is the political distinction between the two. This is reflected in the country's original name, Muscat and Oman. The coast was a dynastic Sultanate, whereas the interior was an Imamate rule by religious leaders.

Figure 3.5: Population Density
Source: ETH Studio Basel (2013)

Given the varying degrees of contact and isolation between tribes, and between the inhabitants of the coast and interior regions, there were, and still are, multiple spatial identities amongst these initial Arab communities within the state territory, manifesting in differences in language, dress, religious interpretation and practice, diet, and the like. Given this plurality of cultural practice and values amongst the early Arab inhabitants of the territory, it becomes rather unfeasible to identify which cultural practices are authentically Omani, if any.

Initial Migration and Settlement

Making identification of authentic Omani culture and identity more difficult is the migrant origins of the early Arab inhabitants. There were two major migrations of Arabs into the territory known as Muscat and Oman. The first phase of Arab migration came from the South, Yemen, into the *Dhofar* region and subsequently north thereafter. The second migration of Arabs came from the North through *Buraimi*. These migrants came into contact with Persians of the Sassinad Empire, who occupied the area, exerting indirect control, until roughly the seventh century. (Jones & Ridout, 2015, pp. 6-9) In addition to the Sassanid Empire, the coast of Oman was occupied briefly by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century, the Ottomans in the seventeenth century, impressing upon the population cultural aspects. More influential is the sustained British presence in Oman since their control of the Indian Ocean arena during the height of imperialism.

Trade and Empire-building

In addition to these initial migrations and settlement within the present territory on Oman, the country has a history of cultural contact and exchange with people all across the Indian Ocean. Given that Oman is separated from the rest of the Arabian Peninsula by expansive desert, much of Oman's interactions have been with South Asia and the Indian subcontinent. This extensive contact was the result of commercial trade networks in the Indian Ocean and Oman's expansion of its empire. By 1856, "the formal sovereignty of the Omani empire covered the whole north-western edge of the Indian Ocean, from Mozambique to Baluchistan." (Valeri, 2009, p. 135).

Oman's relationship with East Africa "dates to at least the early Islamic era, if not before" (Peterson, 2004b, p.45). Until 1964, Zanzibar was an Omani colony, and in

addition to the initial Omani settlers of the island, Omanis from the mainland territory migrated to Zanzibar to escape economic and social devastation. The role of Zanzibari Omanis in the state's development project becomes a critical facet of this argument, to be discussed shortly.

This history of trade, travel, and occupation lead to migration and settlement of Omanis elsewhere as well as the settlement of foreign communities of various origins in Oman, including a small population of Jewish merchants. The Baluch constitute the largest community of non-Arabs in Oman, and are mostly located on the northern coast. This can be attributed to Oman's possession of Gwadar and the recruitment of Baluch soliders, who settled in Oman (Peterson, 2004b, p. 35). Travel records from the sixteenth century mention Baluch communities in Oman. An estimate of the Baluch population put the estimated the community to comprise 12% of the total Omani population in 2004 (Peterson, 2004b, pp. 35-37). Indian merchants have lived in Muscat for centuries, notably Banians, whose numbers in Muscat were higher than "in any other city of Arabia" and were successful businessmen who "nearly monopolized the pearl trade from the Gulf" (Peterson, 2004b, p. 38).

Many of these communities, the notable exception being slaves, were largely accepted. Indian merchants have resided in Oman for centuries, settling first in the fifteenth century. Members of this community "are widely held to have played a significant role in the expulsion of the Portuguese from the Omani coast in the mid-seventeenth century." (Jones & Ridout, 2015, p. 15) As a result of their efforts, Indians were afforded more privileges than usually given to non-Muslim communities, and their influence is still formidable.

The Arab Gulf States

Oman is a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The GCC has six member states; Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. These rentier states are absolute monarchies. The populations of the Gulf States are increasing quickly given the age structure of the local populations, resulting in a high natural rate of increase, and the hasty modernization and development that also results in increased immigration. Historically the economies of these states were humble, based on subsistence agriculture, herding, and fishing in addition to modest coastal trade. The discovery of substantial oil deposits in the region in the 1960's however, greatly altered the economies of the GCC, altering their economic base and increasing states' wealth. Countries of the GCC have some of the highest GDP per capita rates in the world. (Figure 3.6)
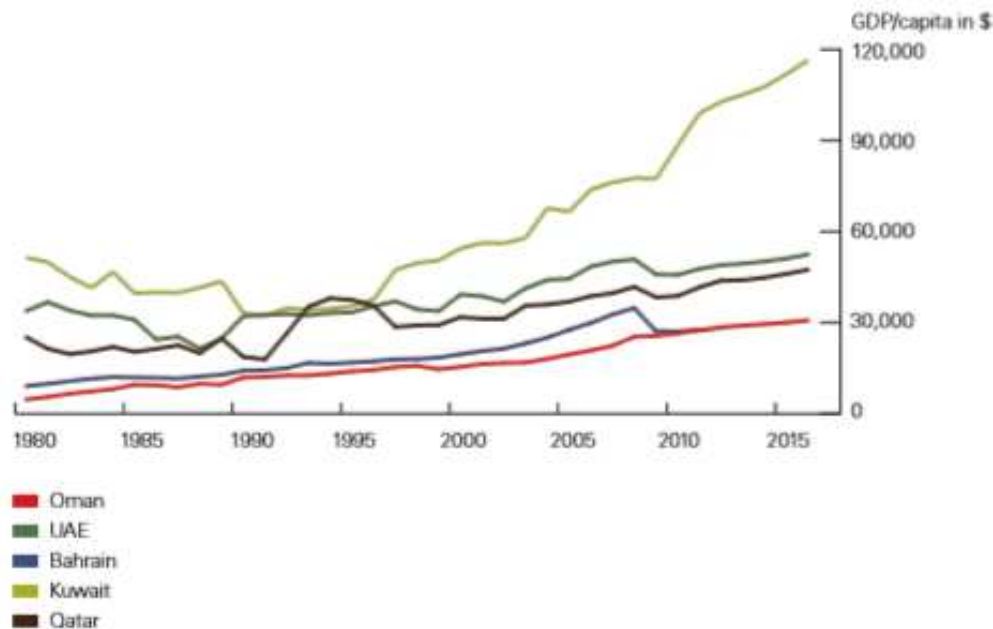
Figure 3.6: GCC states GDP per capita
Source: ETH Studio Basel (2013)

Urbanization in the GCC is incredibly high, and the region boasts some of the highest urbanization rates in the world (Figure 3.7). This rapid urbanization is largely due to the rapid modernization and development efforts made with the newly-found oil revenues. The rapid modernization of the Arab Gulf states in the 1970s, and the subsequent labour recruitment for development projects, led to both regional economic growth and increased labour migration to "oil-exporting countries suddenly flush with enormous revenues and unable to provide domestic labour for the large number of new infrastructure projects" (Solomon, 285). Prior to discussing the regional migration trends, understanding global migration trends will be a helpful orientation.
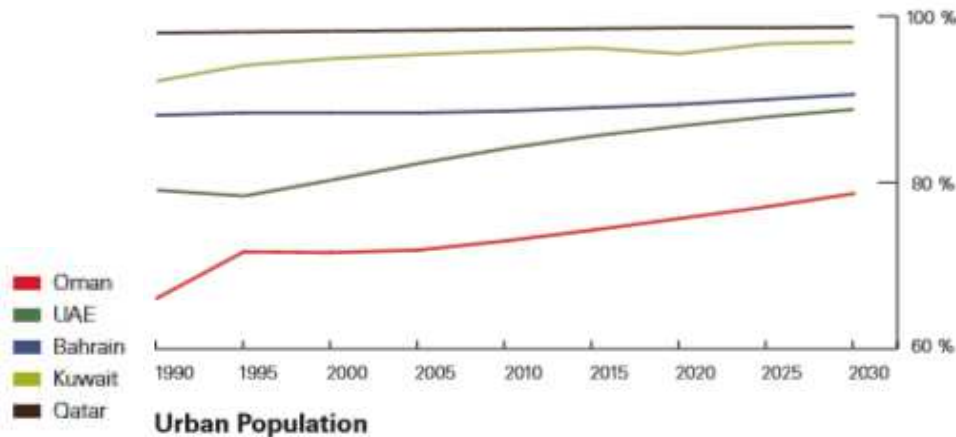
Figure 3.7: Urban Population as Percentage of Total Population
Source: ETH Studio Basel (2013)

Global Migration Trends

In 2015, the number of international migrants reached 244 million, a 41% increase in the estimate international migrant population since 2000. (UNDESA) International migration is both driven by and a component of globalization. Many scholars view globalization as a transformation of the global economy through the spread of neoliberal ideology, resulting in the homogenization of culture, the opening of

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economies to foreign investment, promotion of export-led industrialization, and the privatization of public goods. (Samers, 2010, p. 72). Indeed the overall global migration trend is, and has been, an outward migration from states characterized as 'developing' to those classified as 'developed' (Figure 3.8)
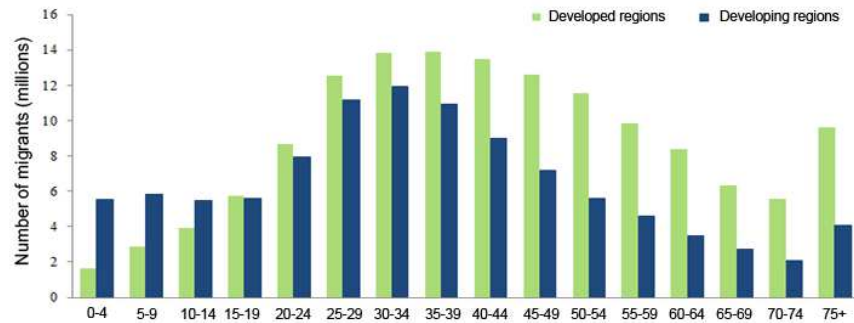
Figure 3.8: Global Migration
Source: UNDESA, Population Division (2015)

Majid Tehranian (2004) identifies *commodification* as a trend of contemporary migration, "reminiscent of the colonial period when large numbers of slaves or immigrants were brought by the colonists […] to provide cheap and reliable labor" (p. 15). This is supported when considering the countries of origin and destination. The United States, Germany, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and the United Kingdom host the largest migrant populations, while India, Mexico, Russia, China, and Bangladesh have the largest diaspora populations living abroad.

The commodification of migration is also evident when considering the labour exportation policies of some states. The Philippines, for example, has a strong labour exportation policy to overcome the "inability to 'realize sovereignty' given its position within a globalized division of labour and globally distributed political authority" (Solomon, 281). For example, large-scale migration of Filipino temporary workers

overseas began in 1974 in response to the increase in oil prices in the 1970s. Facing overpopulation, unemployment and inflation "…the Philippine government established a policy of encouraging Filipinos to work overseas for fixed periods of time." (Solomon, 2009, p. 285) Solomon (2009) argues that the Philippine labour export policy is "a specific spatial strategy of the state demonstrating an effect sovereignty that has reconstituted the Philippines as deterritorialized" (p. 284). The Philippines, to safeguard national loyalty and, probably more importantly, the flow of remittances, refers to its *Overseas Foreign Workers* as national heroes, in addition to providing dual citizenship, and welfare services. Its attempts to secure both capital and legitimacy through this labour export strategy has remade the state and transformed what constitutes national identity.

Regional Migration Trends

According the data collected by the Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (Figure 3.8), the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region (which includes Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morrocco, Palestine, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen) had an international migrant population of 34.5 million. The majority of migrants living in the MENA region, 74% reside in the member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). (UNDESA, Population Division, 2016)
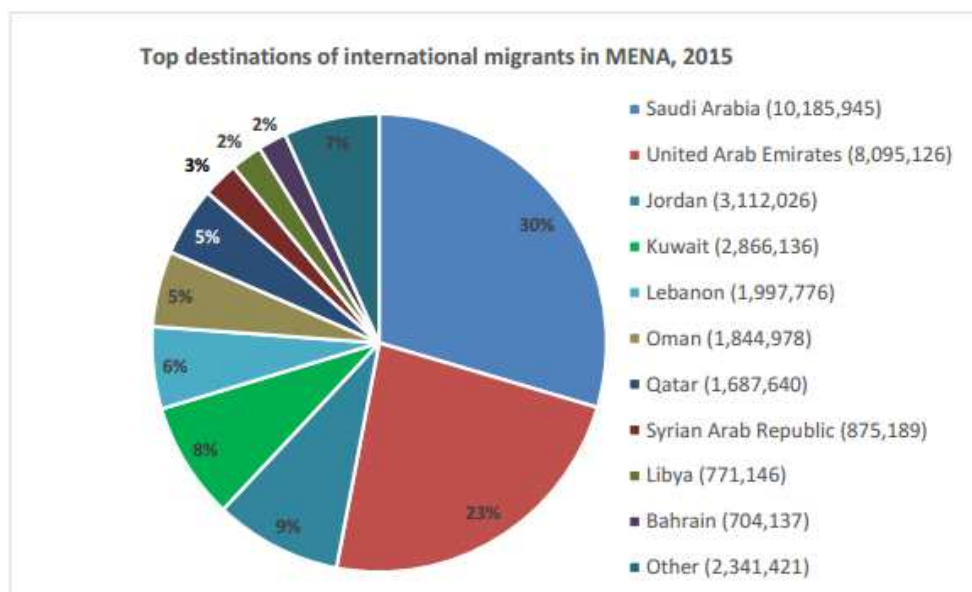
Figure 3.9: Migrant Destinations in the Middle East & North Africa, 2015
Source: UNDESA, Population Division (2016)

In terms of origins, labour migration to the Gulf comes from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh Indonesia, and the Philippines, many of which actively market their workforces abroad to address domestic unemployment and demographic issues (Figure 3.9). "By 1985 there were 3.2 million Asian workers in the Gulf states" (Castles & Miller, 2009, p. 131). The majority of migrants (about 66%) in the GCC are male, but the demographics are shifting slightly with the economic shift from construction toward services. Females are typically preferred for service sector occupations, specifically nursing and housekeeping.

Religious compatibility is an important criterion for migrant workers in the Gulf. Paths of migration are driven by cultural factors, influencing migrant demographics and cultural dynamics. Despite the feminization of labour migration, the gulf remains a prime destination for young male migrants. Most states in the Gulf region have policies and regulations in place to control immigration and reduce dependency, in addition to strict, ethnic ideas of citizenship. (Castles & Miller, 2009)

Top countries of origin of international migrants in MENA, 2015

- India (8,215,575)
- Occupied Palestinian Territories (3,473,532)
- Syrian Arab Republic (2,846,272)
- Bangladesh (2,825,427)
- Pakistan (2,799,369)
- Egypt (2,685,352)
- Indonesia (1,822,107)
- Philippines (1,518,532)
- Yemen (938,836)
- Sri Lanka (618,185)
- Other (6,738,333)
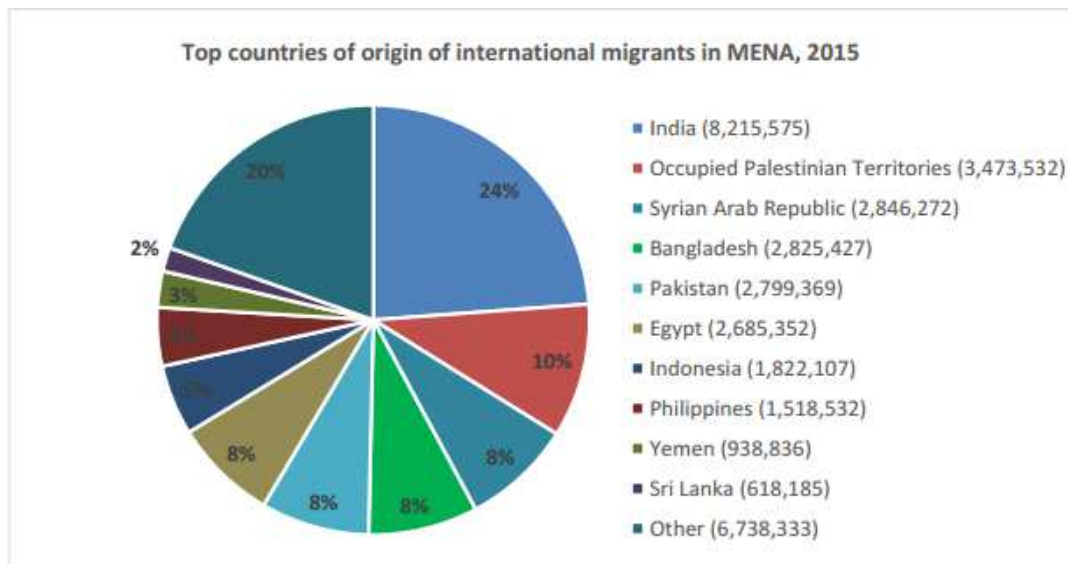
Figure 3.10: Migrant Origins in the Middle East & North Africa, 2015
Source: UNDESA, Population Division (2016)

In the nineteenth century, motivated by the desire to "monopolize political authority and mobilize resources," European colonial powers impressed upon the Arab world the European territorial state as the key political unit (Murden, 2005, p. 373). The countries of the Gulf are considered Rentier states, providing for their citizens through the distribution of natural resource revenues "…in the form of food subsidies, employment opportunities, health care, and all the basic necessities of living" (Levins, 2013, p. 389). Because governments, rather than private institutions, own and control the oil industry, its revenue and the distribution of the wealth, they are unmatched in their economic power, "and with unrivaled economic power comes vast political power" (Levins, 2013, p. 390).

One of the "most enduring legacies of the nineteenth century was the introduction of a new notion of citizenship, whereby political loyalty was directed towards a particular territorial entity" (Choueiri, 2005, p. 301). In the Gulf, citizenship is defined by shared

descent, or kinship, either real or imagined. It is typically referred to as a folk or ethnic model of citizenship, and is an exclusionary measure of national identity formation. Migrant workers and their children are not entitled to citizenship regardless of their length of stay in Gulf States (Shah, 2008, p. 5). However, feelings of belonging, even among those with citizenship, can be influenced by perceptions of purity of Arab ethnicity. "The issue of national belonging is plainly being distorted by theses other perceptions of belonging, while legal measures effectively enforcing inequality suggest that the state itself is not based on a conception of national inclusion" (Patrick, 2012, p. 56).

The state essentially buys the loyalty of its citizens, which could be severely challenged if the flow of oil revenue were to stop, and popular economic hardship be felt, but this is coupled with the concept of rentier mentality. Unique in terms of economic behaviour, income is not associated with work, but is associated with situation, leading to an expectation of sustained revenue, and a satisfaction with their lives and little drive for invention (Levins, 2013, p. 393-395).

The rapid development experienced in the Gulf, undertaken by large foreign workforces, created *global cities* in the region. These cities are products of "the increased mobility of capital and labour and they are the sites of new notions of membership, solidarity, and violence" (van der Veer, 2004, p. 177). These rentier global cities have two basic divisions of labour, and this the segmented labour market drives migration to the 'global cities' of the Gulf. The national population has higher-paying occupations with better working conditions and opportunities for advancement. Low-paying, and unstable positions with poor working conditions and little opportunity for promotion are

reserved for the foreign workforce. The privileges of the national population, oil revenue, is not afforded to migrants, who must earn their incomes by filling the occupations deemed demeaning by the national population. The globalization-induced diversity and segmented labour market alter the local perception of the Other, in turn affecting the reception of migrants and therefore their level of acculturation, which has implications for the maintenance of national identity.

Loyalty to the state is, as previously discussed, also dependent upon the legitimization of the national identity it constructs. The state fosters a unitary national identity through social, cultural, and political means. The promotion of a shared heritage is frequently institutionalized, driven by the high volume of migration to the Gulf State, educating nationals and foreign residents alike of the local history, selectively emphasizing a tribal identity. In the Gulf, as is the case elsewhere, the most significant unifying cultural aspect is religion. "The GCC states, collectively and individually, all emphasize Islamic fealty in policy statements and public projects, and all have emphasized Islam and part of the recent focus on national identity" (Patrick, 2012, p. 53). The self-definition and *othering* of migrant workers is of importance in the Gulf, simply because local populations are usually small in comparison to the foreign population.

The Gulf States also employ policies that aim to restrict the volume of foreign workers by increasing indirect taxes to make the cost of living higher, discouraging further migration and lengthy residency. (Shah, 2008, p. 6) The deportation of illegal migrants and restrictive visa issuance and visa trading policies are also strategies employed to control and limit migration. (Shah, 2008, pp. 7-9)

In addition to policies that are aimed to decrease the supply of foreign labour, there are policies employed to increase the demand for local labour. In some instances, the government subsidizes the salaries of nationals employed in the private sector (Shah, 9). Technical and vocational training is also provided, and the cost of hiring foreign employees is increased in order to decrease the attractiveness of hiring non-nationals. (Shah, 2008, p. 9). Several Gulf States have implemented nationalization policies to gradually decrease reliance on foreign workers and "secure the gradual replacement of expatriates by" through the policy limiting the total number of foreign workers through the allocation of work permits, the imposition fees on employers when foreign workers are hired, and awarding government contracts to private companies. (Valeri, 2009, p. 201) The rates of workforce nationalization can be seen in Figure 3.10, however Oman only has figures for the private sector.

Oman: 85%   Qatar: 94%   Bahrain: 74%   U.A.E.: 96%   Saudi Arabia: 53%
Expatriates as %of total workforce (Nr. for Oman is expatriates in the private sector only)
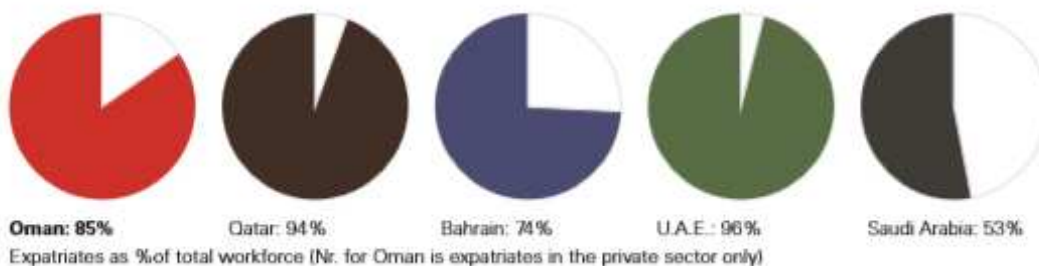
Figure 3.11: Expatriates as Percentage of Total Workforce (Oman: % of private sector)
Source: ETH Studio Basel (2013)

Spatial separation is another avenue pursued in an attempt to mitigate the impact of migration on the constructed national identity. "Planning and zoning…seemingly harmless development projects can be exposed to carefully designed nation-building strategies that serve the interest of one nation at the expense of another" (Herb, 1999, p. 23). For example, social separation has been purposefully planned in Dubai's urbanization through the placement of shopping malls in areas that are accessible only by

cars, further highlighting the socioeconomic differences between the native and immigrant communities. Research on migrants' public spaces in Dubai, characterized as "transitory spaces," are intended to discourage the formation of "spatial attachments to a city that is not meant to be theirs." (Elsheshtawy, 2008, p. 10) Having discussed the regional migration context, it is important to discuss the economic development of Oman beginning in 1970 in order to understand the migration circumstances within the state, and, specifically, the city of Muscat.

The Omani Renaissance

Oman was at the center of maritime trade in the Indian Ocean, but geopolitical circumstances at the height of imperialism changed this dynamic. To be brief, between 1856 and 1932 Oman was in decline and marginalized in the global economy. The British consolidated power in the Indian Ocean, exerting their influence on the slave trade and Zanzibar itself, in addition to dominating maritime trade in general. "The marginalization of Oman itself involved the decline of local and regional trade in the Gulf, as a result of the development of steamer traffic in the Indian Ocean and the gradual replacement of a regional economy dominated by the Indian manufactures and trade networks by a system dominated by the British." (Jones & Ridout, 2015, p. 64)

Because of the changing nature of trade in the Indian Ocean and the state's declining economic dominance, Oman became increasingly reliant on the British. Between 1932 and 1959 the concept of the territorial state and the concept of nationalism were also taking hold in Oman. Anti-colonial sentiment was growing worldwide during the Second World War and Oman was no exception. Said bin Taimur tried to unify the state, while limiting dependence on the British, but also relying on their political and military support for territorial unification. Essentially the British exercised indirect control, that became

increasingly more direct when coupled with the benign neglect and general absence of the Sultan.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, a separatist rebellion in the Dhofar region is witnessed, during the height of the Cold War. This nationalist movement, influenced in part by South Yemen, was influenced by Marxian ideology. The communist rebellion was of concern to the British, and they, wanting to contain the threat of communist expansion, supported Sultan Said's son, Sultan Qaboos bin Said, with the expectation that he would be in opposition to the movement.

The isolation of Oman from the rest of the world left the "sultanate devoid of modern basic infrastructure," including roads, ports, and electricity (Kechichian, 2008, p. 116). In addition to distressing foreign powers, Sultan Said's "benign neglect" galvanized domestic opposition, including his own son, Qaboos bin Said. (Allen & Rigsbee, 2000, pp. 28-29). On the 23rd of July 1970, in a coup coordinated by British, Sultan Sa'id was deposed and "the British government formally recognized Qaboos on the 29th of July," marking the beginning of the Renaissance (Allen & Rigsbee, 2000, pp. 29). It is referred to as a renaissance specifically to imply the lack of development prior to ascension, and to emphasize the positive aspects of his modernization and development efforts.

Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said stated that he sought to build "a new society… authentic ... with its own methods of thought" that didn't mimic any system of government (Kechichian, 2008, p. 127) Immediately following the coup, Sultan Qaboos bin Said established a fledgling government, as only the rudimentary basics existed, and the former Sultan's British advisors constituted the 'interim advisory council' without formal procedures or mandate. The new sultan, needing to maintain territorial state unity,

changed the country's name from Muscat and Oman to the Sultanate Oman, and adopted

a new flag. Qaboos also quelled the Communist separatist movement in the *Dhofar*

region from 1970-1975, spill-over from South Yemen, (Kechichian, 2008, pp. 121-123).

In public addresses, Qaboos highlights the atheistic element of communist ideology,

garnering popular support and legitimizing the suppression of the nationalist movement.

Qaboos eventually established a new government with various ministries and

institutions in January of 1972, appointing family members to key positions and phasing

out British appointees in the process. Qaboos appointed himself as the minister of

defense, foreign affairs, and finance, in addition to Prime Minister (Allen & Rigsbee,

2000, p. 36). Sultan Qaboos, in addition to the formal government structure, had a group

of expatriate advisors, one Brit, an American, two Libyan, and one Saudi advisor. This

group of foreign personal advisors came to be referred to as the "Muscat Mafia," and

were involved in the economic development planning (Allen & Rigsbee, 2000, p. 36).

The traditional business elites disliked the Muscat Mafia because of the potential for their

exclusion from the benefits of development.

In the summer of 1975, the Law for the Organization of State Administration was

published, providing broad guidelines for the role of the council of ministers, special

councils, the sultan himself, and other various government institutions. (Allen & Rigsbee,

2000, p. 39). The council of ministers main function was to be the executive body,

drafting legislation and coordinating policies. Most of the special councils dealt with

development and planning in various areas, including water, agriculture, environmental

protection, and economic planning. Other government offices created include General

Telecommunications Organization and Oman National Transport (Allen & Rigsbee, 2000, pp. 39-41).

Another approach to territorial control employed was to work within the tribal framework of authority, incorporating Arab custom and tradition to both legitimize the state and ensure political stability. A distinguishing feature of the rentier state is the increase in power of the ruling family and the decline in power of traditional elites and tribal leaders, given that those with the economic power are those with unmatched political power. Despite the prominent role of the royal family in government affairs, "Oman followed a very different pattern whereby the traditional elites actually saw an increase in their political power following the coup of 1970 as state involvement in both economic and social programs increased and the bureaucracy grew" (Allen & Rigsbee, 2000, p. 34). Business elites demanded and gained entry into government positions, and therefore more control over the distribution of wealth. The leaders of various tribes also benefitted from increased political authority, given that the state did not have the military or economic means to impose will upon various tribal elites and had to rely on alliances for stability and control.

With the understanding that popular participation in government was compatible with Islam, the ruler of Oman conveyed his commitment to "establish just, democratic rule. . . within the framework of [the] Omani Arab reality, the customs and traditions of [the] community, and the teachings of Islam, which always light our path" (Kechichian, 2008, p. 131). To this end, Qaboos initiated a yearly "meet the people" tour in 1975 with the goal of consulting directly with Omani citizens, who could provide feedback and voice concerns directly to the Sultan. Allen & Rigsbee (2000) state that this event,

initially an unassuming trip where the Sultan and his companions slept in tents, evolved

into a major formal event by the 1990s, with large crowds in people gathering to

demonstrate their support for the Sultan.

This method of consultation was not fruitful, and in 1981, the *Majlis Al-Istishari*

Li Al-Dawla, or State Consultative Council (SCC), was created by royal decree for the

purpose of fulfilling the state's "promise and in pursuance of our policy which aims to

allowing a larger measure of participation for the citizens in the efforts which are being

made by the government to implement its economic and social plans" (Allen & Rigsbee,

2000, p. 48). The SCC met three times a year, and had 43 members, eleven of whom

were government representatives, with nineteen members from the private sector and

fourteen representatives from various regions. (Allen & Rigsbee, pp. 48-50). The

religious composition of the Council was representative of the Omani population as a

whole, with over half being Ibdahi, following by 29% being Sunni, and 16% of members

were Shia (Allen & Rigsbee, 2000, p. 50). However, there was popular criticism of the

SCC, given that the majority of its members were western education, urban, and in their

forties or older. Given that the majority of Omanis were rural, uneducated, and young, the

SCC was not representative of the population.

A royal decree issued in 1990 created the *Majlis Al-Shura* to replace the State

Consultative Council in 1991. Each of Oman's governorates would nominate three

individuals from which one delegate would be chosen. In 1994, the *Majlis Al-Shura* was

opened to women living in Muscat, and in 1997, this membership was expanded further,

allowing women from across the country to nominate and stand as candidates (Allen &

Rigsbee, 2000, pp. 50-56; Peterson, 2004a, p. 133). The Basic Law, which is perhaps

akin to a constitution, was issued in 1996 also by royal decree and will be discussed more thoroughly in the following chapter.

Oil exports provided almost one-hundred percent of the state's revenues in 1970, which is characteristic of a model rentier state, and thus facilitated the development efforts of the state. Qaboos continuously stated that the sultanate's most important resource and sole source of significant revenue "belong[ed] to its people." The state gradually purchased Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) assets from private companies, American and British to gain firm control over this wealth. By 1975, the government had acquired 60 percent and by 1999 owned 100 percent of the assets of PDO. (Kechichian, 2008, p. 120) Though the state owned the oil industry, the private sector in Oman played a significant role in the country's economic development. Qaboos "certainly understood the broader implications of opposition to the regime and did not propose to ignore economic and social programs," coopting the strong historical tradition of private sector involvement and entrepreneurship to both emphasize the cosmopolitan merchant aspect of the national narrative and foster private sector growth. (Allen & Rigsbee, p. 99) Oman did not follow the same method of decreasing government expenditure as other Gulf States by suspending development projects and payments. Instead, the state invited the private sector to undertake development, and courted foreign investors (Kechichian, 2006, p. 60).

This private involvement in state development was also a way of quelling opposition. The Sultan did not have the means to challenge tribal leaders or impose will, and so dependence of alliances was essential, maintaining, at least initially, their autonomy. (Allen & Rigsbee, 2000, pp. 99-100). A partnership emerged "whereby this

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traditional elite offered their time and expertise to the new government in exchange for a *laissez faire* attitude toward private economic activity" (Allen & Rigsbee, 2000, p. 113). This bolstered rather than marginalized the tribal commercial establishment while emphasizing the merchant identity narrative, to be discussed more thoroughly in the following chapter (Allen & Rigsbee, 2000, p. 113).

At the time that Qaboos assumed power, Oman had "a mere 10 dispensaries and nine health centers… serving a population of around 750,000, spread over a geographical area as large as Britain" (Kechichian, 2008, p. 115). Twelve new hospitals and twenty-five dispensaries were established by 1972. But in 1970, Oman had only twelve physicians, so the state had to look overseas to fill the serious shortcoming, while simultaneously establishing a nursing school, to meet growing local needs (Kechichian, 2008, p. 115).

Development and Labour Shortage

Given its small and largely uneducated population, a result of the neglect of preceding rulers, the Sultanate of Oman faced a human resources dilemma. Following the period of British maritime dominance and Oman's subsequent decline, Omanis had emigrated to escape economic and political hardship. They lived in other states of the Gulf, Egypt, Europe, and, of course, eastern Africa. By the end of the 1960, "more than 50,000 Omanis had migrated to other Gulf emirates, where they were looking for better living conditions" (Valeri, 2009, p. 138).

Following his ascension to power Sultan Qaboos first called out to Omanis living abroad, many of whom had invaluable skills and education, urging them to return 'home' and roll up their sleeves for the betterment of the nation. Qaboos also reached out to those

who had been exiled for their opposition to his father, the former Sultan. Essentially, the new "…opened the doors for its sons to return and build a country, shut off from the outside world by instability, tribal warfare, and poverty." (Al-Rasheed, 2013, p. 102) Zanzibari Omanis, those who settled for decades in Zanzibar and were substantially more educated, played an important entrepreneurial and bureaucratic role in the development and modernization of the state. In fact, because their early migration and mixed Omani-African heritage "placed them outside the straightforward tribal categories", the community was seen as supporters of the new government. (Al-Rasheed, 2013, p. 102) The Omani community living abroad was wholly accepted upon return as citizens without distinction made, and such acceptance resulted in allegiance to the state, who capitalized on the educational background and skillsets of the immigrants, many of whom had previously never been to Oman.

Though the new bureaucracy of the sultanate was initially dependent on expatriate knowledge, the government began to train Omanis for lower-level civil servant positions in 1977. Recruitment, and training of an Omani civil service began in the mid-1980s, with specialized positions requiring technical or secondary-school completion. (Allen & Rigsbee, 2000, p. 42) Because of the lack of formal education and, therefore, skilled labour amongst the Omani population, "most non-Omanis were employed in teaching under the ministry of education; as doctors and nurses in the ministry of health; or in various public works functions." (Allen & Rigsbee, 2000, p. 42)

In need of qualified Omanis for both technical and unskilled positions, in addition to urging the return of educated and trained expatriates, the state began a vocational training program in 1972. In 1974, he stressed the expectation that all citizens commit

themselves to the development of the state, as the aim was "'to forget the past', and to forge a new nation with all available talent." (Kechichian, 2008, p. 127) In 1970, Oman had only three schools, by 1975, the rapid development efforts resulted in the construction of 176 schools with 50,000 enrolled students, "with another 50 schools, 1,000 teachers and 10,000 new students coming on board every year that passed. Within a decade, by 1980, over 100,000 Omani children were receiving basic education." (Kechichian, 2008, p. 114)

Despite the development of vocational and educational institutions, there remained an immediate need for both skilled and unskilled labour forces to undertake the state's development. By 1975, it was estimated that 19.4% of Oman's population was foreign, 132,250 workers in total. (Winckler, 2000, p. 26) Socioeconomic development, however, increased after the Dhofar rebellion was suppressed in the mid-1970s, and "according to an official Omani estimate, 154,000 foreigners were working in the contrary in 1980, representing 50.3 per cent of the total labour force." (Winckler, 2000, p. 27)

Local Migration Trends

According to the Omani National Centre for Statistics and Information, the top countries of migrant origins are India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Indonesia, Egypt, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Sudan, Jordan, and the United Kingdom. The majority of the foreign workforce is male, most of whom are between the ages of 20 and 60, or working-age years (Figure 3.12). This greatly changes the demographics of the state. In Figure 3.12 the gender and age ratio of both the migrant and Omani population are displayed. The largest age/gender group for expatriates is males between the ages of 25-30.

Oman's Expatriate Workforce: Age and Gender, 2014
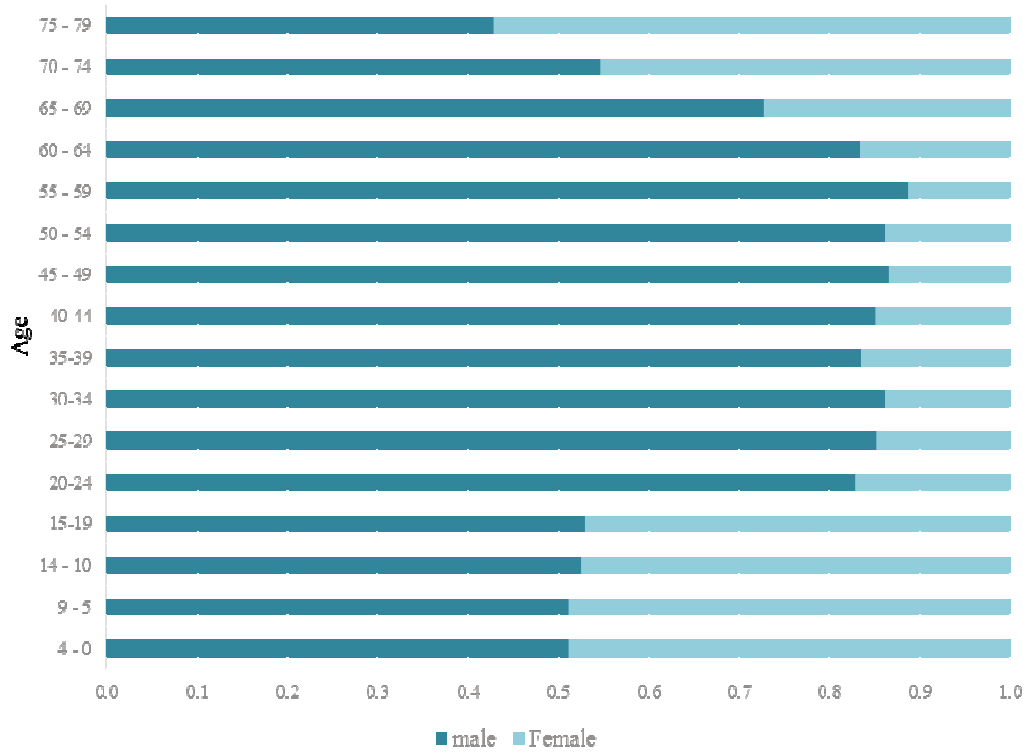
Figure 3.12: Expatriate population by gender and age, 2014
Source: National Centre for Statistics and Information
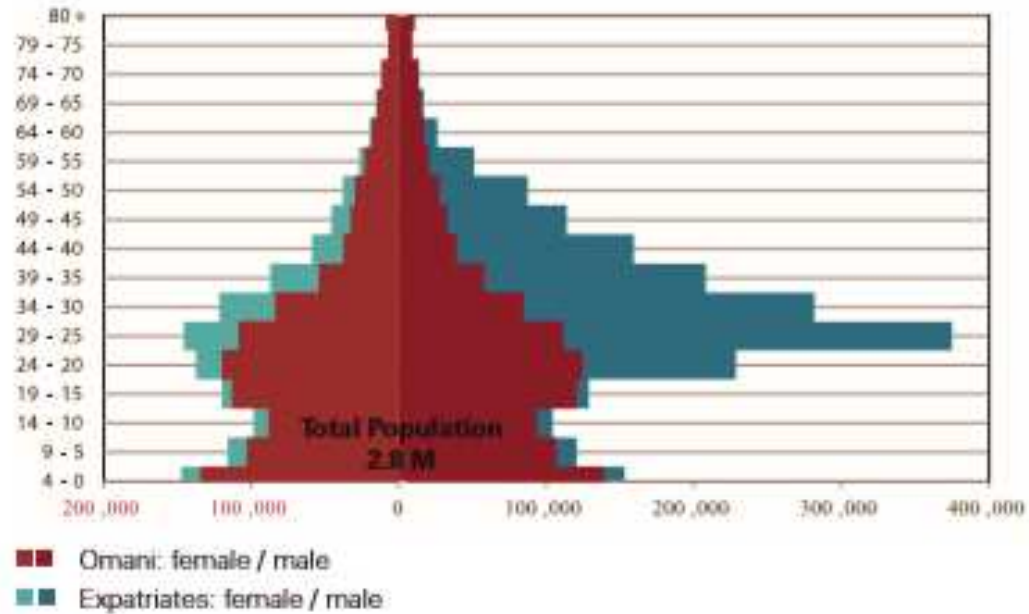
Figure 3.13: Omani and Expatriate populations by gender and age.
Source: ETH Studio Basel, 2013

Muscat

As previously stated, the Al Batinah plain is the main location of historical and contemporary settlement, and well as political, social and economic activity. It is also, because of these factors, the main destination of foreign workers in Oman. The Muscat governorate comprises roughly 1.3% of Oman's territory, but comprise about a quarter of the total population, nationals and expatriates. The metropolitan area of Muscat Governorate is divided into six wilayats, or districts, that are then subdivided. The six main districts of Muscat are Seeb, Bowshar, Amarat, Matrah, Muscat (aka Old Muscat), and Qurayyat. The population's distribution varies significantly within Muscat governorate, with the most populated being Bowshar, and the least populated is Qurayyat (Figure 3.14).

Likewise, the demographics of these populations also vary by wilaya, and more or less correlate with the size of the total population. Matrah and Bowsher have the greatest number of expatriate residents (Figure 3.15), followed by Muscat and Seeb, and then Amarat. Qurayyat has the smallest population of foreign residents.
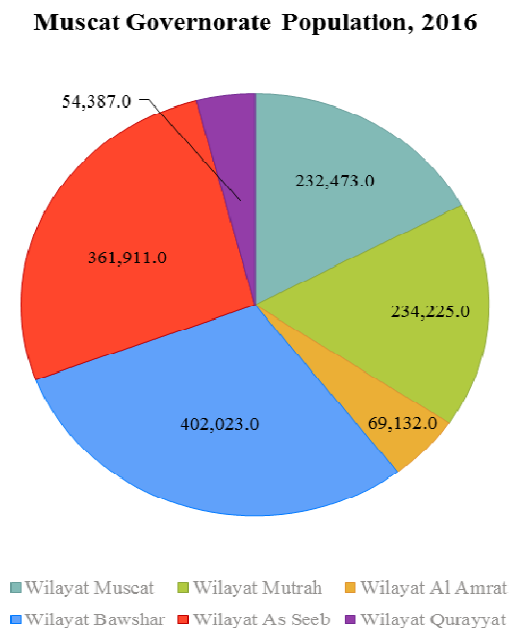
Figure 3.14: Population of Muscat Governorate, 2016
Source: National Centre for Statistics and
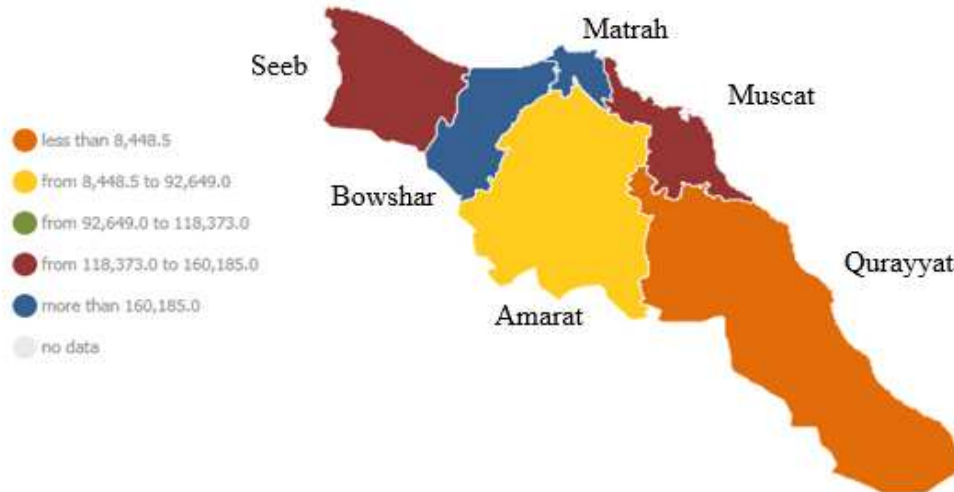
Figure 3.15: Expatriate Population of Muscat Governorate by Wilaya, 2016
Source: National Centre for Statistics and Information

Neighbourhoods of Muscat

Wilaya Mattrah includes the neighbourhoods of Mattrah, Qurum, Darsait, Ruwi, and Wadi Kabir. Wilaya Bowshar includes the neighbourhoods of Bowshar, Shatti, Shatti al-Qurm, Madinat Sultan Qaboos, Al Khuwair, Ghubra, and Ghala, and Azaiba. The neighbourhoods of importance to this study are Mattrah, Muscat, Seeb, Qurum, Ruwi, Shatti, Shatti al-Qurm, Madinat Sultan Qaboos, Al Khuwair, and Azaiba. The development of Muscat and its neighbourhoods, including zoning and place-making, will be addressed more thoroughly in chapter 5, but a limited discussion of Muscat's neighbourhoods provides an orienting context.

Mattrah and Old Muscat are the oldest neighbourhoods in Muscat. The residences in this area are older traditional villas and apartments. Most of the residents here are lower to middle class Omanis and Indian expatriates. Mattrah Souq, the National Museum, and the Sultan's palace are all located in this area. The coast has been developed for tourism through attractive landscaping along the corniche. There are many cafes and tourism-oriented shops along the main road and within the *souq*.

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Ruwi is a neighbourhood known for its largely South Asian population and high population density. Its residents are typically lower to middle class South Asian expatriates. The type of housing typical in Ruwi is older apartment buildings. Though residences comprise most of Ruwi, there are restaurants and coffee shops, and stores. Ruwi Souq is an incredibly crowded street in the neighbourhood characterized by electronic, jewelry, textile, and other consumer shops. In addition, Ruwi is the location of the main Indian School of Muscat and Pakistani School of Muscat.

The Qurum neighbourhood is a popular neighbourhood for Muscat residents of middle to high income. The housing type is mostly free-standing villas, but apartment complexes are the most recent residential developments seen. Though the neighbourhood is dominated by residential areas, there are many shops, restaurants, and entertainment venues located within, including Qurum City Centre Mall.

Shatti and Shatti Al Qurum, discussed here together because of their similarity and the researcher's unfamiliarity with where the arbitrary boundary between two is drawn, is the most prestigious and popular Muscat neighbourhood. Residents here are usually wealthy Omanis and expatriates, usually western expatriates. Free-standing villas of large size and gated community compounds are typical of the residences in this area. There are many restaurants and coffee shops, and high-end shopping centers in Shatti, and Shatti beach is one of the most popular beaches in Muscat. The government's ministry buildings are located within this neighbourhood this area of Shatti is referred to as the Ministries District. Foreign embassies and consulates are also located in this neighbourhood, as is the Royal Opera House. The Grand Hyatt and Intercontinental Hotel are also both located in Shatti.

Al Khuwair is a neighbourhood characterized by high density, but not as highly dense as Ruwi. The homes in this neighbourhood are smaller townhomes and villas, and, mostly, apartment buildings. The residents of Al Khuwair are middle class and usually expatriates of various national origins. Many of the residents are Asian expatriates. There are many shops on the first floor of mixed-use buildings along main roadways, including textile electronic shops. There are budget-friendly restaurants and cafes in this neighbourhood, including the popular shawarma stand Istanboly's.

Azaiba is almost exclusively a residential neighbourhood in close proximity to the airport. The houses in this area are free-standing villas. Azaiba beach is a popular attraction that draws in residents, who are both Omani and expatriates of middle class.

Madinat Sultan Qaboos was initially developed as a neighbourhood for expatriates. The residences here are smaller townhomes and villas as well as more recently developed, high-end apartment complexes. Residents in this neighbourhood are of middle to upper class Omanis and expatriates, particularly Western expatriates and, more specifically, American and British expats. There are a few shopping complexes in this neighbourhood, which include restaurants and cafes and grocery stores, but are rather limited in terms of other consumer goods. Muscat's Pavo Real Mexican Restaurant is located here, as well as the popular shisha café Kargeen, and the Al Fair supermarket, which caters to European tastes.

CHAPTER IV

REPRESENTATIONS OF SPACE: THE CITY

The following chapter attempts to understand representations of Muscat as

conceived by the state and city residents. Lefebvre distinguishes between knowledge and

cognition. Knowledge serves power, which includes ideology and political practice,

whereas "cognition is critical, subversive, open to reality and possibility." (Bertuzzo,

2009, p. 30) Schmid (2008) summarizes that Lefebvre's representations of space,

 "emerge at the level of discourse, of speech as such, and therefore comprise verbalized
forms such as descriptions, definitions, and especially (scientific) theories of space.
Furthermore, Lefebvre counts maps and plans, information in pictures, and signs among
representations of space. The specialized disciplines dealing with the production of these
representations are architecture and planning, but also the social sciences (and here of
special importance is geography)." (p. 37)

This chapter is concerned with representations of Muscat informed by knowledge

and ideology. It first outlines the elements included in the national identity constructed

and promoted by the state, followed by the methods employed to promote these elements

in the nation-building process. Following a discussion of the elements and methods of

nation-building, the attributes of interviewed participants will be discussed to gain insight

into their circumstances and experiences. After discussing participants' attributes, the

effectiveness of the state's nation-building will be evaluated in relation to the

participants' representations of the city as a whole.

State Representations of Space: The City

Islam plays an important role in the construction of Omani national identity, and

is injected into the rationale behind government decisions and the implementation of

many institutions for the purpose of state legitimation. Likewise, the inclusion of the

Ibadhi Islamic tradition in state institutions and the national narrative appeases the leaders in the interior, who, under the Imamate, based their political system on Ibadism. Though religion plays an important role in the creation of an Omani civic identity, religious tolerance, attributed to historical Ibadhi practice and cosmopolitanism, is also emphasized alongside piety.

Other key elements of the constructed and unifying national identity is Arabness, including Arab ethnicity, the Arabic language and traditional social structure, as well as Arab culture and values. Emphasis is placed on the historical underpinning of Bedouin culture and traditional ways of life in the new territory. Arab tradition, in terms of both culture and social organization, is emphasized in the national narrative and incorporated into the state apparatus. These components of national identity, like the emphasis of Ibadism, appeases traditional tribal leaders, who would otherwise feel threatened by the rise of state power and pose a threat to state unity. The identity project gives recognition to the cultural diversity within the territory by celebrating trivial regional differences, like dress, folklore, and dialect, while simultaneously constructing an image of Omani culture as unified and homogenous.

A reoccurring message of national identity is the reiteration of the collective nature of Omani society, where hard work, individual responsibility, and sacrifice for the betterment of the nation is emphasized. This relates to the Islamic concept of the *umma*, or the Muslim community at large. The redistribution of oil wealth to citizens reinforces this concept of religious unity as well as traditional tribal/social organization. Including rhetoric promoting hard work and sacrifice on the part of the individual emphasizes the traditional importance of collective identity for the purpose of state development. There

is also great importance placed on the family as the foundation of society. Likewise, traditional paternal leadership is yet another key element of the civic identity, and the legitimacy of the state is centered on Sultan Qaboos himself. The personalization of his rule is an important component of the effort to build a modern national identity. Valeri (2009) writes,

"With 80% of the population never having known any ruler other than Sultan Qaboos, it is easy for the Sultan to portray himself as the embodiment of modern Oman in general and of the 1970 renaissance (nahda) ideology in particular – the regime's leitmotiv in any national celebration." (pp. 130-131)

In addition to highlighting traditional Arab culture and the pluralistic manifestation of this singular culture, the national narrative incorporates elements of cosmopolitanism as part of Omani identity, especially in Muscat. "This cosmopolitanism is the consequence of hundreds of years of active Omani participation in trade and cultural exchange across and around the Indian Ocean and its littoral…" (Jones & Ridout, 2015, p. 15) Omani social and religious tolerance and openness to the outside world, the result of longstanding transnational connections and diverse coastal communities, are emphasized in the construction of identity are major components of the identity project. However, this cosmopolitan attitude isn't supposed to come at the cost of Omani identity through conformity and syncretism, and so steadfastness and awareness of the national identity is promoted in concert with the promotion of tolerant, respectful, and progressive understandings of others.

Methods of Identity Construction

Legislation and Policy

In 2014 the Sultan issued Royal Decree number 38, which is an update to the 1983 previous decree on the Omani Citizenship Law. The Law of the Organization of

Omani Nationality outlines who is legally considered an Omani resident, and the circumstances under which a foreign can obtain Omani citizenship. Article (11) defines Omani citizens as those born in or outside of Omani territory to Omani fathers, to Omani mothers whose father is unknown or has lost his Omani nationality, those born within the territory to unknown parents, and those born in Oman, and who became resident there, of fathers themselves born in Oman but without having nationality. (Al-Rasheed, 2013, p. 100) With regards to Omani citizens, it states that he or she "may not renounce their nationality in favour of another until they have fulfilled their obligations and commitments towards the Sultanate" and article (12) lists the conditions that need to be met in order to renounce Omani citizenship. (GLMM, 2016)

The Basic Law coopts Arab tradition, and religion, further emphasizing those facets of national identity. Article (1) of the Basic Law classifies that the Sultanate is "an Arabic, Islamic, Independent State with full sovereignty and Muscat is its Capital." Article (2) identifies Islam as the state religion and Islamic Sharia as the basis of legislation. Article (3) states that Arabic is the official language of the Sultanate. Article (4) states that the law determines the national anthem, flag, emblem and insignia. Article (5) classifies the system of governance as "Sultani, hereditary in the male descendants of Sayyid Turki bin Said bin Sultan, provided that whomever is to be chosen from amongst them as a successor shall be a Muslim, mature, rational, and the legitimate son of Omani Muslim parents." (GLMM, 2014a)

The second chapter of the Basic Law, which outlines the principles guiding state policy, declares it a political principle to "lay suitable foundations for consolidating the pillars of genuine Shura emanating from the heritage of the Nation, its values and Islamic

Sharia, taking pride in its history and adopting the useful contemporary means and instruments." In addition to this political principle guiding the policies of the state, "establishing a sound administrative system that guarantees justice, tranquility and equality for the Citizens and ensures respect for the public order and the preservation of the supreme interests of the State." (GLMM, 2014a)

Article (12) outlines social principles guiding state policy, and declares justice, equality, and equal opportunities between Omanis as pillars of Omani society. Article (12) also states that "collaboration and compassion are intimate bonds amongst the Citizens. The reinforcement of the national unity is a duty. The State shall prevent anything that might lead to division, discord or disruption of the national unity." In addition, the article declares the family as the basis of society and "the law regulates the means for protecting it, preserving its legitimate entity, strengthening its ties and values, safeguarding its members and providing suitable conditions to develop their potential and capabilities." (GLMM, 2014a)

Article (13) relates to the guiding cultural principles, and focuses largely on education stating that the aim of education is to "raise and develop the general cultural standard, promote scientific thought, kindle the spirit of research, respond to the requirements of economic and social plans, and build a generation that is physically and morally strong, which takes pride in its Nation, Country, and heritage and preserves its achievements." This article also states that the state "shall foster and preserve the national heritage, encourage the sciences, arts, literature, scientific research and assist in their dissemination." (GLMM, 2014a)

The third chapter of the Basic Law discusses the rights and duties of the public. Article (15) states that nationality is regulated by law and that "it is not permissible to denaturalize or revoke it" except where the law permits. The following chapter declares it impermissible to deport or exile citizens, or prevent their return to the state. Article (17) states that all citizens are equal and share the same public rights and responsibilities. The article prohibits discrimination "on the ground of gender, origin, colour, language, religion, sect, domicile, or social status." Article (28) of chapter three pertains to the protection of religious freedoms provided that "it does not violate the public order or contradict morals." (GLMM, 2014a)

Article (38) declares the preservation of national unity and the safeguarding of state secrets as "a duty incumbent upon every citizen." Chapter 4 of the Basic Law discusses the Head of State. Article (41) summarizes by saying "His Majesty the Sultan is the Head of State and the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, his person is inviolable, respect of him is a duty, and his command is obeyed. He is the symbol of national unity and the guardian of the preservation and the protection thereof." (GLMM, 2014a)

National Narrative and Discourse

The state's official narrative and discourse is used to foster a collective national identity and legitimate the rule of the Sultan. One of the ways in which this is achieved is through the promotion of specific values and elements deemed part of the Omani identity. To start, the national anthem of the state mostly emphasizes the legitimacy of and obedience to Sultan Qaboos specifically. This reinforces his sovereignty and appropriates the traditional patrimonial nature of leadership within the modern state. It includes other

elements of the constructed national identity as well, including Arab ethnicity, peaceful

conduct, loyalty, unity, and multiple reiterations of the religious character of the nation.

<u>Omani National Anthem</u>
O Lord, protect for us our Majesty the Sultan

And the people in our land,

With honour and peace.

May he live long, strong and supported,

Glorified be his leadership.

For him we shall lay down our lives.

May he live long, strong and supported,

Glorified be his leadership.

For him we shall lay down our lives.

O Oman, since the time of the Prophet

We are a dedicated people amongst the noblest Arabs.

Be happy! Qaboos has come

With the blessing of Heaven.

Be cheerful and commend him to the protection of our prayers.

(Online Education & Expert Training, n.d)

The Ministry of Heritage and Culture, formerly known as the Ministry of National

Heritage, was created through Royal Decree No. 12/76. Duties of the ministry include

finding, restoring, and maintaining archaeological and historical sites, establishing

museums, publishing culture and heritage related literature, organizing festivals and

cultural exhibitions, and applying protection laws. In addition, the Ministry of Heritage

and Culture is created for economic motivations, especially tourism-related development.

The website associated with this ministry also lists the following duties,

- "Preserving elements of Oman's heritage to protect them from loss or damage
  since they are considered as a cultural inheritance that can be used to serve the
  national economy in general and the tourism sector in particular."

- "Revitalising traditional arts and improving the arts of drama, music, cinema and fine arts in accordance with Omani traditions and in a way that enhances the cultural awareness of Omanis."

- "Censoring artwork and applying laws related to respecting public morals and beliefs in society, which is carried out in coordination with other relevant parties." (Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Heritage and Culture, n.d)

Museums, texts, and official media outlets like television outlets underscore the society's diversity through the emphasis of its maritime tradition, and regional differences, officially appropriating pluralism for political stability. Material symbols like coffee pots, frankincense burners, traditional *khanjar* daggers, oryx and turtles, scimitar swords, and other such 'authentic' environmental and cultural symbols of the nation are logoized and found on the national flag, currency, letterheads, websites, and infrastructure. Another method is the rewriting of history in the collective memory of the population through speeches, education, and official publications. "The Omani state, under the Sultan's and the Ministry of National Heritage's aegis, holds the monopoly of historical discourse" and "the Omani national identity is basically built of the negation of the country's pre-1970 history" in order to conceal the political climate and territorial divide that existed when Qaboos rose to power. (Valeri, 2009, pp. 132-133)

Preservation of Omani heritage has been a focus of the state development endeavour. In a speech given during UNESCO's 60th anniversary conference in 2005, Sultan Qaboos stated, "We attach our cultural heritage in all its forms and contents of material of particular importance and we mean a distinct attention because of its importance and significant role in the advancement of vibrant intellectual and artistic creativity and innovation." Given "the importance of craft as a symbol of Omani cultural

identity," Royal Decree No. 24/2003 established the Public Authority for Craft Industries (PACI) as a department within the Ministry of Heritage and Culture. (khanjar.om) The PACI regulates the craft industry to ensure continuity and an adherence to traditional design to prevent alteration of national symbols. For example, the design of *khanjars*, traditional Omani daggers, are specified, in terms of dimensions, material, and weight. (Oman Observer)

In all of his State of the Sultanate address, Qaboos referenced Quranic verses, highlighting the Omani understanding of Islam as the foundation of society, and acknowledging national pride in their religion and its role in the state's development. And though he stressed the importance of Islam in Omani society, Qaboos warned that, "Extremism, under whatever guise, fanaticism of whatever kind, factionalism of whatever persuasion would be hateful poisonous plants in the soil of [the] country that will not be allowed to flourish" He saw that Islam could adapt to modernity, and attributed fanaticism to " a lack of knowledge among Muslim youth about the correct facts of their religion." (Kechichian, 2008, p. 15)

Another reoccurring message of national identity was the reiteration that Omani society is one of hard work, individual responsibility, and sacrifice for the betterment of the nation. In promoting perseverance, diligence, and effort, Qaboos utilized imagery of a common seafaring heritage, telling young Omanis that their challenge was "to withstand globalization's storms was no different from the risks faced by their forefathers when they took to the high seas." The message that the population should be proud of their heritage, and actively involved in the society's renaissance strengthens the viewpoint that Omani society is cosmopolitan and more than capable to adapt to and thrive in a modernized

world, because of its history and communal values, with personal sacrifice for the state.

Sultan Qaboos addressed his population, say "your country calls upon you to perform

your duty with faith and discipline, Oman is a society that is used to hard work and it is

not our style to be lazy or negligent, but to responsibly and honestly carry out our

obligations" (Kechichian, 6). Hard work and humility are aspects of Omani national

identity further strengthened through state development, for the purpose of state

development. In this National Day speech, Sultan Qaboos said,

> "As we celebrate here the twenty-sixth Anniversary of our glorious National Day, in an atmosphere redolent of our ancient maritime past, we express our great pride in Oman's seafaring history, which was written by those great ships that traversed the broad oceans carrying the pride and power of our country and its desire to foster friendly relations with all nations. We wish to remind the new generation of the high purpose of their forefathers who braved the storms of the violent seas in order to provide us with a wholesome standard of living.
> The Omani youth who look forward to glorious horizons are called upon today to take their ancestors as an example of diligence, hard work, patience, persistence and sustained effort. They are also called upon to believe, as they believed, that productive work – no matter how small it is – is a key element in the structure of the nation. The foundation will be strengthened and the pillars will be raised higher. This must be the goal for which all must seek and relentlessly strive with humility.With productive work, there will be no place in our society for idle hands, which must have no role in the process of our evolution and progress." Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Information, 2015, pp. 369-370)

In this speech excerpt all promoted identity and cultural values are mentioned, including

hard work but also cosmopolitanism, national pride and unity, respect and tolerance, and

humility. There is also reference to the historical narrative of the state as well.

A major aspect of the national discourse is, as previously stated, is the emphasis

of the 'new era' in Omani history ushered in by Sultan Qaboos. In 1974 he said,

> "On this immortal landmark day, four years ago, a new sun shone in our beloved land to light the flame of the national spirit and zeal of our citizens, who plunged into building this renaissance […] Our beloved Oman lives today in the dawn of a great and comprehensive renaissance." (Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Information, 2015, p. 31)

The Sultan, in his speeches, makes the inference that the country was built from the ground up through his ascension in 1970 with no meaningful development occurring prior. In this way Qaboos "has presented himself as the tutelary father of a just-reborn nation which 'he conducts in its march towards progress and prosperity'." (Valeri, 2009, p. 134) In addition, there is the promotion of his legitimacy and justification for his patrimonial rule. In an interview, Sultan Qaboos said,

"The man in the street often doesn't want or know how to deal with foreign governments or defend the country. He trusts me to do it. That is why these areas have been excluded from the majlis debates. In this part of the world, giving too much power too fast can still be exploited. Elections in many countries mean having the army prevent bloodshed. Is this democracy? Are these happy countries? […] No. they are really just power struggles. I am against creating such situations when people aren't ready for them." (Qabus & Miller, 1997, p. 17)

In his National Day Speeches, Qaboos continuously states that the renaissance and his ascension to power as essentially the beginning of development, saying that, with God's help, the renaissance has "resulted in bringing our Omani people to higher standards of life through their deliverance from the bondage of isolation, ignorance and backwardness." In discussing the achievements and progress made thus far, Qaboos stresses appreciation for the contributions made by the Omani people, and says, "You are the pioneers who blazed the trail that ensured that, in days to come, our progress will be faster and unconfined, with our future gains assured." (Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Information, 2015, p. 352)

Addressing the graduating class at Sultan Qaboos University, Qaboos also emphasizes Omani history, and a self-sacrificing collective approach to development while simultaneously implying that this is the beginning of the Oman's development. He said,

"From the very start, one of our primary aims was to bring education to every part of the Sultanate, so that every member of the population could acquire the schooling he or she was entitled to. This country was facing a great challenge in its battle to overcome the results of long years of isolation and backwardness. So we began a hard, grueling struggle, as we set about building our modern state brick by brick. We were helped immeasurably in our task by the legacy of our ancient civilisation, history and glory, by the assistance of Allah, and by the hard work, determination and noble ambitions of our people. The fine achievements of Oman today are a demonstration of her deep and ancient roots, and an affirmation of her rare and sublime qualities." Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Information, 2015, p. 248)

Student were also told that their educations will assist them in building modern Oman, and will assist in the "preserving the gains of the Blessed Renaissance, and achieving greater progress for the present and coming Omani generations, within the framework of the eternal values we all share. These values represent virtue and truth, tolerance and integration, selflessness and sacrifice, and decent conduct in one's dealings with others. These are values inherited from fathers and forefathers, and absorbed by Omani society over the generations. They have become an essential part of it and have been one of its praiseworthy attributes over the ages." Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Information, 2015, p. 250) This excerpt includes all the promoted Omani identity and culture values discussed thus far, including tolerance and respect of others, hard work, and morality.

Standardized teaching in public schools was introduced to, in part, foster Omani national identity. As previously discussed, Article (13) of the Basic Law names as an objective of the education system the building of "a generation that is physically and morally strong, which takes pride in its Nation, Country, and heritage and preserves its achievements." (GLMM, 2014a)

Marc Valeri (2009) argues that the national school system has been an effort to, "…inculcate individual feeling of belonging to the nation, wrapping it with outwards

signs of sovereignty, like raising the national flag and singing of the national anthem before entering school." (p. 121) Valeri states that "the school-promoted symbolic repertoire…by definition was reserved for national children only." and, in addition to minimizing tribal differences and reinforcing generational difference, "it led to the adoption of common values and behaviours, but also to expansion of new sociability networks between individuals without previous opportunities of relationship." (Valeri, 2009, p. 121)

The way in which Omani history is taught in state schools is indicative of national narrative reinforcement for the purpose of identity construction and state legitimation. Valeri (2009) writes that "in the lower grades…ancient history predominates; common themes are Oman's Islamisation, its relations with the Persians, and the Middle Ages until the thirteenth century. These periods' contribution to the building of national pride, which (it is suggested) made it possible for Oman always to remain independent, is stressed." Valeri (2009) states that "in preparatory grades, the al-Ya'arubi and al-Busa'idi maritime empires are studied in detail. At the secondary level, history is only studied in arts sections…Twentieth-century Oman is only skimmed over, leaving a black hole between the imperial nineteenth century and the *nahda*." (131-132) In fact, in the 1980s students in school were told to replace the word *infitada* with the word *nahda* in their textbooks. Valeri (2009) writes,

 "With 80 percent of the population never having known any ruler other than Sultan Qaboos, it is easy for the sultan to portray himself as the embodiment of modern Oman in general and of the 1970 renaissance (*nahda*) ideology in particular. Indeed, the Omani nation not only is defined by an inviolable territory represented materially and symbolically by splendorous state but is also built on the negation of the country's pre-1970 history, any reference to which remains taboo." (Valeri, 2009, p. 145)

There are several local newspapers in Muscat, including Times of Oman, Muscat Daily, The Oman Observer, and the Oman Tribune. The Oman Observer is a national daily newspaper published by the Ministry of Information while the others are privately owned, funded in part by government subsidies. "Even though censorship was officially abolished in 1985, the press is still governed by a 1984 law which laid down that all publications and journalists must be registered with the Ministry of Information." (Valeri, 2009, p. 126) The Omani press

Figure 4.1: Hardworking Narrative
Source: Times of Oman Instagram

report largely what is reported by the official press agency of the state, the Oman News Agency, created in 2006, including royal decrees. According to Valeri, the Ministry of Information exerts pressure on journalists, which results in little accounts of controversy or criticisms of the government. The nature and content of local news is nationalistic and uncritical. Tourism, economic development, workforce nationalization, heritage site restoration, and royal decrees are commonly the focus of local articles. Social media is an avenue utilized by the state to promote its constructed Omani identity, more precise targeting of its burgeoning young population. Local news outlets like the Times of Oman engage in social media, as do the Royal Oman Police and Muscat Municipality to name a few (Figure 4.1). A recurring and popular hashtag is *#OmanPride,* which usually showcases much of the positive and flattering nation-building content, including development achievements, positive international attention, uplifting quotes from Sultan

Qaboos, and academic, athletic, and artistic accomplishments of Omani citizens and, occasionally, expatriates.

Another method of identity construction and reinforcement is clothing. It is required by law that Omani nationals wear traditional dress, a white *dishdasha* and embroidered in public places, like government buildings and ministries, schools, or publically-owned, wholly or in part, businesses. Jeremy Jones and Nicholas Ridout discuss how both place-making and national dress requirements to retain tradition and Arab authenticity in the face of modernity are misleading. They write, "…both dress and architecture represent not so much the persistence of the past in the present as the imaginative reconstruction of an idea of the past, for the purposes of establishing a shared culture for the contemporary nation." (Jones & Ridout, 2015, p. 196) In addition to the *dishdasha*, there is a Bedouin type turban called a *masar,* or an embroidered cylindrical hat called a *kuma*, popular in the Muscat governorate. The *kuma* as local dress is the result of cultural exchange and contact with eastern Africa. The appropriation of the *kuma* as a symbol of national identity is evidence of invented tradition. The emphasis on national dress, then, serves to emphasize the cosmopolitan nature of Omani history and to distinguish the national population from the foreign in both the public and private spheres, making the two broad classifications of the population readily identifiable.

Mitigating the Impact of Migration and Modernization on Identity Construction

In addition to the motivation and methods of promoting and reinforcing the national identity, the state also attempts to mitigate further the influence of globalization and migrant presence in particular. As previously discussed, because of the population's limited labour capabilities as well as the ambitious and rapid nature of the state development project, the Sultanate continues to rely on a substantial foreign workforce to shoulder these modernization

efforts. The new job opportunities attracted thousands of migrant workers to Oman. Of the labour force in 1970, foreigners accounted for seven percent, but ten years later, foreign workers constituted sixty-five percent of the labour force (Valeri, 2009, p. 145). At the time of the first national census in 1993, "non-Omanis constituted 61.4% of the total labor force while Omani constituted 38.6%." (Localization of Labour) Recognizing that the importation of such a substantial foreign labour force would have significant economic and social consequences contrary to the nation-building project, efforts are made to mitigate the impact of foreign labour upon the constructed national identity.

Legislation and policy

Article (35) of the Basic Law addresses legal foreign residents and ensures their protection and the protection of property rights. It continues by stating "He shall observe the values of the Society and respect the traditions and sentiments thereof." However, the language of the legislation makes it clear that the rights afforded therein are reserved for citizens, including those address equality and discrimination.

In addition, as previously discussed, the Omani Citizenship Law issued in 2014 outlines who is considered to be an Omani citizen, and outlines the requirements needed in order to obtain Omani citizenship. Article (15) outlines the conditions to be met by non-Omani applicants, and these requirements differ based on the gender of the applicant. Firstly, male applicants must have "resided in Oman for at least 20 continuous years or, 15 years if married to an Omani woman provided that their marriage shall have taken place after obtaining approval of the Ministry of the Interior…and he shall have a son from his Omani wife." Secondly, the male applicant must be fluent in the Arabic language and possess "sound conduct and character". The male applicant must also have

a clean background, having never been convicted of a crime, and be disease free. Lastly, he must renounce his or her nationality of origin in writing. (GLMM, 2016)

The language regarding female applicants is rather unclear, referring only to the wives of Omani citizens and not discussing the granting of citizenship to unmarried women. Article (16) states that the foreign wife of an Omani can apply for citizenship if the marriage had taken place after having obtained approval from the Ministry of the Interior, has a son with her Omani husband, and "have been married to her Omani husband and resided with him in Oman for at least 10 continuous years." In addition, the female applicant must be able to communicate in the Arabic language, also "possess sound conduct and character", have no criminal record, and provide written proof of relinquishing her nationality. (GLMM, 2016)

As previously mentioned, marriage between an Omani and non-Omani requires governmental permission. Civil law requires one to seek a marriage permit from the Ministry of the Interior, which evaluates the application. The application for a marriage permit between an Omani and a foreigner can be approved if there are medical or social conditions that necessitate a marriage, if the non-national has the financial means to provide for the Omani spouse, and, if the Omani is male, he must not already be married to an Omani woman. Exempt from rigourous review are those permit applications wherein the Omani wishes to marry a non-Omani from a neighbouring Gulf country, the non-Omani has resided within the territory for at least eighteen years, or the Omani female is divorced or widowed with children. (Marriage in Oman, 2009)

Because the legal system of Oman is also based on *shari'a* law, the likelihood of approval is improved if certain religious prerequisites are met. Non-Omani men seeking

to marry an Omani woman should be Muslim, and non-Omani women seeking to marry and Omani man should be Muslim, Christian, or Jewish, reflecting the monotheistic tradition of Islam, and the historic tolerance between the Muslim community and "People of the Book." The requirement of governmental permission for intermarriage allows for a significant amount of control over foreign populations with significant social and cultural ties to Oman. One can control, to a certain degree, the level of social and cultural impact of migrants on the local population by controlling the composition of the family unit, and therefore the transmission of cultural norms.

To obtain a visa to work in Oman, one must be sponsored by his or her employer. The work visa is specific to both the job and the sponsoring employer, making changing occupations and employers difficult. Once a work visa is obtained, a residency permit is required. The work visa and residency permit can be cancelled at any given time, for instance if the employee is fired, or the company goes out of business. In this event, the worker is expected to leave Oman immediately, regardless of length of residency, lack of overseas connections, or number of dependent children. Similarly, children of expatriates are expected to leave the country once they reach legal age, even if they were born in Oman and have no familial connections elsewhere. This is intended to control the younger population and influence the proportion of expatriates to Omani citizens.

Because of the lack of formal education and, therefore, skilled labour amongst the Omani population, "most non-Omanis were employed in teaching under the ministry of education; as doctors and nurses in the ministry of health; or in various public works functions." (Allen & Rigsbee, 2000, p. 42) The state began a vocational training program in 1972 in order to avoid dependence on foreign labor for unskilled work. In 1974, he

stressed the expectation that all citizens commit themselves to the development of the state, as the aim was "'to forget the past', and to forge a new nation with all available talent." (Kechichian, 2008, p. 127) Following the rationale that occupations held by expatriates could be held by Omanis, and replacing foreign workers with nationals would reduce public spending on expatriates and increase domestic spending. Omanization of the workforce began in the mid-1980s. The policies established specific employment regulations to "secure the gradual replacement of expatriates by" through the policy limiting the total number of foreign workers through the allocation of work permits, the imposition fees on employers when foreign workers are hired, and awarding government contracts to private companies. (Valeri, 2009, p. 201) Qaboos stated that it was "a national duty, even at the most basic levels," to create thousands of working opportunities that did not require advanced degrees. (Kechichian, 2008, p. 118) Foreign workers were therefore prohibited from employment as fishermen, and taxi drivers.

The Foreigners' Residence law adopted in 1995 regulates the residency of foreigners within the territory, though the law does not apply to all foreign residents, including citizens of other GCC states. Article (11) states that a foreigner cannot be issues a work entry visa if he has previously worked in the country until two years have passed since his last residency. Upon entry, foreigners must register their residence with the authorities within the first 30 days. (GLMM, 2014b)

Article (14) specifies the types of foreign residence, the duration, conditions, and renewal procedures. It states that "granting a visa to a married foreigner entails granting it to his/her spouse and children under the age of twenty-one as well." . (GLMM, 2014b) It sets that the duration of residency at two years, requiring the submission of a renewal

request several weeks prior to its expiration. However, the request for residence or its renewal may be denied without giving any reason as to why. . (GLMM, 2014b)

Article (17) states that "a foreigner shall lose his right to residence if he resided outside the Sultanate without a valid reason for six continuous months or eight non-continuous months in a year or for eighteen months within a three-year period." . (GLMM, 2014b) Raids at places of employment are frequent to ensure adherence to labour laws on the part of the employers and the expatriate employees. Expatriates also have residency cards which are expected to be carried on their person to be shown to authorities when asked on the spot. There are also many road blocks throughout the Muscat governorate, the locations of which change, to catch illegal immigrants and other violators of the law.

Discourse and Social Differentiation

As previously mentioned, the coast of Oman, prior to 1970, was pluralistic and cosmopolitan. Baluchis, Persians, and Indians have been intermingled with the 'local' Arab population throughout their transnational imperialistic history. Many important families of these communities received Omani citizenship. Despite this, however, new arrivals are not granted the same treatment. "As elsewhere in the Gulf, citizens and expatriates constitute different moral and statistical universes, and while official statistics document the diversity of the new immigrants, ethnic and religious differences among citizens do not count officially and are hardly recognized." (Al-Rasheed, 2013, p. 104)

In order to assume control over the territory, the state embarked on the task of compiling national statistics and began conducting censuses. As evident in the table of population distribution from the 2010 Omani census, there is no differentiation within the

migrant population with regards to their origins, or the Omani population with regards to ethnic or religious distinction. There are no sub-categories of Omanis who returned in 1970 after emigrating abroad in official statistics or data. This erases the diversity of both the local and the migrant community, effectively collapsing the entire migrant population into a broad 'other' categorization, and the local population into a broad 'us' categorization in a widely distributed publication.

Sultan Qaboos has, when discussing state development and economic diversification, discussed why his approach to promoting the tourism industry is one that caters to wealthier visitors, instead of large-scale tourism. He said,

"I won't hide from you the fact that, before some of these alternatives and industries got started, visitors – that is to say, journalists and others – used to ask me `What about the future?' That was at a time when one was still searching for the right road to follow… To reply `Praise be to God, we have some agriculture, fish and seas, and quite honestly, fish are a real source of wealth' would have been unconvincing, but at that time no other answer was possible. However, now we can say that we have begun to open up scope for investment and we have begun to invest. And we are attracting some investment from abroad. We have begun to open up to tourism in a rational, realistic and carefully considered manner." (Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013)

The impact of having a tourism industry that targets all segments of society is that, in addition to the greater volume of foreign visitors, many 'undesirable' visitors, being those that wouldn't exactly be respectful or behave in a respectable way, would have more of an impact on Omani society. Targeting wealthier populations is a strategy to limit the potential negative impact of tourism. Qaboos continued to discuss tourism in the context of his conversations with other world leaders, saying,

"We certainly do not encourage tourism in its general unrestricted sense. When I was in Spain last year I met the King of Spain – he came to dinner – and he asked me `What is the tourist situation in your country?' I told him `We have begun to open up the country.' He said `Be careful. Be extremely careful that you do not make the same mistakes that we did.' I replied, `We have absolutely no intention of making the same mistakes that you did.'" (Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013)

Sultan Qaboos has also, in his speeches, attempted to counter the popular negative

sentiments about expatriate labour and economic opportunity. Many expressed discontent

with the fact that so many expatriates were being hired at the expense of Omani

jobseekers. In addition, Qaboos addresses the attitude amongst Omanis that certain

occupations, and salaries, are below them, as well as attitudes of entitlement towards

public sector employment as well. In a speech he said,

"The citizen should not refuse to accept work, when there are job opportunities in various
sectors – particularly in the private sector which is full of joy opportunities – and which
still depend upon the expatriate workforce. The work is there, but some people do not
like to work or use the excuse of the small salary, or that the employer prefers foreign
labour as he thinks, unfortunately, it is cheaper and profitable and willing to work for
longer hours. Yes, he may work for longer hours but will the proceeds go to the
employer? The worker does this for his own benefit and not for his employers. Has the
citizen thought of this? Is it better to engage a foreign worker or someone from his own
family, people or society and encourage them to work and be satisfied with a small return
and wait for better to follow?
When it rains, it begins in small drops and then it pours. It is the same with
material benefit. What you should be doing is to enlighten your children on these matters
so that they can feel responsibility towards themselves and towards serving their country.
The citizen serves himself first and by doing so, he serves his country. If he is an active,
productive member of his society, he benefits himself and his society. And if he is
unproductive and unemployed, he harms himself and his society. Moreover, he will
become a burden on the community and will depend on others. This is a matter which we
reject totally. Any talk of unemployment in this country at the present time, is talk of
artificial unemployment and not real unemployment. We can prove this fact from the
result of the Population Census, which showed the existence of an estimated half-a-
million strong expatriate work force, while the present number of job seekers does not
exceed 30,000. Where is the unemployment in a situation where there are half-a-million
expatriate workers and 30,000 citizens seeking jobs, if the citizen really wanted to work?
But if he makes excuses, then it is a different matter." (Sultanate of Oman Ministry of
Information, 2015, p. 332)

He goes on to urge Omanis to stop complaining, making excuses, and roll of their

sleeves, saying, "In Oman, we must purify ourselves. We must not `fall sick' and then

seek treatment; we must apply the doctrine of `prevention is better than cure'. All that we

have already said and say and stress now is solely a part of our keenness on prevention

against a situation in which we already find ourselves." (Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Information, 2015, p. 333)

The discourse used by local news media in reference to expatriates depends upon the legality of their residency and content of the article. Mostly, national origin goes unreported and instead the individual is referred to as an 'Asian national,' for example. Occasionally, when the article is highlighting the positive influence of an expatriate, or discussing their art exhibition, comprised solely of portraits of the Sultan, for example, the article will specify "Indian resident" or something similar that evokes some level of belonging in terms of residency and community, not national belonging. Not belonging in the sense that they are Omani, but that they are contributing to the development of the state and positively reflecting the benevolent nature of the Sultan. Something like that. Expatriates involved in illegal activity like drug smuggling are for the most part referred to as 'Asian expatriate' without reference to their country of origin. If the local news media is reporting on government crackdowns on illegal immigration, the word choice is a little more threatening and a little vaguer. Those who violated labour law or whose legal residency has lapsed are referred to simply as 'workers'. Those who entered Oman illegally or were caught attempting to enter the Sultanate are referred to as 'infiltrators'.

The requirement of national dress, discussed previously, is described by Marc Valeri (2009) as a "mechanism of strong differentiation from foreigners settled in Oman, whether Arab, Western or from the Indian subcontinent, in order to strengthen awareness of belonging to an immediately and concretely identifiable community." (p. 121) Such an external sign of belonging "…encourage different sets of social practices and behaviour,

depending on whether one is dealing with an Omani or an expatriate." (Valeri, 2009, p. 122)

Local news recently published articles discussing a statement disseminated by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry that warns against altering traditional clothing in light of recent fashion trends. According to Oman Observer, "The statement from the ministry urges commercial establishments and companies to stop adding offensive changes to the traditional clothing. New designs have invaded the Omani *masar*, which is the headgear worn by males in Oman. The trend saw strong reactions on the social media and websites with comments fueled with anger opposing and expressing dismay in hurting the identity of Omani traditional attire which reflects the values." (Oman Observer) Barcelona Football Club logos upon masars was a cited example as one of such offensive alterations to Omani traditional dress.

Times of Oman reported that the Ministry is continuing "…its march towards protecting Omani costumes from any deformities and maintaining the Omani identity, and is executing the third article in the ministerial decision No. 270 / 2015 (banning import of some goods)." Ministerial decision No. 270/2015 states that importing, designing Omani traditional clothes or transgressing these, or modifying anything in it in such a way that it harms the Omani identity, is banned." (Times of Oman) According to this article, the objective is to ensure that no modified traditional clothing with "unnecessary decorations or indecent drawings".

Participant Representations of Space: The City

Participant Attributes

Having discussed the conceived space of the state and the promotion of specific cultural and identity values amongst the national population, and the methods of mitigating outside influences, participants' representations of the city and its inhabitants will be examined, after a brief discussion of their attributes. During three months of fieldwork I interviewed nineteen Muscat residents (Table 4.1). Five participants were Western expatriates: two Portuguese nationals, one male and one female, one very French male of West African descent, and two British males. Five participants interviewed were of Asian or African nationalities: two Philippine nationals, one male and one female, one Indian female, and two Sudanese males who both held Omani citizenship because their parents earned citizenship through their contributions to the development of the state. In addition, I interviewed 3 Arab expatriates: one Yemeni male, one Bahraini male, and one Egyptian male. In addition to expatriates, I conducted interviews with six Omanis, three males and three females. One of these male Omani participants was half Filipino on his mother's side.

The gender ratio for participants is quite skewed, with thirteen male participants and only six female participants. This skewed gender ratio limits this study's insights into the spatial practices of women in Muscat. The age range for the participants is 22-44 years with the average age of those interviewed being 29 years. Ten of the participants are under the age of thirty. Four participants were in their thirties, and three participants were over the age of forty. The age of participants is important, and, especially for Omani

participants, their personal memories of life in Oman prior to the Renaissance and its resulting development is limited.

In terms of their levels of educational attainment, three participants had a high school education, and another three had attended a college or other vocational school. The majority of participants, thirteen in all, had attended university and received a higher degree. For the Omani participants specifically, two had a high school education, one participant had gone to a vocational college, and three had university degrees. For Western expatriates, one had a high school education, one had vocational training, and three had university educations. For the Asian and African expatriates, 1 participant had a vocational education and the others had a university degree. All three of the Arab participants interviewed has university degrees.

Table 4.1
Participant Attributes

Participant	Nationality	Age	Gender	Birthplace	Occupation	Education Level	Length of Residency
1	Sudanese	23	Male	Oman	Student	College	23
2	Omani	40	Male	Oman	Petroleum Engineer	High school	40
3	Portuguese	30	Female	Portugal	Museum Curator	University	3
4	Omani	25	Female	Oman	Architect	University	19
5	French	48	Male	Spain	Architect	University	5
6	Egyptian	31	Male	Egypt	Architect	University	7
7	Indian	26	Female	UAE	Mental Health Admin	University	10
8	British	30	Male	England	Telecom-Managerial	University	7
9	Portuguese	24	Male	Portugal	Florist	High school	3
10	Omani	25	Female	Oman	Translator	University	25
11	Omani	33	Male	Oman	Planning/Business Owner	College	9
12	Omani	28	Female	Oman	Investments/Radio Host	University	22
13	British	23	Male	England	Chef	Culinary School	15
14	Yemeni	23	Male	Yemen	Software Consultant	University	17

15	Bahraini	25	Male	Bahrain	Events Management	University	1
16	Sudanese/Omani	25	Male	Oman	Tech /Business Owner	University	25
17	Omani/Filipino	22	Male	Oman	Unemployed	High school	22
18	Filipino	27	Female	Philippines	Procurement Agent	University	24
19	Filipino	44	Male	Philippines	Procurement Agent	University	20

The majority of occupations were professional in nature, while a few others were service-oriented occupations. The occupations of participants was varied across the national origins, including an engineer, architects, procurement agents, a chef, a museum curator, software and tech consultants, a florist, and an English translator, to name a few. Three participants had two jobs. Omani Participant 13 was a radio host part time in addition to her full-time administrative position. Omani Participant 11 owned a blacksmithing and aluminum fabrication business in Mabelah in addition to his administrative position at the Supreme Council for Planning. Sudanese Participant 16 owned an American-style steakhouse in Madinat Qaboos in addition to working in technology. One participant, Omani-Filipino Participant was neither studying nor employed.

The majority of non-national participants interviewed, of various regional origins, moved to Muscat for economic reasons. The employment opportunities available to expatriates with work experience in various field relating to development were cited as the motivation for relocation. For others, however, the choice to live in Muscat was not theirs to make, though the economic opportunity was still the most important factor. British Participant 8, a telecommunications manager, stated bluntly, "I was offered a job

so I just took it." Participant 5, a French architect born in Spain but based in London, gave more context to his motivations, saying,

"I was working at the time in the UK where I specialized in airports. I was working in France at the main airport and was head-hunted to go to London where I worked in terminal five. Then I moved on and was working on cross-rail, which is a project in London and I was head-hunted to come to Muscat because they have the airport development. That's why I came down here. I was the architect in charge of the air traffic tower and a string of buildings around the airport. I was doing that for about 2.5 years then one of our directors of senior management here used to be one of my directors at the airport. Found out that I wanted to stay further in Muscat and asked me if I wanted to join NJP which I did in January of this year."

British Participant 13 stated, "I came to Oman because my father works for the sultan." Participant 9, a Portuguese florist, initially came to Muscat because his sister moved to Muscat and married an Omani. Her reason for residing in Muscat, too, related to the economic opportunity of the city; her father, Participant 11's uncle, was an architect employed by the state with the purpose of restoring old forts and constructing facades for prison buildings. Participant 11 moved to Muscat for more personal motivations rather than economic reasons, citing as his reason that he loves the city and that Oman is his second home.

Egyptian Participant 6, also an architect, stated that he moved because he enjoys "experiencing new places" and that he has "always look forward to seeing new places and cultures and learning new things." However, employment was a more substantial reason for his move to Oman. On why he came to Muscat, Participant 6 stated, "I got an opportunity to join here in this office back in 2008 and I thought at that time it was a good opportunity to go. I got an offer when I was in Egypt and I met with one of the representatives back in Egypt, I had an interview, and I thought it was a good opportunity."

Participant 19, an embassy procurement agent from the Philippines, stated, "I've been here almost 20 years…and came for work, for economic reasons. But if I had a choice and better opportunities in my country or elsewhere I would go." However, Participant 19 had a transnational upbringing in Muscat, too. He said,

"My dad used to work in the Royal Hospital as an IT person. He brought us with him in 1983. I was the only one who studied in the Philippines, but came every year for vacation until 1993 when I decide to come over and work. I worked, from my girlfriend from the Philippines and in 1995 we got married and my two boys were born and I've been here ever since."

Sudanese Participant 1, a student and Muscat local, stated that his father moved to Muscat in 1982. He said, "It was my father only he moved here by himself and then he started, and then he went back to Sudan and came back with my mom and then it's on from then." Likewise, Participant 18 said, "I've been in Muscat since 1991. We moved here because my dad was working here." Similarly, Participant 7, an Indian female who grew up in the Gulf, initially moved to Muscat because of her father's employment, and the presence of her family was the reason to return to Muscat, where she met her husband, Participant 7. She decided to remain in Muscat because, "We got married and he was living here anyways."

Omani Participant 12, a radio DJ for a western music station, advised that I should give more consideration to Oman's rural-urban migration, because Muscat is "the hub and not everyone here comes from Muscat." She elaborated by saying,

"…very few of the population of Omanis have families who are originally from Muscat. Everyone has settled here but their forefather so everyone meets in their towns so a big percent of Omanis not from Muscat. Very few tribes are actually from here. The majority just migrated here. The new generation, our generation, the younger ones say I'm from Muscat but you ask "where did your tribe come from?" and they'll say 'oh this or that place.' Most of the jobs are here, the ministries, the government sector jobs are here. They have to move, most people, to work."

Participant 12 said, "I'm Busaidi. There are two roots of Busaidis one in the east in Ibra and the actual one is from Nizwa, just south of Nizwa so that's the origin of all Busaidis But then with time everyone dispersed someone else." Other Omani participants did relay that their families moved to Muscat in the 1970's and 1980's following the start of the renaissance and the economic opportunity available in the city. Participant 2, a petroleum engineer, stated that his grandfather moved to Muscat in the 80's and acquired a land plot, and that is why he was born and raised in the city. Despite this, he stated, "Actually I'm not from the city. My family they are from Ibra in the interior. Sharqiyya region. So all my life I have been here. SO, I love it, but sometimes we go to interior, go to Sharqiyya."

For several participants their residency was not continuous, with periods of residency abroad, a kind of transnational on-and-off residency in Muscat. Sudanese Participant 1, for example, stated, "I was born here so I lived here almost all my life but I've been travelling to France. I lived in Malaysia also. But most of my life has been in Oman...so...I know everything that's small and big in Oman, feel me?" Portuguese Participant 9 lived in Muscat for two years with his sister prior to his current residency. He was been in Muscat for 3 consecutive years, but five in total. His uncle was an architect in Oman 20-30 years ago restoring forts. His sister came for a visit, enjoyed her time, and got a job to stay. Eventually, she married an Omani man and remained in Muscat. Indian Participant 7, who was born in the United Arab Emirates, stated that she had resided in Muscat "…on and off for about 10 years. I moved here when I was about 11 and I left home when I was 14 or 15, came back when I was 20." Filipina

procurement agent Participant 18 also said "I did…go back to Manila to study engineering, but eventually came back to Oman to work."

A few Omani participants had also spent some time living abroad. Participant 4, an architect, stated that she has lived in Muscat for nineteen years but immediately after being born moved to Bahrain where her father was based, and her family returned to Muscat when she was five years of age. Participant 12, the radio DJ, said, "I did 2 years of high school in the states, Delaware, and then 4 years in the Netherlands, and then came back so total of 6 years outside of Oman." In addition to residency abroad, many participants stated that they had traveled abroad, or travel abroad periodically, for touristic purposes. Travel destinations for participants include Malaysia, Thailand, The UK, The United States, and others.

Representations Signifying Success of Nation-building Efforts

To uncover and explore participants' general representations of Muscat, the following interview questions, or variations thereof, were posed:

- What do you think about the culture in Muscat?
- Are there aspects to the culture that you like more than others?
- Is there anything you don't particularly like about the culture?
- Is Omani society welcoming of foreigners?
- As an Omani what is it like to live in a city that is so diverse?
- What do you think are some positive aspects of the other cultures that are here?
- Are there any negative aspects of other cultures that you see? Anything that annoys you?

The questions "What do you think about the culture in Muscat?", "Are there aspects of the culture here that you like more than others?" and "Is Omani society

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welcoming of foreigners?" were posed to participants, and patterns clearly emerged that speak to the effectiveness of the state's nation-building efforts. The following aspects of Muscat culture and identity were favoured and appreciated with frequency:

Purity, tradition, and steadfastness were elements of the culture in Muscat mentioned several times during interviews. Portuguese Participant 9 loves everything about "authentic" Omani traditions and cultural activities, even the banal like burning frankincense. He seems to have really romanticized and embraced Arab culture. Likewise, Filipino Participant 19 said the "local culture of Muscat is very rich, once preserved and still lived by." Participant 1, a Sudanese student with Omani citizenship, said,

"The culture… The culture is just uh. They're really really, like, they've been holding their culture which is really good. It means that they never… change their culture. They're just keeping it 100, they're keeping it real to what they believe in. And that's what the other countries should do too."

The most frequently mentioned conceptions of Muscat culture are that it is welcoming, hospitable, friendly, and generous. Participant 6, an Egyptian architect, mentioned the humble nature of Omani culture, saying,

"The good thing about Omanis is that you feel that they are still pure…still umm…they don't have the arrogancy of 'we are superior' in terms of their relations between the expats coming to work here in this country. You know in other countries they feel like 'okay you are coming to work for us so you know we are better.' You don't hear it here most of the time. I never came across someone…of course…maybe less than one percent you might find someone that feel that 'okay you come here and this is my country. You're an expat coming to me' but mainly you don't feel it at all. I don't feel this."

All participants said that Omani society was welcoming of others. Participant 14, a Yemeni software consultant, said, "Of course, 100% welcoming." Omani Participant 12 said, "Yes definitely. We're known as the most hospitable people in the Arab World so I'll vouch for that. Because I've heard everyone say that." She then describes a culture-

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shock experience that made her more aware of the welcoming, hospitable nature of

Muscat culture, saying,

"I was in Holland and it was a paradox like you'd be in there house and they wouldn't invite you for dinner. They'll have dinner and not tell you 'there's some food, will you have some?' so you'd stay in the living room while they're eating dinner in the kitchen. But that's how the people are there and yes it was a culture shock for me was like that's so rude but why is it rude? You know? 'It's my right it's my money it's this it's that.' 'Okay, fine.'"

Indian mental health care administrator Participant 7 said, "They're quite

generous as well, generous with their time for sure, way more than they are overseas."

This sentiment was echoed by Participant 19, a Filipino male, who said, "You would

notice that people are very hospitable and very generous in all aspects. The people are

known to be loving due to the random act of kindness."

Kindness was also mentioned by Omani-Filipino Participant 17, who said, "I

think the culture here is incredible. People are kind and respectful, for the most part,

when interacting with both foreigners and locals." Bahraini Participant 15 who works in

events management highlighted the niceness of Muscat residents, saying, "People are

very nice and welcoming, and are often very hospitable." This is echoed by French

architect Participant 5 who said, "The good thing about Oman is that I feel Oman is a

friendly place where as a westerner you don't feel, as I felt once or twice when I was in

Tunisia, unwelcome." Participant 8, from the UK, was incredibly impressed with the

friendliness of the local culture, saying,

"Overall, the friendliness and everything actually hits you quite a lot when you're an expat. Like in England when someone comes up to you know and says, 'How are you? Can I help you? Would you like to come in for a cup of coffee?' You're like 'No. Why? Are you gonna rob me?' Here it's genuine you can't….I mean. Something like that is unbelievable. Oman is the best place to live in the Middle East. "

Participant 3, a museum curator from Portugal, said she likes a lot about the culture of Muscat. She said, "I love the food of course. I really like the strong connection with the sea, like in the North, that everyone has. Um and their very cheerful and happy people. It's very different from how people react when they are at work." She also mentioned that she loves how helpful everyone is, saying, "The Omanis in general help you whenever you're in need." Helpfulness was reiterated by Participant 5, a French male, who recalled an experience when he first arrived,

"When I first moved here I drove to Dubai by myself and my Omani colleagues, he's now like a friend really, a close friend, he gave me his number and was calling me every hour to make sure I was okay. On that trip I stopped to make a phone call and I was stopped for maybe ten minutes and three cars stopped, all Omani, to ask me if I was okay, if I had a problem, if I needed help, if I had water. I mean you're from the US no one would stop and see if you're okay. Nowhere else really, I mean I'm originally from West Africa (Nigeria, Cameroon area) no one would stop if you were stopped because you could get jacked."

The conception of Muscat as a place that is like home was also repeated by several participants. Participant 9, the florist from Portugal, stated that Omani culture makes you feel at home, and that they are humble. Participant 6 said,

"Also Omani culture is pure…it's not you know…you can see the country is not very advanced. You can see the difference between here and Dubai. You can see how sometimes I go there I'm lonely somehow. But here you feel you are somewhere where you are welcome, you feel peace. If you want to stay with a family its better."

Another frequently mentioned element appreciated by participants was the safety of Muscat. French Participant 5 stated, "In Oman, everyone goes about their business, they don't mind you being here because they have a life to live so you feel very safe here." Sudanese Participant 1 said, "To be honest because I've been living here and I've learned a lot of things here, and the peace in this country is unbelievable. Very very very peaceful. I don't know what they hear in the media, you know propaganda but the peace

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is unbelievable in this country." Participant 2, an Omani petroleum engineer, discussed

the safety and tolerance of Muscat in relation to his experiences as a tourist in the United

States. When he mentioned that he visited, I asked him where he went, if he talked with

Americans while there, and, if so, were they friendly. His response is incredibly

insightful. Participant 2 replied,

"Yea but I saw some difference in the US, that's what I wanted to talk to you about. I went to a bar in Daytona I had long hair I had a ponytail. So you could say I looked Mexican or whatever. So I went to the bar and the bartender kicked me. He told me to get out. I said 'why I just want a beer'. He told me 'get out they will kill you' I was like, 'what?' I looked back and the whole bar stopped. You got me? This is something I never experienced. As an Omani I go to Dubai, I go to Europe, normal. So, he said to me 'get out before they kill you.' And it was true. They were playing pool, I love playing pool. I said I will take a beer and go there. He said to me "I cannot serve you.' And I looked around the room and everyone was staring at me. I didn't understand. That's how Arabs get killed there. You don't know where they are. So I left. After two or three days I realized they have their own problem there. Mexicans….it's not because I'm Omani or Arab they don't know who I am. They have their own thing with Mexicans. They have their own neighbourhoods and they are dangerous. I didn't know that. But see for an American to come here, he can go anywhere. He can go to an, like you, go to Matrah."

Yemeni Participant 14 said, "The culture in Muscat is so simple, full of history and

modern all at once. Omanis are more open minded than any of the GCC countries and

they all come from different backgrounds and races." Likewise, Participant 7, an Indian

female, responded, "I would say they don't judge very much, I mean from what I can

see...I have no idea what they say behind closed doors.it feels like a pretty relaxed

environment." She went on to discuss the openness of local culture, emphasizing its

genuine origins, by comparing it to other cities in the region. She said,

"I mean…everyone says Dubai is a great place to be because it's so open. But you gotta understand that they are looking to make money out of it that's why they are so open. Having been brought up there, born there, I know what it's really like for foreigners. They've relaxed all their rules and regulations because they need more money. They do it here in Oman because of the culture and history of Oman."

Participant 7 continued to emphasize how tolerant and welcoming the society. "They

cater to us a lot," she said.

"You can be negative all you want and say 'oh I have to go to a special area to buy pork and alcohol' but you're drinking and you're eating pork in a country which doesn't allow it. We have everything we could want and we're grateful for that. We are very grateful for everything we've been given. And we're here to contribute as well we're not here for ourselves. We wouldn't have dedicated so much of our lives to a place we didn't feel any affection for."

Religious tolerance was mentioned also. Participant 8, a British male in the

telecommunications industry, said,

"You learn to respect…we live in a Muslim country but what I find amazing is follow one or two rules and you're fine. You'll have the best time. And uh…I like that. I like that fact that I can come here and do that…as a Christian. It's fine. Whereas the media doesn't show this side to it. I mean there are Hindu temples and Christian churches I don't know the type of Islam they follow…so they allow any religion…"

Responding to this statement made by her husband, Participant 7 said,

"Yea I mean the churches aren't built like cathedrals but what's interesting is that the sultan and the Indian community back in the day had a close relationship make in the day so in Ruwi there is a legit temple statues everyone, it is a beautiful temple. And it's not in a regular buildings it's a temple and it looks like one."

National pride and loyalty was mentioned by several participants during

interviews as an aspect of Muscat culture that was appreciated. Participant 19 said a

positive aspect he observed was "the discipline they show and the love for their own

people and country, like for them it is the nationals first in everything before the

foreigners. In our culture our own people tend to treat the foreigners/tourists much better

than their own people."

Patriotism was really appreciated by Participant 8, a British male, who said,

"Another thing I really like is the sort of national pride and pride for their king... I think like even for me I feel sort of indebted to him because what he has done, and you feel the pride of others in him and it *is* genuine and the fact that they respect and love the culture they love the country, but they *really* love it. I mean sometimes I feel like England is lost

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or the queen is just someone on the money. Coming from a country where you have the royal family and then coming here… it's amazing."

At the same time, however, Participant 8 did convey that this loyalty made him

feel like an outsider. He said,

"They're supportive I think at the same time though maybe you're always on the outside. Doesn't matter if you know someone or not. You're always on the outside. Except for a few of my friends that I've known forever if there was another Omani they'd say…they probably wouldn't take my side. I get that feeling anyway."

Representations Signifying Counteraction of Nation-building Efforts

When participants were asked if there was anything they didn't particularly like

about the culture in Muscat, there was a variety of responses, but many of them run

counter to the state's promoted identity and cultural values. Like other participants,

Participant 6, the architect from Egypt, showed an interest in Omani history as a source

of understanding. He said,

"I don't think there is anything annoying. I'm trying to understand and know what they are. We came here I assume late so I don't know how things work in their history so if I have a chance to talk to someone about how the area is, how it was, how they were living...I'm kind of interested in this kind of thing."

Racism was mentioned by many as a negative elements to the local culture.

Participant 13, a British male who has grown up in Muscat, said he has encountered

discrimination based on language and race only when dealing with police. He said, "If

you don't speak Arabic they look down on you… you can sense them looking down on

you for your skin colour. I have had this many times very horrible… the only thing in

Oman I hate. I have no trust in the police."

Participant 12, an Omani female, said, "In terms of population you have different

classes of expats..." and cited labourers, who are mostly South Asian, as those comprising

the lowest class of expats. Participant 5, the architect from France, stated that "You'll

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realize that wage-wise westerners are better off because there's the power of the passport. It's a fact and because we are meant to come from markets where we have experience." One participant, Participant 17 who is both Omani and Filipino, qualified his response to the question of whether Omani society was welcoming or not. He said it "depends on what type of foreigners. Working class foreigners, Indians, Filipinos, Indonesians, for example, aren't given as much respect as western foreigners, Americans and Europeans." He went on to say, "People are kind and respectful, for the most part, when interacting with both foreigners and locals. Although there are certain class groups, working class, that aren't given the respect they deserve for the amount of work that they do." Referring to treatment of maids, British Participant 8 said, "Most people don't abide by the laws but people…I mean they'll hire a maid and say 'here's your bed, here's your TV' and pay them 40 Rials a month and make them work 24/7."

This racism based on national origins was particularly upsetting for Participant 8, who said, "One thing I feel obviously is coming from the UK is the way that other nationalities are treated. You have your maids…your…I don't know. I just find it weird how people are treated like that. That's one thing I observed." I asked him how they are treated to which he replied, "More like servants or something…What I'm trying to say is I guess I was being politically correct, what you see is more people are racist. Like 'you're from this part of the world I'm better than you do what I say.'" Aware of his whiteness and the privilege it affords, Participant 8 continued saying,

"I've been told 'you need to respect me because you're in my country.' And I turned around and said 'no you need to respect me because I'm here trying to do your job.' I see it more with like cleaners and how these people are spoken to rather than...I mean if someone brings me a cup of tea it doesn't matter who you are I'm gonna thank you. That's one thing that gets me angry. I'm lucky I'm from the first world."

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Government censorship was mentioned as a negative aspect of the culture in only one interview, but was mentioned in a few off-the-record conversations. In the interview, the issue of censorship was mentioned in the context of physical and mental health awareness. Participant 7, who works at a mental health clinic in Azaiba, said,

"But I think something else, I don't wanna say more important but as significant definitely is um there is a huge problem with dependency issues when it comes to alcohol and drugs and whatnot. And we can't talk about it. I think raising awareness, whether its addiction or um mental health…we need more awareness in the Middle East and that's why the number is so high."

I asked whether or not the lack of public awareness is because drug and alcohol use is taboo, to which she replied,

"Yea definitely I've had people tell me that they can't publish my articles because it discusses that topic. The TV, newspapers, everything is regulated by a higher body and if they say you can't put this out, the public doesn't hear about it. Even when it comes to violence or domestic abuse you don't hear about it. You don't know if it exists here or not."

In other informal conversations, the lack of adequate and factual coverage of the damage and government response to natural disasters was mentioned. The extent of property damage and the death toll for cyclone Gonu was, I was told, grossly underreported by the state, and contrary to what was personally experienced during that natural disaster. One individual said that because of his proximity to military airspace, he had seen a helicopter carrying dozens of corpses in a net. He considered that sight evidence of government underreporting. In another conversation, with a small group of friends, they relayed that once, while hanging out at the home of one of the group, they came to notice a commotion at the street corner. When they went to investigate, they said there was a deceased newborn, unclothed with the umbilical cord still attached, dumped on the street. They speculated that it was a baby born out of wedlock and its birth

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would've tarnished the woman's, and hence the family's, reputation. They said that this type of occurrence never receives any media coverage, despite how upsetting it may be. In another conversation

Though tolerance, and in particular religious tolerance was frequently mentioned as a positive aspect of Muscat culture, Participant 9, a florist from Portugal who converted to Islam during his residency, stated that though Omanis respect Christians they don't respect Hindus because they don't like people who worship idols. Participant 9, despite his love for Omani culture, had a few other negative aspects to mention in addition to religious intolerance. He also mentioned how he's bothered by the fact that people don't care for stray dogs or cats and dislikes the mistreatment and neglect of animals. Relating to the natural world, he also stated that he doesn't appreciate the destruction of the natural landscape in the process of development, including terracing.

Participant 9 also stated that he doesn't like how superficial weddings are, and said it's more about "spending like an Arab" than it is about the marriage itself. This negative aspect of the culture in Muscat was mentioned in informal conversations as well. "Spend like an Arab" was a phrase I heard frequently in relation to weddings, birthday parties, and other such celebrations in addition to material belongings like cars, clothes and jewelry. Material wealth is increasing in social importance and serves as a signal of success. It was discussed off-the-record that this "spend like an Arab" aspect of Muscat culture is more of a regional influence than one typically seen in Omani culture, which favours humility and austerity.

The last negative aspect mentioned by Portuguese Participant 9 relates to the changing family dynamic, especially when it comes to children. He said he doesn't like

how parents leave their children with maids instead of teaching them traditional Omani values, which are strongly regarded by Participant 9. It was only mentioned by this single participant, but it's not unlikely to see housekeepers and nannies caring for children in public, even in the presence of the parents. Having lived there previously, I overheard a female Omani coworker chatting with another about how her husband wants another child. Her response to him was "I'll have another baby if I get another nanny."

The culture of work in Muscat was mentioned frequently also. Many said that Omanis lack work ethic and professionalism, frequently showing up late, and wasting time once there. For example, Participant 15, a male from Bahrain, said "…when it comes to work and being efficient, things tend to take longer than they should. I feel the culture lacks a sense of urgency in that regard." Egyptian architect Participant 6 had some insightful comments about the work environment in Oman. When I asked him if he wanted to stay in Muscat permanently, he said, delicately and diplomatically,

"The problem is once you start to live and you get used to the …for each country their own type of system of work goes on. It is very unique and different between countries. The system of work in Egypt is very different than it is here is Muscat. The tempo of work for example sometimes in Egypt we are a very big country we have on 90 million people so the competition the way of work the standards are different than what we are using here in Oman. You'll find that when you want to go back to your type of work you'll find some difficulty."

Several participants, and other city residents during off-the-record conversations, mentioned that Muscat is restrictive. Participant 19, a Filipino male, compared the Philippines to Muscat to illustrate his point. He said what he likes about the Philippines is,

"…the freedom. Women can dress and behave as they want openly, guys can drink on the street, you can buy alcohol from the local 7 Eleven and drink wherever you want. Plus I think because of the religion and strict implementation of it, the society does not seem normal as we were accustomed to growing up. We grew up in a culture that is pro

American and feel like I'm being choked up in a restrictive society…. But the pros is that because of this strict laws nobody gets out of line, like you have in our countries."

Participant 5, from France, attributed this restrictive environment to traditional Omani social values, and the prevalence of judgment and gossip. He said, "Out here, socially representation is very important…I have some friends from the royal circle and there are things they cannot do, places they cannot go because they'll be seen. And it seeps down to the whole society and it's a very Victorian approach." He went on to discuss the trend of Omanis and expatriates going on holiday abroad in relation to this restrictive Victorian society. He said,

"…that's why I go to London. It's such a melting pot. People are just too busy doing their own thing. Dubai's a bit like that. Muscat isn't which is why sometime I mean you lived here four years ago…most people tend to just go off to Dubai just to let off steam. Omanis, expats, everyone. And that's the thing about Muscat it is small, it's very non provincial but it's got a…you feel like you're in an invisible straight jacket and sometimes you wanna let your hair down."

Participant 11, a recent Muscat transplant from the rural Sharkiya region, considered Muscat to be crowded and polluted, saying,

"In cities it's like this always, most cities, is more pollution, more than other village and very crowded busy. Even when you go to mosque it is not the same, it's different. So crowded and also you cannot…I cannot focus and give all my attention on the praying, on the God."

In addition to defining Muscat as polluted and crowded, he considered the culture alienating. When discussing residential areas, Al Khuwair in particular, I asked if he knew his neighbours or talked to them, he said, "Here? No. I feel they like this type. I can't go to them even because I feel they like this style, private and being alone. But not all of them…I mean there's difference. There is very big difference between here and outside of Muscat."

For Omani participants, the diversity of the city was generally seen as favourable, with a couple of responses indicating limited interaction with and ambivalence towards the presence of others. No participant conveyed any negative comments about other Muscat residents, and the responses of Omani participants reflect closely the promoted culture and identity of the state.

Omani participants discussed the presence of others in Muscat as positive, and an opportunity to increase awareness, understanding, tolerance and respect. For example, Participant 4, a female architect, said more generally, "the positive aspect I believe is having a multicultural city for the people to expand their horizons. It teaches people to be aware and considerate about others…sharing new experiences." In addition to this, she stated, "Personally, it's always exciting to meet a foreigner in Oman because I see it as an opportunity to get an idea about customs and cultures of others and compare it to our own." Similarly, Participant 11, who works for the government in planning, said, "But we also have to understand and learn other cultures. It's okay to learn to know but not by being influenced by them…you can take advantage take good things so add this things to you."

English translator Participant 10 made it clear that she has limited dealings with expatriates, saying, "In terms of interaction I guess it's nice 'cuz they don't interact that well I mean….from my experience from our neighbourhood we have some foreigners but we don't visit them they don't visit us. We don't really interact." However, she stated that when she has interacted with foreigners, in the work environment for example, that the interactions are good. "They respect the traditions and habits. They respect the culture here which is good," she said. When asked what she likes about the cultures of others that

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she's encountered, Participant 10 said, "mmmm…I like how they respect other cultures and I like how they do not interfere themselves in people's businesses because as you know here if you do something and everyone wants to know and everyone looks at you when you go out." I asked if she meant that they don't gossip, and she said yes.

When asked if they can see any benefits or positive aspects of the cultures of their foreign fellow residents, work culture was consistently mentioned. In response to this question Participant 12 said, "Professionalism would be one. I like how Europeans are very professional and punctual and I wish Omanis were. Especially since I lived abroad I would compare how work ethics are and it's a whole different thing that I wish we had more of." Likewise, Participant 2 cited merit-driven promotion as a positive aspect, saying,

"When you ask me if I like the Americans I work with. Of course. They taught me the job, first of all, and they treat me with respect. And they're very 'you work hard you go there if you don't work hard you don't go there' it's something that I respect, and it's something we don't have much here by the way."

Participants noted what they see as negative aspects of the cultures of others, or negative aspects of the city's diversity in general. For the most part, there were very few negative aspects mentioned. Petroleum engineer Participant 2, when asked if he noticed anything negative, said,

"No not really. See um, Nothing will annoy me because foreigners when they come here they respect our culture, so they do their own thing without disturbing us. They don't force us to follow them and we don't force them to follow us so nothing will annoy me. If they force me to do something I don't like, then I will be annoyed because it is my country, but no one force me. I respect them, they respect me. It's all good."

Participant 12, the female radio DJ, isn't fond of the preference some foreigners give to their compatriots. She said,

"There are very few things I don't like...like for instance how it's based on preferential treatment especially when you work with the South Asian population you do notice how they prefer someone from their own background in comparison to someone who has the skills to do something. That's just professional work. But other than that yea."

Participant 4, the female architect, made a general statement about the downside of Muscat's diversity, saying "…on the other hand there are also some negative aspects, for example the youth tend to copy and mimic what they see from foreigners without being aware that the contentious mimicking is stripping away some of their culture." This counters the promoted cultural trait of steadfast identity in the face of modernization.

The personal impact of Muscat's diversity on Omani participants is more limited than initially thought. Participant 10, a female translator, said, "It's okay for me. It's cool I mean I don't feel they're impacting me in any way." She went on to say, "I actually don't have foreigner friends. But if I do have one I don't mind hanging out with them." Participant 12, the DJ, said she doesn't really notice the high level of diversity in the city. She said,

"I don't mind even though statistics say Muscat has 60% expats I actually notice more Omanis than expats I don't know if that's my image or if where I roam around expats aren't available but… I'll give you an example when I was abroad I would notice I was much of a foreign in the place I lived where here I feel more at home because everyone is of the same culture and same nationality so…I don't know."

Participant 11 who works in planning in addition to running his own business, demonstrating the steadfastness of Omani identity well, said, "It depends...but when you believe on one thing and strongly believe in one thing you cannot be influenced by any other culture...But we also have to understand and learn other cultures. It's okay to learn to know but not by being influenced by them…you can take advantage take good things so add this things to you." Similarly, Participant 2, a petroleum engineer, said,

"… most of the people that come here they love our identity. They love it so that they don't follow us. We don't follow them. We respect each other. We respect the identity and culture and whatever. If they come and love it, of course I won't leave it. Because it is something that we love, as Omanis."

Discussion

In addition to state development and policy, global economic forces have influenced participants' representations of Muscat, particularly the increasing mobility of global labour forces. For the majority of participants, of Western, Asian, African, and Arab origins, Muscat represented opportunity. The main reason cited by expatriate participants for their residency in Muscat was economic opportunity, relating heavily to the global labour market. Several participants stated that an employment opportunity in Muscat presented itself and the opportunity was seized. Some participants stated that if they had the same opportunities in their countries of origin or elsewhere, they would've accepted those, too. Actually, a few migrant participants mentioned a lack of economic opportunity in their country of origin as the motivating factor to relocate. Western, Asian, and Arab expatriates were essentially sought out by their employers for their educational background or work experience in their respective fields/markets. Similarly, those expatriate participants who moved to Muscat as children did so because their fathers were given employment opportunities in the city. For the majority of Omani participants, the global economy influences their representations of the city as well, and similar to those expatriate participants, Muscat represents economic opportunity. The decision to move to Muscat was made by their parents or grandparents, who moved to Muscat for the economic and employment opportunities available at the start of the renaissance. One Omani participant made the decision to relocate from the interior to Muscat because of the employment opportunities, particularly in the public sector. In addition to this

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immigration, the fact that every participant interviewed had international travel experience, even living and studying abroad, demonstrates the impact of global markets and globalization, which in turn influence their spatial practices in terms of interests, preferences, and comfortability in diverse company.

The representations of Muscat amongst participants more or less reflects the promoted cultural values of the state, which revolve around traditional Arabness, Islam, and cosmopolitanism. There is strong evidence that such nation-building efforts have been quite effective. Both Omani and expatriate participants, from all origins but particularly Arab participants and Muslim African participants, held representations of the city as pure and traditional, even 'authentic'. Many participants, including Europeans, viewed Muscat as home or as a great place to raise a family in comparison to other cities in the Gulf. This purity and authenticity was also strengthened by participant statements, of Asian, African, European and Arab origins, regarding the cultural steadfastness of Omanis even in the face of increasing diversity.

Related to this cultural steadfastness is the conveyed representation of Omani society as loyal and patriotic, emphasized notably by a British participant. National pride, unity, and loyalty was also mentioned by expatriate participants, with an emphasis on Sultan Qaboos himself. This was not conveyed blatantly by Omani participants, perhaps because these representations of the city are produced in relation to representations and experiences of other places, and so this unity and loyalty might be passively experienced without reflection. However, a foreign participant did say that he felt like an outsider, and felt as if Omanis would be supportive of other Omanis regardless of the situation, even if he, a British male, and the Omani were close friends. Participants also seem to have some

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understanding of the historical materialism, specifically the maritime trade relations of yesteryear, that serves as the basis for Omani cultural values. The term *wasta* was used during informal conversations, and it effectively translate to nepotism. Muscat residents said with frequency that knowing someone or being from the same tribe as someone produces results, especially when it comes to government affairs and permissions. This is evidence of loyalty and unity, though not meritorious. I also observed such loyalty in social situations, and, in particular, admiration of and loyalty to Sultan Qaboos himself. In conversations his accomplishments are spoken of in high regard, and seen as selfless dedication to the Omani people. This alone fosters patrimonial loyalty, playing into the nation-building strategy employed. Relating to traditional Arab social and cultural values is the promoted characteristic of Omanis as hardworking. Though no expatriate participants cited strong work ethic as a characteristic of Omani society, the fact that Omani participants thought the professionalism exhibited by their expatriate coworkers was admirable and a positive outcome of their presence signals that there is, at least for some Omanis, a shift towards, or return back to, such a work ethic. Likewise, two Omani participants interviewed had more than one job is evidence that the state's promotion of hardwork and sacrifice is at least in part effective.

Also frequently mentioned, by all participants regardless of national origin, was the representations of Muscat and its inhabitants as welcoming, friendly, humble, hospitable and generous, some of the most central elements of the promoted traditional Arabness. Expatriate participants saw this hospitality and friendliness as sincere and genuine, and, as a white western female, I am personally in agreement with this representation. This representation of Muscat usually arose from interactions of

participants with Omanis who extended help or hospitality even when unsolicited or inconvenient. Omani participants also mentioned that the social importance of hospitality, humility, and generosity in Oman is exceptional when compared to other peoples, both regionally and globally. In addition, Omani respondents also mentioned their shock when not met with the same hospitality, which stands as evidence that the value of hospitality is engrained in Omani society. Related to this, a third representation of the city that stands as evidence of the success of Oman's nation-building endeavor is the representation of Muscat as safe and peaceful. This was mentioned by foreign residents, of all national origins, and Omanis alike.

In addition, a fourth representation of Muscat amongst participants is open-minded, tolerant, both culturally and religiously, and progressive, serving as evidence that cosmopolitanism as a national identity element is successful. The fact that many foreign participants from more western societies mentioned this conception of Muscat is notable. Also, the fact that Omani participants expressed that they see the presence of expatriates as an opportunity to learn tolerance and respect, and gain understanding of others, is incredibly strong evidence of the effectiveness of the state's promotion of cosmopolitanism as a critical component of national identity. Western, or westernized, expatriates seemed to hold this conception of Muscat as religiously tolerant in relation to their conceptions about the region more broadly, or of Muslim societies more broadly. The exception to this is the florist from Portugal who noted religious intolerance towards South Asians in particular.

Though much of the state's promoted cultural values are verified through residents' representations of space, there was some evidence that suggests a level of

ineffectiveness in the state's nation-building process. Though tolerance, respect, and hospitality were frequently cited, several expatriate participants noted racism based on both class and national origin. The nationalities of expatriates expressing this sentiment included British, Portuguese, Indian, and Filipino. Other participants discussed the disrespectful and intolerant behaviours and attitudes of Omanis towards non-Western expatriates, specifically those employed as housekeepers, and cleaners. A couple Omani participants mentioned racism and 'expat classes' which runs counter to the cosmopolitan identity elements of tolerance, respect, and hospitality. An Omani participant relayed that there are certain classes of expatriates based on their occupation. South Asians comprise, according to her understanding, the lowest level of that expatriate hierarchy because they are the labourers. This disrespect can in part be attributed to classism, but participants of Asian origins experienced racism despite their employment in other fields.

Likewise, intolerance towards specific religions was mentioned by a Portuguese participant who had converted to Islam. Non-Christians aren't afforded the same level of respect and tolerance afforded to Christian residents. This religious intolerance, however, is supported in part by Omani law, especially in terms of being granted citizenship and permission to marry non-Omanis. To marry an Omani man, for example, an expatriate woman must by Muslim, Christian or Jewish to be granted permission to marry. This law is intended to prevent the influence of other polytheistic religions upon Omani society, but essentially reinforces religious intolerance amongst the population.

This could be due to the fact that Christians historically have been respected by Muslims, but it could also be correlated with the national origins of its adherents. Not unrelated is another negative aspect of Muscat culture mentioned, and that is the

changing nature of the family. One expatriate participant noted that Omani parents tend to leave the child-rearing to expatriate nannies/housekeepers, who therefore have much influence over the cultural identity of those children. This could be considered an impact of international migration upon the national population, but I consider it more an outcome of urbanization and modernization upon the traditional structure of society. The influence of modernization and urbanization can also be seen in the conveyance that, countering the humble representations of Muscat culture, Omani culture is becoming increasingly superficial, as the phrase "spend like an Arab" was iterated on multiple occasions. Likewise, the representation of Muscat as crowded and alienating, as expressed by an Omani of rural origin, further demonstrates the impact of modernization and urbanization upon the local culture and counters the cultural element of collectivity and unity.

Another counter to the state's promotion of tolerance and understanding as a cultural value is the participants' representation of Muscat as restrictive. This is mentioned by non-Muslim expatriates, as to be expected, but also Omanis, especially women. In both interviews and informal conversations, the restrictiveness of society was attributed to family reputation and gossip amongst Omanis. Both men and women fear the repercussions of being seen in public in places they are not meant to frequent, whether or not they are engaged in any transgression. Consideration is given to the thoughts and perceptions others would have, and the gossip that seems to be inherent to Omani society. Omani women feel a heightened sense of restriction because their chastity and reputation is a direct reflection of their families' reputation, and influences their social and personal relations. Though the state promotes tolerance and understanding, it

might not be intended to apply in this situation, but for this promoted element of identity, it should.

Relating to this promotion of tolerance and understanding is the issue of government censoring of specific domestic events. Drug and alcohol abuse, and sexual 'misconduct' are not adequately covered in domestic news publications. This, I speculate, is a way of controlling the flow of information so that the government's modernization efforts are seen in a positive light, but with gossip and grape-vine communications being so prevalent, the residents of Muscat are already aware of the existence of these issues, but perhaps not their magnitude, and are therefore aware of the media censorship. Increasingly, though, taboo issues, such as drug abuse and outreach, are appearing more frequently in local news outlets. This is, in my mind, progress towards tolerance and understanding amongst Omani residents.

There was significant evidence that the state's promotion of hard work was lacking amongst Muscat residents. Both Omani and non-national participants conveyed, citing either that they appreciate the work ethic of expatriates, or their dislike for Omani work ethic, that the promotion of hard work and sacrifice as an element of national identity was unfulfilled. Omani Participant 11, a recent transplant from the rural areas of Oman, ran his own business and volunteered regularly in addition to his full-time government job. Because of his rural upbringing and origins, I consider the rentier state, Omanization, nepotism, and urbanization as the cause for this lax work culture, rather than something that can be attributed to a 'traditional' Omani work ethic that existed prior to 1970.

Having discussed the nation-building strategies employed to promote specific cultural traits, and evaluated the effectiveness of these efforts through an exploration of participants' representations of the city broadly, the following chapter will discuss the more material nation-building strategy, and the subsequent representations of sub-city neighbourhoods amongst Muscat residents.

CHAPTER V

REPRESENTATIONS OF SPACE: NEIGHBOURHOODS

The following chapter attempts to understand representations of Muscat's

neighbourhoods as conceived by the state and city residents. Lefebvre distinguishes

between knowledge and cognition. Knowledge serves power, which includes ideology

and political practice, whereas "cognition is critical, subversive, and open to reality and

possibility." (Bertuzzo, 2009, p. 30) This chapter is concerned with representations of

Muscat's neighbourhoods informed by the material reality created by the state through

urban planning. The methods of urban planning and the production of spaces will first be

discussed, followed by a discussion of participants' representations of space at the

neighbourhood level in relation to the state's urban development efforts.

Place-making in the Construction of Identity and Mitigation of Modernization's

Influence

Place-making is an important strategy for national, spatial identity construction

and territorial unification, and is a strategy used by the Omani state to counter the

potentially homogenizing impact of modernization and globalization. According to

Mohamed El Amrousi and John Biln (2010), whereas other cities of the Gulf Coast, like

Dubai, Doha and Abu Dhabi, "have tended to create two mutually exclusive forms of

spatial development: hyper-modern high-rise towers and shopping complexes, on the one

hand, and carefully renovated historic buildings…on the other…" the urban development

of Muscat has been much more nuanced. (El Amrousi & Biln, 2010, pp. 2-3)

Aurel von Richthofen (2011) discusses the process of territorialization in Oman beginning in 1970. He states that an emphasis on investment in infrastructure was a way to distribute wealth throughout the country and "prevent exodus from rural areas and the creation of slums in the Muscat Capital Area" and to decentralize existing urban areas that could politically challenge the Sultan. (6) The first Five-Year Development Plan focused on land-use and urban planning in the Muscat Capital Area that was both an architectural and administrative undertaking to facilitate the development of the area. "The extents of the Muscat Capital Area along the coast of the Gulf of Oman was framed deliberately by the 2 palaces of the Sultan (Muscat as the government's seat and Seeb as the residence), an act of absolute territorialization." (von Richthofen, 2011, PARAGRAPH #)

With regards to the urbanization process, according to von Richthofen (2016) states that the Capital Area – Seeb Local Plan was created through the consultancy with European planners and architects and divides and separates areas of Muscat into zones based on singular functions. Von Richthofen states that, "this 'modernist separation of functions' marginalized the traditional mix of uses that characterizes the traditional Omani city." (von Richthofen, 2016, p. 145) Royal Decree No. 26/1975 describes the functions of the Ministry of Land Affairs, which helped realize the Muscat development plan. It determines land usage, subdivision, preparation and development, and the allocation of land. The plan first identified sites for the location of industrial and commercial zones and the airport followed by residential areas, though "the plan does not explicitly state any segregation of ethnicities nor social differentiation within the

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residential zones." (von Richthofen, 2011, para. 15) Von Richthofen (2011) states that the

delineated zones of the Ministry of Land Affairs,

"pre-determined space and prevented dialogue….the modernist separation of functions
marginalizing the traditional mix of uses that characterizes the traditional Omani city.
The central power controls and structures a previously heterogeneous and indefinite
space rendering it homogenous. The separation of functions implicit in the zoning plan
leads to a spatial separation and by result to a sprawl of separate living, working, and
leisure districts." (para. 16)

Royal Decree No. 81/84 was issued to allocate government land to Omani citizens

through a lottery system. This decree stated that every Omani male aged 23 and above, or

female if she was the sole provider of the family, had the right to a plot of land. These

plots were subdivided, homogenous in size and shape, along already constructed

roadways. Construction of homes on these subdivided lots were supported by

government-backed loans through the Oman Housing Bank (von Richthofen, 2011, para.

9).

There are images of Sultan Qaboos littered throughout the territory (Photo 5.1,

Photo 5.2), especially the capital. Businesses will display prominent portraits of the

Sultan on the outside of their buildings, in addition to hanging portraits in every office

and waiting room throughout Muscat. Valeri (2009) writes that "the extreme

personalization of Oman's external signs of sovereignty is an integral part of a modern

national-identity building process, to assert Sultan Qaboos' legitimacy and to link both

the institution he embodies and his own person to the 'renaissance' of the country." (p.

139) Likewise, place names personalizing the Omani renaissance in post-1970 Muscat

with Qaboos include Madina al-Nahda, Nahda Hospital in Ruwi, Madina Sultan Qaboos,

18 November Street (Sultan Qaboos' birthday and the date of the Omani National Day),

the wealthy Madinat Qaboos neighbourhood, Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque, to name a

few. By linking his name to modern and progressive developments is part of the national discourse, and by naming specific roads, schools, ports, stadiums, and buildings after himself, "Qaboos was inscribing his presence upon the national geography." (Chatty, 2009, p. 46) All of this place-making plays into the national narrative and produces a conceived space of the state in the Muscat Capital Area.

While Muscat also has the intentions to both preserve culture and to "consolidate a unified…Omani identity, while also developing its tourist sector as a major source of foreign income," the strategy of urban development in Muscat avoided "the reductive strategies" of these other Gulf cities, and can be understood to be comprised of three basic approaches: 1) *recovering the past*, 2) *phasing space*, and 3) *forging reality*. "Taken together," El Amrousi and Biln (2010) argue,

"these can be understood as original experiments in resolving some of the tensions between strengthening location traditions and identities (national identity, traditional culture, local religious beliefs and practices), on the one hand, and facilitating modernization and economic stability (opening up to global economies and tourist development), which tend to dilate local culture and tradition, on the other." (pp. 2-3)

The first strategy, *recovering the past*, involves the maintenance of traditional architectural and urban appearances covering a range of modern conveniences. With regards to regular residential buildings, El Amrousi & Biln (2010) classify Muscat's urban planning as "culturally sensible urbanism" and as "Arabian-modernism" in that in the everyday lived experience, Muscat residents live in neo-Arabian styled houses outside of the tourists' gaze, in other words not for the presentation of traditional culture to tourists. They classify the urban development approach in Muscat as "an organic extension of the 20th century modernization projects in Casablanca and Rabat that merged modern/Western urbanism, with its strict design guidelines, with local ornaments and motifs that sustain local adaptations to climate." (El Amrousi & Biln, 2010, p. 5)

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Building codes and construction regulations, on both commercial and residential buildings, govern outward appearance. There are municipal planning laws requiring buildings look 'Arab,' with neutral colours, Arab architectural design, and height limitations to maintain tradition sense of place. (Jones & Ridout, 2015, pp. 195-196) Building codes specify how residential buildings must look. According to the building regulations for Muscat Municipality, they must "conform with the social norms of the Arab Muslim families." (Ch. 2 Article 14 A1) and Article (33) 2 of Chapter 2 states that "the architectural design of facades/elevation of residential and residential-commercial buildings shall be according to the local, Arab, and Islamic style." (Muscat Municipality –Muscat Municipal Council, 1974) (See Photo 5.3)

The Ministry of Land Affairs and Municipality in Muscat issued ministerial decision No. 41/81 which promotes construction that "incorporate[s] the rounded edges and fleeting towers originating in traditional abode construction…to decorate the flat roofs with balustrades reminiscent of old forts" and to "set back glass windows to the inside of the dwelling to keep the appearance of a traditional house." (Muscat Municipality –Muscat Municipal Council, 1974) White and beige colours are the only approved exterior colours for newly constructed buildings, as they "emanate traditional abode or stone dwellings." (Muscat Municipality –Muscat Municipal Council, 1974) There are also height limits of five stories for new construction to reproduce this traditional residential setting. In addition, even roof-top water tanks (Photo 5.4) are to be hidden "inside a crenellated white cylinder, displaying the Inner Oman forts' architecture, so as not to clash with the harmony sought." (Valeri, 2009, p. 145) Building regulations and guidelines have "succeeded in homogenizing the urban fabric of Muscat and

preserving a comprehensible past that effectively narrated the history of the city." (El Amrousi & Biln, 2010, p. 5) Like residential and commercial buildings, transportation infrastructure, like overpasses, roadways, and roundabouts, are intentionally designed to resemble the old forts of the territory. Roundabouts and overpasses in particular included sculptures and mosaics of coffee pots, frankincense burners, traditional *khanjar* daggers, oryx and turtles, scimitar swords, and other such 'authentic' symbols of the nation. These symbols of the nation are also found on the national flag, bank notes, and other material goods.

Focusing on central Muscat, the historical core of the city, restoration has been focused on monumentality and "the production of monumental space that reinterprets neo-Arabian" architectural elements and places these architectural features on modern buildings. (El Amrousi & Biln, 2010, p. 3) Such elements are an ad-hoc collection of various "Muslim dynastic pasts" and were used to express and promote belonging to a broader Muslim community rather than the local Ibadhi tradition in order to "overcome the expressive and narrative limitations of local abode architecture," since Ibadism promotes humble urban facades. (Photo 5.5) (El Amrousi & Biln, 2010, p. 3)

The Sultan's Palace, Al Alam Palace, is located in Old Muscat/Mutrah area. Al Alam, which means *flag* in Arabic, is unique in its architectural design. The building itself is set off quite a distance from the road. There is ironwork on the walls and the opening gate is iron as well, and the path to the gate is lined with three-point street lamps like those usually associated with Western Europe. There are two bright yellow and two bright blue pillars in the front that support an overreaching roof. The infrastructure surrounding the palace lends to its authoritative air, as they are all white

with wooden balconies, reminiscent of the traditional architecture in Old Muscat and

Mutrah. Right across from the Sultan's Palace on the other side of the roundabout is the

newly constructed and equally monumental National Museum. According to El Amrousi

and Biln (2010),

"The plan was to transform the historic city into an urban museum that represented the
Sultanate, and to relocate vernacular settlements, as well as state departments in al-Qurm,
beyond the historic realm. The city was to become a cultural center, while maintaining
symbols of the State that are accessible to the tourist's lens…This not only satisfies
tourists, but allows second order representations of the city to circulate in various ways
and carry Muscat's message of quasi-Arab monumentality well beyond the confines of
direct experience." (p. 4)

The Ministries district of Muscat is an area dedicated to the location and

construction of ministry buildings. It is located between in Shatti between Al Khuwair

and 'embassy row' along the shore of the Gulf of Oman. It is within these buildings that

male Omani nationals are required to wear the traditional *dishdasha* in order to signal

visually their citizenship status. These buildings are also large and imposing structures,

conforming to building regulations in terms of appearance and façade. Most of these

buildings are visible from the main road through the city. "Internally, these monuments

are arranged to accommodate, but also conceal, the modern lighting and ventilation

technologies and contemporary administrative systems required for modern offices to

function efficiently." (El Amrousi & Biln, 2010, p. 4) Some monuments were

reconstructed or renovated "…by a group of architectural historians aiming to maintain a

unified image that could be at once modern and traditional." (El Amrousi & Biln, 2010,

p.4)

Within each neighbourhood in Muscat has a highly visible and spatially-orienting

mosque, and many of these mosques of prominence are named after political leaders. The

most important is the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque, an enormous structure built off the

expressway between the airport and the city center in the Bowshar neighbourhood. It serves as an incredibly visible symbol of the Muslim component of national identity, as well as the wealth and power of the state, and further emphasizes the personal involvement of the Sultan.

The second element of the strategy as outlined by El Amrousi and Biln (2010), *phasing space*, is the promotion of functional duality, or "allowing independent religious and tourist functions to coexist in the same spaces at different times." (p. 7) This is largely a response for the need to diversify the economy and provide employment through the tourism industry. Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque (Photo 5.6) is used for religious purposes during daily prayers, but is also used as a tourist site during regulated hours. El Amrousi and Biln (2010) state that,

"The duality of function and the shift in spatial use from religious to touristic offers to both the faithful and the tourist a sense of living memory that is often lacking in local heritage sites. In this sense, the Grand Mosque can be understood as a particularly compelling example of 're-packaging' the image of a conservative past into one that a tourist- but also a local- can find accessible." (p. 7)

Ibadhi religious doctrine declares that both vernacular and religious buildings be "modest, humble in appearance and lacking extravagant decoration" and that religious buildings in particular should not be monuments of visitations to those outside the Ibadhi interpretation. The Grand Mosque, with its,

"transnational-electic choice of interior motifs and monumental symbolism transcend local building traditions in time and space, and inevitably reflect political decisions and constructed traditions. They also reflect the ambitions of their respective governments….in part through the presentations of a new image: that of a multi-faceted and tolerant Islam." (El Amrousi & Biln, 2010, p. 7)

In Matrah, next to the historic core of Muscat, is a large *souq* on the Corniche that is regularly frequented by tourists. According to El Amrousi & Biln (2010), this *souq* is evidence of "the front and backstage of Muscat's commercial hub" in that the front

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portion of the *souq* is a "space of tourist consumption and commerce." (Photo 5.7) There you can find souvenirs shops and cafes, "fronted by a group of restored houses traditionally belonging to Hyderbadi merchants" while the backend of the *souq* is the lived space of Lawati residences (Photo 5.8) Spatial segregation is purposefully planned into the *souq,* with a change in lighting, roads and walkways, and the presence of gates signaling a change between the tourist space of the *souq* and the everyday living space of Matrah residents. (El Amrousi & Biln, 2010, p. 6)

Aside from government schools there are several separate primary and secondary schools specific to national origin. For example, there is the Pakistani School of Muscat and the Philippine School Muscat, Indian School Muscat, Sri Lankan School Muscat, ABA (British Academy), Egyptian School Muscat, and The American International School Muscat (TAISM). The Sultan also allotted land for the construction of places of worship, like Christian churches and Hindu temples, and their location is significant in that they are not in the core of the city, and are located in areas frequented by expatriate residents more so than Omanis or foreign tourists.

The importation of foreign labour, particularly unskilled, manual labour, is characterized by spatial and social segregation. Labour camps, within which the imported foreign labourers are confined, are usually in close proximity to or on the site of construction of the infrastructural project, and are provided for the company awarded the construction contract. The accommodations are usually Spartan, and the workers live in close quarters. In addition to the spatial separation of living arrangements, the working hours for the labourers are usually contrary to regular working hours, meaning that not only is there little interaction between the unskilled foreign labourers and the society, but

they go largely unseen or unnoticed. This purposeful separation, in addition to the economic separation given their low wages usually sent as remittances, severely limits the social and cultural interaction between the large population of foreign labourers and the local population, rendering their social and cultural impact virtually null.

Usually, expatriate workers are provided housing by their employers, and do not have much choice in choosing the location of residency. These residential compounds allow for expatriates to conduct themselves as they wish without such activities being seen by the local population, like alcohol consumption and sun-bathing. These residential developments are usually reserved for the more wealthy migrant community, particularly Europeans. They limit the influence of western culture upon the national narrative being constructed.

Forging reality is the third strategy in the urban development strategy and this relates to the construction of tourist enclaves and "developing wholly new and integrated 'realities' by compressing traces of the past into present development." (El Amrousi & Biln, 2010, p. 3) There are expatriate enclaves and resorts, developed by private or joint private-public endeavours. The Ministry of Tourism was created in 2004 and promoted high-end tourism rather than mass tourism with the understanding that "high-end tourists would expect a more authentic cultural experience" and this type of tourism would thus preserve socio-cultural traditions more so than mass tourism. In high-end hotels you see the inclusion of historical references to local culture, including architectural elements like arched windows and central interior domes. Al Bustan Intercontinental Hotel has a "castle-like appearance and grand approach" functioning as a visual reference to the monuments of the Imamate of the interior, like forts and castles. The façade of Barr Al

Jissah, Chedi Muscat Hotel, the Wave, and Shangri-La, resorts or tourist/expatriate enclaves, can all be classified in the same vein, but the resort nature of these locations can be seen as a "further attempt to seclude the tourist from the surrounding environment by offering similarly entertaining, clean, and well-organized staged environments." (El Amrousi & Biln, 2010, p. 9)

Recognizing that foreign investors and residents engage in the consumption of alcohol, the Sultan allows the sale and consumption of alcohol in designated locations, usually in neighbourhoods dominated by Westerners or those catering to tourists. Bars in or in close proximity to hotels are popular amongst expatriates but are also regularly frequented by male Omani nationals. During Ramadan these places do not serve alcoholic beverages. Live music is regulated, limited by important religious dates, level of volume, venue location, and entertainment work visa requirements.

According to El Amrousi and Biln (2010), "These new tourism enclaves have become spaces to stage new but more or less convincing narratives of Omani heritage" and these tourism enclaves exist,

"…within a context that compresses several times and spaces, various pasts, and an evolving present. These enclaves construct from the whole cloth settings that appear entirely real and which sometimes surpass their imitated origins in apparent authenticity and presences. They tend to weave narratives of hybrid traditions that build on chosen sections of history, and project onto the present a fusing of disparate places and spaces." (p. 10)

 El Amrousi and Biln (2010) ultimately argue that,

"This effectively creates a 'new heritage' which serves to validate a unified national narrative of place and identity, as well as to satisfy touristic demands for 'real experiences'. These narratives and their associated space create an image of national identity and socio-cultural cohesion that serves to repacked the image of Oman from one of tribal conflict and conservatism to one demonstrating the (constructed) charm of an emerging Gulf State which smoothly interlaces traditional and modernity." (Photo 5.9) (El Amrousi & Biln, 2010, p. 10)

This staged authenticity and creation of tourist enclaves "encourages the belief that the rest of the landscape the tourist encounters – constructed waterfront, conventional tourist developments, the reconstructed urban core – is all there is to the 'real Oman'…" and that "the unseen populations of the excluded […] spaces, themselves and their spaces as real as any other, however, remain invisible, and as such remain protected from unwanted incursion." (El Amrousi & Biln, 2010, p. 10

Participant Representations of Space: Neighbourhoods

To tap into participants' understandings and conceptions of specific neighbourhoods and areas of Muscat, in particular their inhabitants, the following interview questions were asked:

- Do you think there are distinct areas where noncitizens live? Where are these areas?

- Are there specific areas where Omanis live? Where are they?

As you can see from Table 5.1, several neighbourhoods of the Muscat Capital Area were mentioned multiple times are areas of migrant residency. The most frequently mentioned neighbourhoods were Qurum, Ruwi, The Wave, and Madinat Qaboos. When asked where the areas of conspicuous foreign residency were, Omani Participant 12, the DJ replied, "The Wave is one…for westerners" but went on to summarize the residential composition of the Muscat Capital Area quite thoroughly. She said,

"Like I think it's zoned. Like the whole of Muscat, so the coast is kinda zoned and you have Ruwi and Matrah where mostly Indians live there. Muscat the main Muscat lots of Omanis who live there who it's their hometown. Like generations and generations they have old ancient houses there. Also Qurum is where most high end Omanis live say the ones who came back in the70s and 80s and started having homes and some of them moved to Azaiba and Ghubra as well. Ghubra is mix you have Indian population the western population and Omanis but mostly Omanis. Madinat Qaboos is western kind of center for some reason and…You find more Omanis this side of town, Seeb Mabelah,

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because most Omanis don't rent flats they own land and build houses and this is where the new land is. Al Khuwair I'll say is mostly Indians."

The expatriate residential compounds, The Wave, Dolphin Village, Muscat Hills, and PDO, were mentioned quite a bit as standout foreign residential neighbourhoods. When asked where the foreigners live in the Muscat area, Portuguese Participant 3 said, "Bowsher the Dolphin Village where I live is also an expat community. In Seeb, the Wave. Muscat Hills is starting but it's not very big now." Egyptian Participant 6 said, "The Wave is a lot of expats also, I have a few friends there, they are British. I think a few are Americans also."

The French architect, Participant 5, when discussing areas avoided mentioned 'expat ghettoes', or residential compounds for expatriates. "In Muscat I'd say there Muscat Hills, The Dolphin as well…" He went on to discuss other areas of conspicuous foreign residency, saying ,

"The Wave used to be like that but it's more and more Omanis. Muscat Hills is definitely an expat home, the Dolphin. Al Bustan, there's a set of luxury villas there, but that's really, really rich expats...they made a killing in the oil industry...to a lesser degree Bar Al Jissah is like that as well. Even still there's a certain degree of mixity I mean even in Muscat hills you'll find Omanis living there."

Sudanese Participant 1 said that preference is a factor in the decision of foreigners as to where they live, saying "Well, it depends on...it all depends on what they feel like. You know? Some people like to live in a uh, a live area, which is like you see people and stuff." When I asked where the lively places are he responded, "Shatti and MQ. Uh, Al Khuwair. And Al Qurum." Madinat Qaboos was also mentioned often, and Portuguese Participant 3 identified MQ as "the British neighbourhood."

Qurum was mentioned very frequently as an expatriate neighbourhood also. Participant 11 said, "Most of them in the Wave and new Qurum…and uh MQ." He, like Participant 5, also stated that income and employment was a factor in understanding where non-nationals live. Omani Participant 11 said, "It depends on the living of this foreign people. Many in Al Hamra especially those who work in PDO…and Qurum also, and they like to live near the sea so most of them near the sea."

French Participant 5 when asked if there are identifiable foreign residential neighbourhoods, said "You could say Qurum, for example, Old Qurum is full of Omanis and poor expats. New Qurum is full of high level Omanis and expats." Participant 6, from Egypt said, "It depends to be honest. You can see for example in Qurum you can see a lot of expats…not specific nationality but uh foreigners in general you can see a lot…."

Table 5.1
Neighbourhoods - Foreign Residency

Neighbourhood	Expat Origins	Total
Qurum		7
	India America	
Ruwi/Wadi Kabir		6
	South Asia India Pakistan Bangladesh	
The Wave		6
	Western America India	
Madinat Qaboos		6
	Western America UK	
PDO		3
	UK America	
Dolphin Village		3
	Western	
Al Khuwair		3
	Asian India Egypt	
Muscat Hills		3
	Western	
Matrah		2
	India	
Al Hail		2
	Asian India Nepal	
Ghubra		1
	India Western	1

Omani Participant 2 mentioned both PDO and his neighbourhood of Qurum, saying, "Indians are found everywhere. It is mixed. My neighbours I have Indians and I have Americans I have….you know."

Ruwi and its nearby neighbourhoods were mentioned with frequency as areas dominated by foreigners. Participant 4, an Omani female, stated that, "you can find migrants in all areas in general but a few areas that stand out more than others are Wadi Al Kabir, Ruwi, and Darsait." Participant 3, from Portugal, said,

"Ruwi is where the Indian expats live...Pakistani. I was thinking only about European expats but Ruwi is a huge hub for Indian and Pakistani and yea… We have colleagues here that are engineers they just feel better there because culturally they are their own people. Like people at the wave feel better over there."

The Omani radio DJ, Participant 12, said "Indians live there because it's cheaper…Ruwi and Matrah is cheaper *way* cheaper." Participant 4, though she didn't cite Matrah as a location of prominent expatriate residency, said Omani culture has adapted to global relations not only because of migration, but history. She stated, "Oman had good trading relations with India and Zanzibar, just to mention a few…and you can also link the architecture to the Indian mogul style, mainly seen in Matrah area along the coast." Another reason cited for this residential pattern is the proximity to community-specific services and place of employment. Participant 18, a Filipina procurement agent, said,

"I noticed that a lot of Indians, Bangladeshis, and Pakistanis tend to live in areas like Ruwi and Wadi Kabir because it's where the schools are. And I am almost certain that no Americans, British or other western nationals live in that part of town. They tend to stay in Ilam, Qurum, Madinat Qaboos, Muscat Hills, The Wave, and the like. But generally, expats are all over the place. It's usually the workplace or children's schools that dictate where the individual or family will reside."

Al Khuwair was also mentioned frequently, and is the neighbourhood of residents of some of my friends, interview participants, and was the neighbourhood in which our family lived during our stay in Muscat. Egyptian Participant 6 stated that "Al Khuwair

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and Ruwi have a lot of expats especially Asian nationalities. For Egyptians a lot in Al Khuwair." This is significant in that the Egyptian School of Muscat in located in Al Khuwair, as is the British School. Sudanese Participant 1 said that he thought Omanis live in Al Khuwair, qualifying his statement with "Al Khuwair that's what I think. That's my opinion but yea." Al Khuwair was also mentioned by Participant 5, an expat from France as an area that is "very mixed up." Since Participant 11, an Omani living in Al Khuwair, was really focusing on western expatriates at the start of this discussion during the interview, and so I asked him where those of Asian origin live to which he replied "In Al Khuwair, and Al Hail as well." Participant 10, an Omani female, also mentioned Al Hail as an area of foreign residency, saying, "There are also expatriates in Hail for example my neighbourhood has like three or four foreigners houses. Indians and Nepalis are everywhere…haha"

Sudanese Participant 1 mentioned growth and development as a factor influencing areas of residency, for both non-nationals and Omanis. He said, "Like Al Azaiba. Azaiba just started growing up now…nowadays. Like in the past two or three years or so. But back in the day it used to be very very extremely quiet." Egyptian Participant 6, an architect, stated that the Azaiba area is one dominated by Omani residents (See Table 5.2). He said,

Table 5.2
Neighbourhoods: Omani Residency

Neighbourhood	Total
Azaiba	3
Qurum	3
Seeb	2
Mabelah	2
Al Hail	2
Muscat	1
Ghubra	1
Al Khuwair	1

"There are some areas for example Azaiba if you go to the beach there you will find few expatriates because mainly they are Omanis building their own homes and living there but there are some areas. But because we are architects we know there are some areas

open for commercial residential use so people are constructing buildings are renting for us so renting is an expatriate expense not for local."

This point was again echoed by Participant 12, the radio DJ, who said that

Omanis tend to live in Seeb. She said,

"Seeb includes Mabelah, Al Hail and others. So you'll see that all the big houses are here because they either got the land or bought the land and built a house. If you talk to an Omani nobody lives in flats and apartments. By default everyone lives in a house. The first this is like, 'I need to get land' the first thing you think of when you get a job is I need to buy land."

The French architect, Participant 5, wanted to mention, like other participants,

that every neighbourhood has some degree of diversity, and this is due in part to the

backgrounds and preferences of individuals in addition to their income. In discussing the

'expat ghettoes' he takes great care to avoid he said,

"Even still there's a certain degree of mixity I mean even in Muscat hills you'll find Omanis living there. Many Omanis lived abroad and they feel more comfortable in western, like if you go on the house market you'll see western style and Omani style house what they means the home arrangement is western or not and that's how westerners tend to go and Omanis tend to go for. In Omani style you've got two small lounges at the entry and by today's standards they're small you're not comfortable in either room so even Omanis tend to move away from that. You'd rather have one big space than two small spaces."

Discussion

The state has a huge influence on participants' representations of space through its

urban development, but the national or regional origins of the participants, as well as their

occupations in some cases, also influences their conceptions of Muscat's

neighbourhoods. Firstly, the zoning of Muscat into specific residential, commercial, and

leisure zones limits the areas in which people reside. The creation of leisure zones that

cater to Western tourism and Western tastes created representations of those

neighbourhoods as dominated by Western expatriates. This is due to the amenities and

infrastructure of the area in addition to the cost of housing. Participants of all regional origins identified Integrated Tourist Zones, The Wave, and PDO as areas of Western expatriate residency. The state is also influencing representations of space in its employer-sponsorship approach to labour importation. Employers have housing specifically for its Western expatriate employees, and these are located generally in the areas associated with western residency. Participants of various origins cited Madinat Qaboos as a neighbourhood dominated by western expatriates, notable British residents. In addition, there are expatriate enclaves mentioned by participants of all regional/national origins, which include Muscat Hills, and Dolphin Village, as European and American dominated residential areas.

Employer-sponsored housing is also a factor in the representations of neighbourhoods as South Asian dominated, like Ruwi and Wadi Kabir, but zoning is also a factor in participants' representations of neighbourhoods. The fact that some areas are zoned for commercial residential use influenced the representations of those neighbourhoods, explicitly mentioned by the architects, both European and Arab, as either mixed or expatriate-dominated. Of course class is an important factor in participants' representations of neighbourhoods relating to this zoning. Those areas wherein apartment buildings and small rental villas were conceived of as South Asian and Asian dominated neighbourhoods because of the cost of housing and the held beliefs about the class of people of those origins. Ruwi is a good example, and is an area typically conceived of as poor, dense, and dominated by South Asian populations, and this conception of Ruwi and Wadi Kabir was held by all participants. Al Khuwair too is seen to be more affordable, having a higher density than other neighbourhoods, and

dominated by Asian, Indian and Arab expatriates, but also poorer Omanis. MQ is an area of larger villas and higher-end apartments, and therefore seen as European dominated.

The acknowledgment of zoning and employer-sponsored housing as a factor wasn't made by all participants, however, but were in part informed by participants' preconceived notions about the expatriate populations apart from level of income. An Omani participant speculated that those Western-dominated neighbourhoods exist in part because that population prefers to live by the ocean. Another participant stated that some people prefer to live in a more bustling and lively neighbourhood. A European expatriate stated that her South Asian work colleagues preferred to live in Ruwi because of cultural reasons, preferring to be around their own people. An Indian participant stated that South Asians tend to stay in Ruwi not only because of their employment, but also because they prefer to live in close proximity to their children's schools.

Those areas zoned only for residential use were conceived of as Omani-dominated neighbourhoods because of the allocation of land plots through a lottery system to Omanis. In addition, participants can tell, partially, whether or not a neighbourhood is mostly Omanis based on the size and style of residences. This conception of neighbourhoods like Azaiba, Seeb, and Ghubra as Omani dominated are informed by the presence of large single-family villas, and held by participants of all origins.

Likewise, somewhat unrelated to the level of income of Omani residents, some neighbourhoods are conceived of as Omani neighbourhoods because of the historical development of the city. Muscat and Matrah, for example, are known as Omani areas because it is the core of the Muscat Capital Area, and this was expressed by Omani

participants most notably. The original architecture of the area, catering to the tourist gaze and desire for traditionality, is maintained in this area and likely influencing representations of Muscat. In addition, the Omani residents of this area are seen to be less wealthy than those living in the newly constructed residential areas. Likewise, Qurum is seen as an Omani area, or a mixed neighbourhood, because that is where initially people from the interior bought land at the start of the renaissance. Omani participants as well as an expatriate architect divide the neighbourhood of Qurum into 'Old Qurum' and 'New Qurum', where the former is conceived of as being occupied by Omanis and poor expats and the latter, more recently developed Qurum, is occupied by wealthier Omanis and expatriates of Indian, and European origins. The city is expanding towards Seeb, and so this area is largely seen as Omani dominated, for now.

Having explored the mental components of space at different scales, the following chapter will address the spatial practice, or lived space, of Muscat residence, paying particular attention to how participants' negotiate, mediate, and adapt to the state's identity project.

CHAPTER VI

SPATIAL PRACTICE

The physical field of spatial production can be observed in the network of places of everyday life and the connections between them. Bertuzzo (2009) states that physical space involves,

"continuous material production, through appropriation and mastering, of a society's space by spatial practice, which dialectically propounds and presupposes it. The perceivable aspects of space are hereby concerned: material production and reproduction processes as well as specific places and spatial ensembles that are inherent to, and the starting point of, every social formation.... These places are never isolated, but always inter-related and inter-penetrated." (p. 30)

Spatial practice deals with both the urban reality and the everyday reality of actors. Urban reality is defined by Lefebvre as the routes of travel between spaces. The everyday reality is the everyday routines of actors, but differs from social practice in that everyday routines are controlled by the dominant ideology. "Like all social practice," Lefebvre (1991) writes, "spatial practice is lived directly before it is conceptualized; but the speculative primacy of the conceived over the lived causes practice to disappear along with life, and so does very little justice to the 'unconscious' level of lived experience per se" (p. 34)

According to Lefebvre's (1991) trialectic model, spatial practice is informed by both global material (re)production (Level G), the spatial elements and material production at the level of the city (Level M), and by specific locations or places (Level P). Schmid (2008) summarizes spatial practice, saying it

"...denotes a system resulting from articulation and connection of elements or activities. In concrete terms, one could think of networks of interaction and communication as they arise in everyday life (e.g., daily connection of residence and workplace) or in the production process (production and exchange relations)." (p. 36)

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Elisa T. Bertuzzo (2009) summarizes that spatial practice can therefore "be defined as the visible and most directly observable 'layer' of a complex urban life, of which it represents the functional, operational dimension." (61) To uncover the "functional and operational dimension" that is spatial practice, this chapter will consider the everyday reality of participants. A discussion of the mental maps, which are more active representations of space, drawn by participants will supplement our understanding of the spatial practice of participants conveyed during interviews. The chapter will end with a discussion of the influence of both global processes and state development efforts upon Muscat residents' spatial practices.

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Participants' Spatial Practices

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The everyday reality is defined as everyday routines of actors, constrained by dominant ideology, discussed in Chapter 4, and the material reality it informs, discussed in Chapter 5. In order to uncover settlement patterns, everyday routines, and mobility of Muscat residents the following questions, or variations of, were asked during our semi-structured interviews:

- In what area of Muscat are you living now?
- How long have you been living there?
- Did you choose to live in this area? If so, why?
- Have you lived in any other parts of the city?
- Where do you work? How far away do you live from where you work/study?
- Where do you do your grocery shopping?
- Are there areas of the city that you try to avoid visiting or feel uncomfortable in?
- Are there areas of Muscat you feel more comfortable in? Why?

In reference to Table 6.1, the neighbourhoods of residence for interview participants include Azaiba, Al Khuwair, Bowsher, Seeb, Al Hail, Shatti Al Qurum,

Qurum, and Madinat Qaboos. Five participants live in the Azaiba neighbourhood. Two

participants live in the Al Khuwair neighbourhood, and two participants live in Bowsher.

Two participants reside in Seeb, in proximity to the Sultan Qaboos University campus.

One participant lives in the Al Hail neighbourhood, and one resident lives in Shatti Al

Qurum.

Table 6.1
Spatial Practice -Work and Residency

P	Neighbourhood Residency	Length of Residency	Choice	Previous Residency	Neighbourhood Work	Commute (min)
1	Azaiba	5	no	Ruwi	Seeb (Near SQU)	25
2	Madinat Qaboos & Qurum	1.5	yes	no	Al Ain (outside city)	180
3	Bowsher	2	no	Al Khuwair	Old Muscat	30
4	Seeb (Al Hail)	1	no	Azaiba	Azaiba	10
5	Al Khuwair	1.5	yes	Bariq Al Shatti	Azaiba	10
6	Azaiba	2	yes	Al Khuwair	Azaiba	10
7	Azaiba	10	yes	Azaiba	Azaiba	5
8	Azaiba	6	yes	Shatti Al Qurum	Azaiba	10
9	Azaiba	2	no	Qurum	Azaiba	1
10	Seeb (Al Hail)	20	no	no	Shatti	40
11	Al Khuwair	7.5	yes	Ruwi	Shatti & Mabelah	10
12	Ghubra	22	no	no	Al Khuwair & Matrah	5
13	Seeb	15	no	no	Shatti	15
14	Seeb(SQU)	17	no	no	Azaiba	15
15	Bowsher	.17 (2 months)	yes	Madinat Qaboos	Shatti Al Qurum	15
16	Madinat Qaboos	15	no	no	Seeb	15
17	Shatti Al Qurum	14	no	Al Khuwair, MQ	n/a	n/a
18	Qurum	15	yes	Ruwi	Shatti Al Qurum	10
19	Al Khuwair	7	yes	Ruwi, Wadi Kabir	Shatti Al Qurum	10

One participant, Omani Participant 2, splits his time equally between his family

house in Madinat Qaboos (MQ) and his private flat in Qurum. I asked to clarify that he

lives in both MQ and Qurum to which he responded, "Yea. How are you gonna say that,

haha, I live in two places..." Trying to make data neater, I asked at which residence he spends more time and he said, "Both. This is a flat that I rent."

The average length of residency in the current neighbourhoods of residence is 7.5 years, with the shortest residency being two months and the longest being twenty years in the same neighbourhood. Many participants noted that they have, either with their family or singularly, moved between houses within the same neighbourhood. British Participant 13, for example, has lived on a military housing compound near the Seeb airport for fifteen years, but "moved house four times on the same complex."

Nine participants did not have a choice in their current neighbourhood of residency because either they were children and it was the parents' decision, they married and moved to the husband's residence, or they were provided housing by their employer in a specific location. Portuguese Participant 3, who resides in the Dolphin Village in Bowsher, stated that the decision to live at the Dolphin was forced: "It was a forced decision. Before I was staying in a hotel given by my employee. We had to find a solution in a very short time frame and that residential area was the only one available. Also the governmental contract…it was just easier."

Participant 7, an Indian female who initially moved to Muscat as a child with her family, explained that "wherever you work your company tries to find you a place nearby so that's kinda what happened there. And my school was pretty close I used to go to the American School of Muscat." It was a similar situation for Yemeni Participant 14, who lives on the campus of Sultan Qaboos University. He stated that his father has been working at SQU since they moved to Oman so the decision to live there wasn't his, but said it's a "great neighborhood though." Likewise, Omani-Filipino Participant 17 lives in

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Shatti with his parents since he was a toddler, and reasoned, "I guess my parents thought it was a good place to live in comparison to where we used to live."

Nine participants did decide to move to their current neighbourhood. Those who chose to move did so for the desire of privacy and space, lower cost of rent and/or increased convenience in terms of proximity to work and amenities. Some participants only cited convenience and location as the main motivation in choosing a neighbourhood in which to reside. Participant 8, a British male, said, "I used to work across the road so I had an apartment in Azaiba within the first year of moving to Oman and then I just got a new place in Azaiba because I like the area." His wife, Participant 7 simply said, "This area it's kinda where everything is happening in Muscat."

Bahraini Participant 15 said his current neighbourhood of residency "…was a convenient option because of rent price and location." This was echoed by others, like Filipino Participant 19 who said "The rent is reasonable and it is close to work and school." French Participant 5 was looking for both privacy and space, but more or less stated that, because of his expatriate status, privacy was more of a concern than living space. He conveyed,

"Basically I was living in Bariq Al Shatti for 3.5 years and I had one of the flats on the inside. It's one of those where you couldn't open your curtains because your neighbour is literally peering down…so I was tired of having a quality name but not a quality life so I decided to change and I was looking at the time for a villa. But I wasn't sure that I had this job I was going to Dubai to see my spouse…then I found this flat in this area and I said why not. At the time I didn't have this job at NJP so if I had to move back to the UK or Dubai I can handle the flat easily and my spouse wouldn't go crazy in a big empty villa."

Egyptian Participant 6 stated that when he was living in Al Khuwair, the apartment was rented by the company he works for and was ready upon his arrival, and it was a shared living arrangement with other company employees. He stated,

"So I got an opportunity to be independent and got my own place. So I found a nice…my office was in Ghubra, so it was more near the office. And since that time I was here in

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Azaiba so I shifted from my office to this company and I've been there now for five years and so I tried to find something that was near the office."

A theme of note emerged during interviews, for those of rural origins and those born and raised in Muscat, both expatriate and national, and that is the desire for peace and quiet in their residential preferences. For example, Sudanese Participant 1 likes living in the Azaiba area because, "It's too quiet, and close to the airport." This was echoed by Omani Participant 2, who in explaining his reason for choosing to rent a flat in Qurum said, "It's quiet. I like quiet places." Participant 3, a Portuguese female who used to live in Al Khuwair, said, "I prefer Bowsher. Bowsher is quiet and close to everything."

Five interview participants had no lived in other neighbourhoods of the city. Participants who responded yes to having lived in other neighbourhoods have previously lived in the neighbourhoods of Ruwi (four participants), Azaiba (two participants), Al Khuwair (three participants), Shatti (two participants), Qurum (one participant), and Madinat Qaboos (two participants). Portuguese Participant 9 moved from Qurum to Azaiba because the business through which he's employed relocated. Sudanese Participant 1 said he lived in Ruwi initially but "moved straight away to Al Azaiba." I asked how long he and his family lived in Ruwi to which he replied, "Maybe over ten years. But not in one house. Ruwi is big." Filipina Participant 18 also lived in Ruwi when her family first arrived in Muscat, as did Omani Participant 11, who said, "For one and a half years I was living in Darsait it is in Ruwi...near of Ruwi. I moved because I was studying there in Majan College part time so that's why I lived there to be close to the college. So when I got my degree from Majan College I moved here near of my work." Bahraini Participant 15 had previously lived in both Madinat Qaboos and Mawaleh in

wilaya Seeb. He said, "I moved because my work contract that provided the accommodation ended, also it is somewhat far from the city and my new job"

This relocation from one neighbourhood to another within Muscat is important because it demonstrates the influence of the state's employment policies, urban planning, and the adaptation and preferences of residents with their increasing time spent in Oman. In addition, for Omani participants, it demonstrates perhaps their economic growth and development in that they move from a more affordable neighbourhood, like Ruwi, to a more affluent area, like Shatti or Azaiba.

The neighbourhoods wherein participants work and/or study includes Azaiba, Seeb, Shatti Al Qurum, Old Muscat, and Shatti. Four of the five participants residing in Azaiba also work in the same neighbourhood. One Azaiba resident studies in the Seeb area of the city. One Al Khuwair resident worked in Azaiba and the other worked in Shatti Al Qurum. One Bowsher resident works in Old Muscat, and one Bowsher resident works in the Shatti Al Qurum neighbourhood. The two residents of Seeb work in the neighbourhoods of Shatti and Azaiba, respectively. The Al Hail resident works in Azaiba. The Shatti Al Qurum resident is unemployed and therefore does not commute to work as part of his everyday routine. The Omani male participant who splits his residency between MQ and Qurum commutes 3 hours to Al Ain, where he spends two weeks at a time away from Muscat working in the oil industry.

Omitting this outlier, the average length of interview participants' daily commute is 12.7 minutes. The longest commute within the city was 30-45 minutes between the third participant's residence in Bowsher and the location of her job in Old Muscat. The shortest commute was less than a minute, as Participant 11, a Portuguese florist, lives in

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the flat above his place of work in Azaiba. Most responded that it takes them between 10 and 15 minutes to get to work, and nearly all participants stated that this number is dependent upon the time of day and amount of commute-related traffic.

Carrefour Seeb, Carrefour Qurum, Sultan Center, LuLu Hypermarket, and Al Fair are the stores participants most frequently stated they go to for grocery shopping, but which stores they frequent is dependent upon convenience, necessity, and product preferences. You can see the frequency of stores mentioned or mapped in Table 6.2 on the following page.

Convenience seems to be the most cited reason for shopping at the locations discussed. Stores in relative proximity to participants' homes are those most frequented. Omani Participant 10, a translator, said she buys groceries "most of the time at Muscat City Center, because it's closer to me." Mobility is an issue when it comes to grocery shopping for a couple of participants. Participant 9, for example, does not drive, and so he shops at Al Fair and Sultan Center in Azaiba because of their proximity to his apartment and place of employment.

Several participants differentiated between quick shopping trips and longer, extensive shopping trips. If they needed a few items immediately the locations chosen for grocery shopping were usually near their homes or places of employment. If, however, participants weren't constrained by time, or traffic, they chose to shop at other locations that have more affordable products, or products that appeal to their palates. For example, Participant 6, a male architect from Egypt, said, "There's not much places in Muscat to shopping. Mainly Muscat City Centre for Carrefour and there's a Carrefour in Seeb and

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Carrefour in Qurum. Yea mainly Carrefour, sometimes Sultan Center it's near the office

and I can pick something up quickly."

Table 6.2
Market Activities: Shopping

Location	Neighbourhood	Wilaya	Interviews	Mental Maps	Total
Muscat City Center	Seeb	Seeb	4	5	9
Muscat Grand Mall	Bowsher	Bowsher	5	4	9
Matrah Souq	Matrah	Matrah	2	4	6
Avenues Mall	Bowsher	Bowsher	2	2	4
LuLu Hypermarket	Bowsher	Bowsher	2	1	3
Carrefour City Center	Qurum	Matrah	1	2	3
Carrefour City Center	Seeb	Seeb	2	1	3
City Center	Qurum	Matrah	1	2	3
Al Fair	MQ	Bowsher	2	0	2
Al Fair	Azaiba	Bowsher	1	1	2
Sultan Center	Azaiba	Bowsher	1	1	2
Al Hail Hypermarket	Al Hail	Seeb	2	0	2
Al Fair	Shatti	Bowsher	1	0	1
LuLu Hypermarket	Matrah	Matrah	1	0	1
Maya Shop	Ghubra	Bowsher	1	0	1
Mazoon	Ruwi	Muscat	1	0	1
Ruwi Souq	Ruwi	Muscat	1	0	1
Seeb Souq	Seeb	Seeb	1	0	1

Participant 4, a recently married female Omani architect with limited overseas

experience, chooses grocery stores for larger trips based on product availability and her

personal preferences. She said,

"There's a small shop near our house that I usually go to. It's called Al Hail
Hypermarket, but my favourite shop when I get the chance is Al Fair and Sultan Center.
All these fancy fancy…hahaha. The closest Al Fair is a five minute drive from my house,
but the closest grocery shop is two minutes. Everything here they have everything here."

Participant 12, an Omani female with extensive overseas experience, mentioned

that family dynamics is a factor when choosing a location for larger shopping hauls. She

said,

"It varies. Mostly for immediate grocery shopping like things I definitely need its right nearby it's the Maya shop...it's a minute drive. You can walk to it. If it's a big grocery shopping trip we definitely go to a mall because we can split ourselves, half can take the kids and go have fun and half would go and grab lunch and go do grocery shopping. We go to City Center Seeb."

Some participants were more motivated by product preferences and availability then other factors, and, interestingly, gave consideration to the presence of other shoppers. In my joint interview with newlyweds Participant 7, a woman of Indian nationality with extensive residency in the Gulf, and Participant 8, a British male having lived in Muscat for over seven years, palate was clearly an important factor. When asked where they do their grocery shopping, the two replied immediately and in unison "Al Fair." Participant 7, an Indian female, was the first to elaborate, saying,

"I like specific items that I can get here that only Al Fair sells. So we'll go to the one in Shatti and MQ and Azaiba. And then I like going to Sultan Center because they have a lot more American stuff which I'm used to. Sometimes for actual vegetables we'll go to Carrefour. We want to avoid Lulu's like the plague."

When I asked why they avoid LuLu Hypermarket she said, "It's hella large and hella crowded, really crowded." Her husband, British Participant 8, cited another reason for preferring Al Fair to other grocery stores, and that's the concern of running into work associates or clients. He relayed, "for me I tend to go to Al Fair because it's the only account we don't supply to, so I know I'm never going to bump into people…so I can go in my shorts and especially it's around the corner."

Indian Participant 7, responding to the previous statement said, "We don't go to the local grocery stores," and, regarding their preference for Al Fair, speculated that "it's really out of convenience. If there was a Carrefour near us we would probably go there too." Addressing her British husband's statement regarding Al Fair, she said "One thing

you forgot to say was that in Al Fair they have a lot of Waitrose stuff and it reminds him

of home a little more." He agreed, saying, "Yes that's true."

For some, grocery shopping appears to be a gendered, domestic activity reserved

for women. Participant 5, a French national of West African descent who was born in

Spain but calls London home, greatly dislikes grocery shopping, and so rarely goes to the

store unless it's convenient and/or deemed necessary by his wife, a Moroccan national.

He said,

"I tend to do the complimentary grocery shopping when my wife says to get some bread
haha. My wife does mainly the shopping and she does it in Carrefour and I get dragged
kicking and screaming. But yea I do the complimentary shopping because I'm French and
she likes cheese so I get it at Al Fair. And I buy water because I can carry those."

Participant 11, a religious Omani male who, in addition to working for the

Supreme Council for Planning also runs an aluminum fabrication shop in Mabelah, also

doesn't do much grocery shopping. He said, "I used to cook by myself but now not too

much because I have one business also and so I have no time for cooking so mostly from

restaurants. I like to change restaurants…some nearby my area so I take lunch from

there." This stands in contrast to the response of Participant 2, a more westernized

Omani male employed by an American petrol company. When I asked where he does his

grocery shopping I was met with silence and a cheeky smirk. He pointed to his flexed

bicep, and I asked, "What does that mean? You don't do your grocery shopping?" He

replied, "Men don't do that."

When it comes to shopping for non-grocery items, particularly clothing, the

various malls in Muscat were frequented. However an interesting theme emerged and that

is the lack of appealing local choices and the amount of shopping conducted outside of

Oman.

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Indian female Participant 7 cited the lack of choice, but said they go to the malls if the need something. Participant 1, a Sudanese male born and raised in Muscat said he shops at "City Center, um most likely City Center or...that's all…or otherwise from outside the country." Omani Participant 2 stated that he buys his clothes in "Europe mostly" and when asked why he said, "I don't get my sizes. I get trousers, and they're very short here and I'm tall." Omani Participant 11 of rural origins said he goes to the Grand Mall and likes to shop at a small shop in Ruwi called Mazoon Center. Being unfamiliar with the store, I asked what they sold to which he replied, in a surprisingly vernacular way, "Clothes …t shirt and whatever." Participant 11 then added "…and from Dubai I like to shop in Dubai."

Specialization was also indirectly discussed. Participant 12, an Omani radio DJ, stated during our interview that she was in Ruwi the previous day shopping for fabric. "That's the go-to place for fabric and tailoring so I went there." Likewise, though Matrah Souq was mapped frequently, only three participants stated in their interviews that they go there often. Omani Participant 10 stated she goes to Matrah Souq "especially for silver" rings and necklaces. Portuguese Participant 9 stated that he goes to Matrah Souq because he likes its traditional environment, and likes to burn frankincense in his apartment, and Matrah is where you go for frankincense.

Generally the participants interviewed stated they shop, visit with friends and relatives, go to the cinema, hang out at bars, and stay physically active for recreation and entertainment. Indoor and outdoor entertainment and recreation activities will be discussed separately. People again expressed that Muscat lacks options in terms of entertainment and recreational activities, and nearly all mentioned the season as

influential in where they choose to go. Indoor locations and preferred in the summer months, and outdoor activities are preferred when the weather is more permitting. Female Omani Participant 10 said, "Uh I hang out with friends, go out to the cinema go to the movies…shopping. You know there's not a lot to do in here. There's only malls, movies, restaurants that's it." This was echoed by others, including Omani Participant 11 who said, "There are no special places in Muscat except for Grand Mall…especially in summer it's too hot so you can't go except to these places for shopping, restaurants staying with friends…"

Muscat City Center in Seeb, Muscat Grand Mall and Avenues Mall, both located off the main road in Bowsher, are those locations most frequently cited by participants as places they frequent for shopping and window shopping, in addition to the cinemas located within them. Indian expatriate Participant 7 said, "I like malls because I've been brought up in Middle East and there's a mall culture here so it's in my system. I can window shop for hours."

Her British husband, however, laughed and said he doesn't like going to the malls. He elaborated, saying,

"For me I like to stay at home on the weekends or go to a friend's house, so I don't want to go to those malls because also the thing is we're, like, an interracial couple and so you get stared at a lot. Like a lot. You know, I'm not bothered by it, but you get…it's a culture thing it's a culture thing you have to accept. A lot of people in this culture Arab culture, they don't… I mean the women they don't mix and marry…I met only 3 people who have done it and I've lived here 7 years. So that's probably why if we do something we'll go to like the Wave. Now we kinda stopped going out. We used to go out to drink at like Left Bank now it's more like friends and BBQs."

In terms of restaurants frequented (Table 6.3), a lack of choice was cited, but personal preference, as expected, was the deciding factor in where people go. Indian Participant 7 stated that her and British Participant 8's favourite Italian restaurant is

Tuscany, located in Shatti, and she said "Kargeen's…definitely Kargeen's." Kargeen's is a restaurant and shisha café located in Madinat Qaboos neighbourhood that is very popular amongst the younger crowd. I also frequented Kargeen's often during my residency in Muscat.

Table 6.3
Leisure Activities: Restaurants

Restaurant	Neighbourhood	Wilaya	Interviews	Mental Maps	Total
McDonald's	Azaiba	Bowsher	1	3	4
Pavo Real	MQ	Bowsher	1	2	3
Grand Fish Market	Seeb	Seeb	1	1	2
Maeda Restaurant	Seeb	Seeb	1	1	2
McDonald's	Al Khuwair	Bowsher	0	1	1
KFC	Al Khuwair	Bowsher	0	1	1
Starbucks	MQ	Bowsher	0	1	1
KFC	MQ	Bowsher	0	1	1
Pizza Hut	MQ	Bowsher	0	1	1
McDonald's	Shatti	Bowsher	0	1	1
Al Aktham	Al Khuwair	Bowsher	1	0	1
Lai Thai	Al Khuwair	Bowsher	1	0	1
Zaher El-Laymoun	The Wave	Seeb	1	0	1
Tuscany	Shatti	Bowsher	1	0	1
O Sole Mio	AL Khuwair	Bowsher	1	0	1
Anar	The Wave	Seeb	1	0	1
Woodlands	Ruwi	Matrah	1	0	1
Kargeens	MQ	Bowsher	1	0	1

Omani Participant 10, an English translator, stated that she tries all the new restaurants, but loves Lebanese food, and therefore goes frequently to various Lebanese restaurants, especially at the Wave and Grand Mall. There were also many restaurants mapped that were not mentioned during interviews, as evident in Table 6.3 These restaurants include McDonald's, Starbucks, and KFC. This could be the unintended

outcome of the wording of the interview question, which in many cases implied favourite

restaurants, rather than those they frequent most. It could also be that such locations are

conspicuous and serve and landmarks in participants' spatial orientation.

Visiting with family and friends, as alluded to already, was also a frequently

mentioned leisure activity for participants, because "houses are a great place to hang

out." This preference will be discussed more thoroughly in the following chapter. Omani

Participant 10, a female, said, "I have brothers and sisters in different parts of Muscat so I

may go there and here some times. For example Al Hail, Mabelah, do you know the cities

in here? I have relatives in Al Hail, Mabelah, Mawaleh so I go sometimes here and

there." One participant doesn't consider socializing a leisurely activity. Omani Participant

12, also female, said,

"Usually I stay at home but I do hang out with friends…but I don't know. For me recreation is on the weekends and on the weekends I choose to stay home. I'm mostly active during the weekdays so I'll go for dinner and catch up with everyone but I find it more of a chore than recreation. If it's me time its recreation if it's someone else I think it's more part of my social life but I don't consider it recreation time."

Establishments that serve alcohol, including many restaurants mentioned, seem to

be popular amongst participants. Participant 1 stated that he goes to Left Bank more

frequently than he goes anywhere else, and this was echoed by Omani Participant 2, a

petroleum engineer, who added Zouk to the list. French architect Participant 5 said,

"I used to go to Left Bank before, but lately I feel like it's a pub more than a bar. I used to

like the wine bar. It felt really more like a pub… Sometimes I go to Trader Vic's because

I like to Salsa." Participant 15, a young Bahraini male, said he goes to the cinema and

enjoys "going out to pubs" on a regular basis and goes camping or to the beach on

occasion. Portuguese Participant 9, a florist, stated that he does go to the Wave every

week because it "feels like Europe" and he sees many "European faces," but only

window shops. He also said he doesn't go out to the hotels in Shatti because the

Intercontinental Hotel and Grand Hyatt "are too crowded now" and, more importantly,

he's saving his money. You can see the frequency with which specific venues were

mentioned in Table 6.4 on the following page.

Table 6.4
Leisure Activities: Indoor Recreation and Entertainment

Location	Within	Neighbourhood	Wilaya	Interviews	Mental Maps	Total
Left Bank	n/a	Qurum	Matrah	6	4	10
Shangri La	Shangri La Resort	Muscat	Muscat	2	7	9
Cinema	n/a	Shatti Al Qurum	Bowsher	2	3	5
Royal Opera House	n/a	Shatti	Bowsher	1	4	5
Zouk	Crown Plaza	Qurum	Matrah	2	2	4
Copacabana Club	Hyatt Regency	Shatti Al Qurum	Bowsher	0	3	3
Ghazal Pub	Intercontinental	Shatti Al Qurum	Bowsher	0	3	3
Cinema	City Center	Seeb	Seeb	2	0	2
Cinema	Muscat Grand Mall	Bowsher	Bowsher	2	0	2
On the Rocks Lounge	Golden Tulip	Seeb	Seeb	0	1	1
Feeney's Irish Pub	n/a	Shatti Al Qurum	Bowsher	0	1	1
Route 66	n/a	Shatti Al Qurum	Bowsher	0	1	1
Trader Vic's	Intercontinental	Shatti Al Qurum	Bowsher	1	0	1
Rock Bottom	Ramee Hotel	Qurum	Matrah	1	0	1

Omani Participant 11, a recent city resident, stands alone as the one participant

who conveyed that he prays five times per day, every single day. I asked where he prays,

and where he chooses to pray. He replied, "It depends on where I am at the time of praying. So there was Al Fajal is near my home…and the afternoon there is one here I pray in the work we have a small mosque here. And also in the evening…so wherever I am I will go. I don't have special place." Looking for insight into the population frequenting the mosques in various locations, I asked who was praying alongside him. Omani Participant 11 said,

"Different Muslim people. More of them India, Bangladesh. But of course it also depends on the area. The area which is accommodating they are Omani citizen so they will be all Omani. But when I go to industrial area, when I go to my workshop in Mabelah most of them from Bangladeshi…but there are some Omani but mostly Bangladeshi and Indian. When I go to Al Khuwair mosque they are Egyptian, from Jordan, many nationalities...only Muslims can go there."

As shown in Table 6.5, outdoor recreational activities were mentioned frequently by interview participants, and seems to be incredibly popular in Muscat. Participant 3 stated that she doesn't go out much, and said, "Usually I stay within my residential compound or the Crown Plaza. I like to go there for drinks and dinner. And during the weekends, I dive a lot so I go to the Dive Center a lot for diving."

Unsurprisingly, the time of the year greatly influences outdoor recreational activities of participants. For example, Egyptian Participant 6, an architect, said that he and his family go to "different places…the beach we also go to Sifa, sometimes the Wave. I like Qurum Beach, its nice place there especially in winter but you know in this weather it's way too hot." Omani Participant 10 said she goes to Matrah and, in cooler months, enjoys walking along Matrah Corniche because "although it's crowded it's very beautiful." Indian Participant 7, employed in the mental health field, said,

"especially now that it's getting hot we like to go on the boat, he (referring to British Participant 8, her husband) likes to fish. I hate fishing. Swimming stuff like that. But now that it's hot and Ramadan now it's kind of put a cramp on what we used to do...and

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people always find an excuse to leave so our friends go on vacation….so our summer schedule changes a bit. I still like to be active on the weekends."

Table 6.5
Leisure Activities: Outdoor Recreation

Location	Neighbourhood	Wilaya	Interviews	Mental Maps	Total
Marina Bin de Rauda	Muscat	Muscat	3	2	5
Qurum Beach	Qurum	Matrah	3	2	5
Al Amerat	Al Amerat	Al Amerat	2	2	4
Azaiba Beach	Azaiba	Bowsher	1	3	4
Oman Dive Center	Muscat	Muscat	2	2	4
Shatti Beach	Shatti	Bowsher	1	3	4
Islands (Bandar al Khiran)	Muscat	Muscat	2	1	3
Matrah Corniche	Matrah	Matrah	2	1	3
Oman Auto Track	Bowsher	Bowsher	1	1	2
Ghubra Beach	Ghubra	Bowsher	1	1	2
Muscat Beach	Muscat	Muscat	0	2	2
Seeb Beach	Seeb	Seeb	0	1	1
Marina	The Wave	Seeb	1	0	1
Almouj Golf Course	The Wave	Seeb	0	1	1

Omani Participant 12, a radio DJ with extensive residency in the West, advised that I should "focus on the migration that happens every weekend." When I asked what she meant she said, "For example in Eid the streets are empty and that's because nobody's in Muscat nobody…very few of the population of Omanis have families who are originally from Muscat. Everyone has settled here but their forefather so everyone meets in their towns…" Omani Participant 11 stands apart from other participants in that he does leave Muscat every weekend, to visit his family house and check out natural attractions with his family. He said,

"I like more to go outside Muscat for…we have good weather here in Oman in summer especially in Salalah good weather and rain also we have green mountain (Jabal Akhdar). I like to go more to green mountain because it is close to Muscat and has cold weather and also we can buy from there fresh fruits because the weather there is good so the fruits is more growing there, especially in the summer. In the winter and out of this month we

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cannot go there because the weather will be too much. Also al Ashkara is good weather. Masira island good weather. Also I like some cities which are traditional like Nizwa. Nizwa has many old things. But in Muscat I told you there's not much places to go except these City Center…Grand Mall."

Table 6.6
Neighbourhoods Avoided/Unfrequented

Neighbourhood	Total
Ruwi	9
Matrah	3
Wadi Kabir	2
Muscat Hills	1
Dolphin Village	1
Seeb	1
Mabelah	1
Ghubra	1
Labour Camps	1
Nowhere avoided	3

The areas of Muscat that participants avoided include Ruwi, and Wadi Kabir (Table 6.6). Locations where participants felt most comfortable were Shatti, and Qurum (Table 6.7), though many stated that they did not feel uncomfortable in any area of the city.

Unfamiliarity, lack of purpose, crowding, congestion, and traffic were frequently mentioned as the rationale behind avoiding certain neighbourhoods. Omani female Participant 4, an architect, said, "Yes there are some areas I try to avoid in Muscat due to the really tight street, traffic, and lack of parking." Omani female Participant 12 doesn't avoid any area of Muscat, and said, "I mean seriously during the week I'm all over the place. Maybe the one place I don't go to is Mabelah but the reason is there's nothing…there's no attraction there except for a few friends that live there and the only time I go there is if they invited me." Likewise, Participant 6, an architect from Egypt doesn't avoid any neighbourhood specifically, but said,

"I mainly stay in this area you know Azaiba, Al Khuwair, Qurum. I don't go to the other side because basically our work is in this area and our shopping also is the same so…sometimes we go to Ruwi if we have something to be done there but I'm not going often… Maybe I'm not familiar with Seeb area but even Ruwi I can manage."

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British Participant 8 mentioned labour camps as areas in which he felt uneasy. He said, "I mean I don't like labour camps. I work in telecom distribution…I feel out of place in like labour camps." Because of the lack of visibility of these camps, I asked where they are. He said, "All around in Ghala, Al Hail, even in Azaiba, there's one." Matrah was also avoided by a few participants interviewed. French architect Participant 5 avoids Matrah during specific times because of the traffic and density of the area. He said he avoids Matrah,

"…in the evening because it's just too crowded. It's Hell. My wife forced me to drive to Matrah after iftar she said, 'do you want to park and walk with me?' I said 'Hell no, I'm gonna park at the fish market and when you're done you call me.' I was in the car for a half hour and it was hellish."

As you can see in Table 6.6, Ruwi was most frequently cited as a neighbourhood participants purposefully avoid. Darsait, which is really an extension of Ruwi, was also mentioned. Participant 3, a museum curator from Portugal, who works in Matrah, avoids Ruwi because, she said, "I always get lost. Haha I never go to Ruwi because I end up lost. I cannot drive there. I don't feel unsafe, I just cannot get myself oriented there." Omani female Participant 10 responded, "Maybe somewhere near Ruwi or near there because of the crowd. It's all crowded all day and night." This was repeated frequently by others, including Participant 15, from Bahrain, who responded, "I'd say Ruwi during general working hours just to avoid the usual traffic there. Nowhere else beyond that." As well as Participant 11, an Omani male, who said, "Ruwi because…I was there because of the college but...and also Wadi Kabir. This two places I don't like to go because of crowded and there is nothing there…nothing interesting to go. I only go when I have to go."

Female participants conveyed that, in addition to the congestion, they avoided Ruwi in part because of the nationalities of those residing in that area. Filipina Participant

19 said she avoided Ruwi because "…there are too many guys who don't have a sense of personal space." Similarly, Participant 7, an Indian female, stated,

"As a woman I feel uncomfortable a lot more. I feel uncomfortable in places like Ruwi and Matrah. They're a lot more crowded parts of Muscat. There's a larger population of other nationalities there like a lot of Indians, Bangladeshi, Pakistani I guess it's more concentrated in those areas. I'm not particularly comfortable there because there's so much happening but apart from that, just anywhere as a woman you go alone sometimes it can get quite uncomfortable but just stay in well-lit areas."

French architect Participant 5 avoided expatriate compounds, which he referred to as 'expat ghettoes', because the introverted mentality of their residents. I asked where these locations of introversion are, to which he replied,

"In Muscat I'd say there Muscat Hills, The Dolphin as well. You ask if there are places I avoid, then definitely. I don't like expat, what you call expat homes because I just don't like the mentality. If you're coming somewhere to work, it's a life experience. If I'm gonna go to the UK to be French, what's the point of going to the UK? If I'm gonna go somewhere it's also a personal development kind of."

The areas of Muscat Capital Area mentioned as those frequented or preferred, or areas in which participants felt most comfortable include Shatti, Qurum, the Wave integrated tourist complex, Azaiba, and Madinat Qaboos (See Table 6.7). Omani Participant 4, an architect, said she feels more comfortable in particular areas "because of the infrastructure facilities and organization." Omani petroleum engineer Participant 2, though he was referring more to specific places than areas of Muscat, stated,

Table 6.7
Neighbourhoods
Preferred/Frequented

Neighbourhood	Total
Shatti	7
Qurum	5
The Wave	5
Madinat Qaboos	5
Azaiba	4
Oman Dive Center	2
Bowsher	2
Mawaleh	2
Al Hail	2
Al Amarat	2
Matrah	2
Al Khuwair	1
Seeb	1
Mabelah	1
PDO	1
Ghala	1

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"I like to go where I feel comfortable, but that doesn't mean other places aren't comfortable. It's like I'm the type of person who finds a place where I feel comfortable and then get stuck there… I prefer to go to places where they respect me. Thing is when I go to a place, first impression, if I feel comfortable there then that's it. And the atmosphere of course. The crowd, what kind of people go there…"

Sudanese Participant 16, who holds Omani citizenship, stated that he's comfortable everywhere because "everybody here is welcomed" but stated, "In my opinion I prefer MQ 'cuz I've been living there for long and it's my hometown."

As somewhat discussed in Chapter 5, many participants said that they frequent various beaches in the Muscat Capital Area, included Shatti Al Qurum, Qurum, Azaiba, Oman Dive Center near Qantab in wilaya Muscat, and the PDO compound in Qurum. Yemeni Participant 14, a software consultant, said he feels comfortable in "Azaiba, by the beach" because "it's more like a quiet zone that gives you a piece of mind." Omani Participant 10, however, prefers another beach because of its development. When asked, she said, "Maybe somewhere near Qurum, because of Shatti Al Qurum you know the beach and all the restaurants on the beach it's very nice." Likewise, Portuguese florist Participant 9 also enjoys the Shatti neighbourhood because "it's like Europe with the canopies (awnings)...and I feel comfortable to chill and drink coffee there." He says both Qurum and Shatti are comfortable because "it feels like home." In addition to these more Western areas, however, Portuguese Participant 9 also feels incredibly comfortable in Azaiba beach because of the people he sees. He said, again, all the fishermen and all their boats is an attraction of Azaiba beach because he loves "the traditional." Participant 9 stated, as previously mentioned, that he also likes to frequent and feels comfortable in Matrah and its corniche because it is both aesthetically pleasing and traditional. He added also that he likes to frequent places with some history, and the Matrah Souq and the

architecture of Matrah are "historical structures". It's not just the historical structures he cited as appealing. He went on to say, "Port people are very traditional, and I love the tradition." Likewise, Participant 10, an Omani female, also said in addition to the development beach areas of Shatti, "I like to go to Matrah. It's very beautiful. Although it's crowded it's very beautiful."

French Participant 5 inferred that the reason he and his wife, a Moroccan national, like to go to and feel comfortable in certain locations is the freedom from the gaze of other. He said, "On the weekends I like going to the Oman Dive Center just to, you know, I'm the lounging type so I like being in the shade. My wife likes to tan. So we found a place where she can tan and, you know a bar and drinking." The Wave was another frequently mentioned location participants enjoy or in which feel comfortable. Egyptian Participant 6 said that though is doesn't feel more comfortable in one place over another, also he said he and his family also like to frequent the Wave, saying, "We like to spend to the Wave sometimes and enjoy the walk and the restaurants there. We like to go and spend some time there."

French architect Participant 5 also said that he enjoys going to the Wave because of its visual resemblance to Europe. "I like strolling in the Wave," he said, "I find the new Wave quite interesting as an area. I mean it looks less like an expat ghetto and more like a little *chantier*, so I like that as well because you can stroll…and I like places where locals and expats mix." This for his comfortability at the Wave was echoed by Participant 9, the florist originally from Portugal. He loves to frequent the Wave every week because, he said, with the marina, the outdoor cafes along the walk, the window shopping, and the "European faces" the Wave has the feel of Europe.

Not entirely unrelated, other participants stated that they feel most comfortable in the areas closer to their homes, for different reasons, but overall familiarity was key. Bahraini Participant 15 stated that he feels most comfortable, "Around the Bousher area next to my apartment, as it is calmer than other areas. I've also become comfortable in Mawaleh, as I used to live there." Indian Participant 7 stated that she and her British husband, Participant 8, tend to stay centralized around their apartment also, both for convenience and familiarity. She said,

"We kinda stay in a central area of Seeb, Azaiba, MQ, Shatti area, and the thing is now Muscat is expanding more towards the Seeb area anyway and I wouldn't say it's getting a lot more westernized but it's definitely catering to our tastes a little bit more I'd say. Avenues just opened up and MGM is there and now there's another mall near MGM."

Responding to her statement, Participant 8 elaborated on their choice of residency as being related to this centrality to other areas they frequent regularly. He responded, "That's part of the reason we stay in Azaiba because it's like ten minutes to MQ where we have quite a few friends and then its ten minutes to the Wave and then I work just past Muscat city center…so it's quite a central area and we, you can basically say we go from the wave to MQ really, and Shatti sometimes."

Mental Maps: Active Representations of Space

Mental maps demonstrate "that the city, to non-professionals as well as to geographers or architects, is what is lived at street level: what influences and accompanies everyday life, where desire can potentially be realized, and where everyday objects and landmarks play a part." (Bertuzzo, 2009, p. 164)

The mental maps gave some insight into the spatial practices of participants. With regards to routes and mobility, 18 November Street, Madinat Sultan Qaboos, and the Muscat expressway were frequently included on the map, but very few participants

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labeled these roads on their respective maps (See Table 6.8). 18 November Street, Madinat Sultan Qaboos, and the Muscat expressway are utilized most in the mornings and the afternoons, corresponding with the workday schedule. In addition to serving as the main routes of Muscat residents in their daily mobility, these main roads orient participants spatially and serve as the spine of their mental conceptions of space, as evident in their inclusion in the majority of mental maps, and, for some, their abrupt ends.

Table 6.8
Major Roadways Mapped

Road Name	Drawn, labeled	Drawn, unlabeled	Total
18 November Street	2	6	8
Madinat Sultan Qaboos	1	9	10
Muscat Expressway	4	5	9

The mental map drawn by 48 year old French architect Participant 5 (Map 6.1), is rich in content. Firstly, he includes and labels all three major roads, but all three end abruptly in the Shatti neighbourhood, as located, and just east of his specified home location in Al Khuwair. Neighbourhoods are also labeled and delineated, and seem to be small in size compared to their actual size. The neighbourhood is Ruwi is marked with a dashed line rather than solid line to indicate his uncertainty about its size and extent. The PDO expatriate compound and Oman Dive Center both seem much larger than they are. Similarly, City Center Qurum is also huge, the size of neighbourhoods, though it is a specific location. In addition, eastern Muscat seems to have compressed distances, and is shown to be much closer to the town of Sur than it is. Interpreting this mental map, I would assume that Participant 5 is more familiar with the area between Seeb and Shatti, less familiar with Muscat east of the neighbourhood of Shatti. Thus, I would conclude his spatial practices are concentrated in this west-central area of Muscat governorate.

The map drawn by 31 year old Egyptian architect Participant 6 (Map 6.2), for me, reflects a planner's view of Muscat, which could be the case considering his occupation. Firstly, the coastline and mountain range, barriers to development, are both drawn with some detail. All three major roads are also drawn and labeled, and three main North-South oriented roads are drawn, with three roundabouts included and labeled at the intersections of these north-south oriented roads and the three main roads of Muscat. Neighbourhoods are also labeled, and in his map are delineated by the road networks. The location of his home and his place of employment are also included, as well as PDO, which is stated during the interview is a location is frequents for work-related reasons. The mental map of Participant 6 ends in the neighbourhood of Qurum, signaling that his familiarity and spatial practice is limited past PDO and the neighbourhood of Qurum. In our interview, he made a statement that let it be known that the roundabouts drawn are landmarks in his mental map of Muscat. "Yea I go I'm handling a project for PDO they are one of our clients so I'm always going there. Moving always from here, Azaiba, to Qurum. This area is always..I go office and go home. It's just two or three traffic lights."

24 year old Portuguese Participant 9, a florist who lives in Azaiba above his place of employment and does not drive, produced a mental map (Map 6.3) that reflects his limited mobility. It does not include any roadways and is less linear than the actual form of Muscat Governorate, which is developing in a strip between the sea and the mountain range. The triangular lines drawn, he stated, is more or less the extent of his daily spatial practice. Participant 9 stated that he absolutely loves Azaiba Beach, and loves watching the fishermen engaged in their work at this location. His pleasant illustration of Azaiba

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Beach reflects his fondness of the area, and, because it is the only illustration, implies the importance of this location to others in his daily spatial practice.

23 year old British Participant 13's mental map (Map 6.4), on the other hand, is incredibly road-heavy. Participant 13 very much enjoy cars, from tinkering to driving, and his mental map reflects his mobility and mode of transportation. All three main roads are included, as are various on-ramps and roundabouts. There are only two roads labeled on his map, the on-ramp for the Muscat Expressway, and 18 November Street, which is actually labeled as "Wave Road / Racing Road." His home is labeled, but no neighbourhood labels are present. Participant 13 also mapped two gas stations, and an automobile/go cart track. The rest of the locations included in his mental map are interpreted as being landmarks for spatial orientation. The extent of the map is limited the area of the city between the Wave and the western portion of Bowsher, perhaps because he started the map at a small scale are ran out of space.

The mental map drawn by 25 year old Omani female Participant 10 (Map 6.5) includes her home, place of work, and the route between the two. The main road, Sultan Qaboos Street, is depicted as quite wide, an area in relation to the lines representing the other roadways. The airport and Muscat Grand Mall are also depicted on the sides of Sultan Qaboos Street. There are also two roundabout landmarks included on the map, one in close proximity to her home, and one in front of the Wave. From this roundabout, there are no other roads indicating that it is really just a landmark on the way to the Wave. The Wave is included, too, and behind a square depicting what I assume represents the front entrance, is the Walk, identifiable by the two rows signaling the buildings between which the walk is located. Participant 10 has also included Muscat City Center and one of her

favourite seafood restaurants, Grand Fish Market, which is next to Muscat City Center. Because of her gender, nationality, and neighbourhood of residence, Participant 10's conception of Muscat is limited. In her interview she mentioned that she frequents the Wave and the two malls depicted, but said otherwise she doesn't go out much for recreation and entertainment. She discussed enjoying Shatti for its amenities and proximity to the beach, but the extent of her map shows a limited, neighbourhood view of Muscat, indicating that perhaps she's more familiar and comfortable in this area and goes to other areas infrequently. Thus I would say that this mental map represents the city as routine.

The map drawn by 28 year old Omani female Participant 12 (Map 6.6) is incredibly linear and relatively abstract and functional in its depiction of Muscat. There are two lines drawn, depicting two main roads Sultan Qaboos Street and the Muscat Expressway. On either side of these major routes, and notably not in between, the different neighbourhoods of Muscat are outlined, and her reason for being in each is conveyed. This map gives us a lot of insight into her conceptions of each neighbourhood as they relate to her spatial practice. For Participant 12 mentioned during the interview that she visited Mabelah to visit friends infrequently. One can gather that she doesn't frequent Seeb often, but when she does it is to access the beach. In Al Khoudh is where she does her shopping and dining, in addition to visiting family. One can reason that Al Khoudh has many Omani residents. She visits with family in Azaiba, but also mentioned McDonald's in that location, as other participants have done. She lives in Ghubra, and so classified this area with home and the leisure area of "beach" in addition to daily errands of "groceries". One could reason that most of her socializing occurs in Shatti/Qurum

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because of the outlined activities in which she engages in that neighbourhood. Thus I would say from this map, the representations of space are based on utility and consumption

The 25 year old Sudanese restaurant owner Participant 16 (Map 6.7) drew a mental map of Muscat that only includes neighbourhoods. Off the coastline he has located and labeled Seeb, Muscat, and Bowsher in addition to the cities of Sohar and Sur, for reference. Next to the Seeb label, on the inland side of the coastline he has written Al Khoud, Mawaleh, Al Hail. Next to the Bowsher label he has written Wattiya, MQ, Azaiba, Khuwair, Ghubra and Qurum. From this we can speculate on his representations of the city. Firstly, since the Muscat label is north of the Bowsher label, he conceives all of the Muscat Capital Area as Muscat, which I don't think is unusual considering everyone references this metropolitan area as Muscat. But the fact that it is essentially misplaced could be evidence that he does not spend much time in wilaya Muscat, or Old Muscat, or even Matrah. Secondly, Since Al Khoud, Mawaleh and Al Hail are next to the Seeb label, he conceives of these areas as parts of wilaya Seeb. The various neighbourhoods listed in Bowsher would also indicate that he sees these areas as part of the larger wilaya. The fact that more Bowsher neighbourhoods are listed could indicate that he is more familiar with this area, which is both where he lives and where he works. I would consider this map to be a conception of Muscat as compressed.

The map drawn by 22 year old unemployed Omani-Filipino Participant 17 (Map 6.8) reveals a representation of Muscat as home. His place of residence is the center of the map, and includes very few labels. The gas station, McDonald's, the Hyatt, and Shatti beach are labeled, in addition to a traffic light, an orienting landmark. In our

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conversations it was clear that he rarely socialized outside of his home, preferring to have friends over to the family house instead to smoke, chat, and listen to Bay-area hip-hop on YouTube. Participant 17 also does not drive, and does not commute to work or school, but there are several roadways drawn. However, these roadways end abruptly, and show that his familiarity with those routes is limited. The only road he may be familiar with the main residential street off of which is his house. Really, Muscat is simply home.

The map drawn by 40 year old Omani petroleum engineer Participant 2 (Map 6.9) reflects an active representation of Muscat as leisure. Both his family home and the personal flat he is renting are depicted. Also included on his mental map are landmark locations including the International Airport in Seeb, the Sultan's palace, and the Matrah Souq. The remainder of the locations included on his map of Muscat are locations he frequents often, and are those leisure spaces that cater to Western tastes and serve alcohol. Such venues include the Mexican restaurant Pavo Real in Madinat Qaboos, Copacabana club in the Hyatt, Ghazal Pub in the Intercontinental Hotel, On The Rocks Lounge in the Golden Tulip Hotel, and the much beloved Left Bank Lounge. Participant 2 does not work within the city of Muscat, and therefore his conception of Muscat is not one of work, but of leisure.

Discussion

Global economic forces have increased economic activity within Oman and Muscat in particular. There is more material production and consumption activity in Muscat than prior to 1970, and this changes the spatial practices of residents in that their more frequently engaged in such consumption and production. In addition to market activities, employment activity is on the rise in Muscat, and female employment in

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particular has greatly increased. The mobility of Muscat residents has also been influenced at the global level, with an increasing use of automobiles, in addition to the western-style car-oriented urban development of the city, also influenced by global forces. Lastly, the changing preferences of residents in terms of entertainment, clothing, and food, influenced by globalization, impacts the spatial practices of Muscat residents, who are choosing perhaps different locations than they would have if, for example, western restaurants were not abundant. Likewise, the availability of international brands and products catering to western palates also influences the spatial practices of residents, and can be attributed global forces of production.

The state's development plan influences the spatial practices of Muscat residents in several ways. With regards to residency, the state's development plan is incredibly influential for the spatial practice of Muscat residents. As discussed previously, specific areas of the city are zoned for residential use and commercial residential use, which influences the population density, infrastructural amenities, the class and national origin of the neighbourhoods' residents, and subsequently, the representations of those neighbourhoods amongst Muscat residents interviewed.

The allocation of land plots to Omanis through a lottery system creates Omani dominated neighbourhoods, particularly in the northern area of the governorate in Bowsher and Seeb. The neighbourhoods of residency for Omani participants were Madinat Qaboos (1), Qurum (1), Al Hail (2), Ghubra (1), Al Khuwair (1), and Shatti Al Qurum(1), generally more wealthy and developed neighbourhoods of Muscat. The neighbourhoods of residency for migrant non-national participants included Azaiba (5), Seeb (2), Bowsher (2), Qurum (1), and Al Khuwair (2). For the five Western participants,

their current neighbourhoods of residency are Bowsher, Al Khuwair, Seeb, and two live

in Azaiba. One European participant lived on an expatriate compound in Bowsher. For

participants of Asian and African regional origins, another two live in Azaiba, one in

Madinat Qaboos, one in Qurum and one in Al Khuwair. The three Arab participants

interviewed live in Azaiba, Bowsher, and Seeb.

Most participants stated that they had relocated within Muscat, from one

neighbourhood to another. Half of the Omani participants interviewed had lived

previously in another neighbourhood, which include Azaiba, Ruwi, Al Khuwair and

Madinat Qaboos. However, only two stated that it was their decision to relocate.

Participant 2 decided to rent a separate flat in Qurum to escape the family house, and

Participant 11 left Ruwi once he graduated from a college located in that neighbourhood.

The third participant to relocate within Muscat did so because she married and left the

family house to live with her husband. The fact that the majority of Omanis interviewed

did not have a choice in their location of residency serves as evidence of adaptation and

conformation to the state's identity project, in that the traditional social structure, with

emphasis upon the family, is being adhered to. Participant 2, as an unmarried but middle-

aged man, and his decision to split is residency evenly between the family house and his

own flat, is evidence of a renegotiation of that traditional expectation regarding marriage

and living arrangements.

For expatriates, this residential relocation can largely be attributed to the state's

employment policies. Upon arrival, many expatriates were provided housing by their

employers, usually in a collective setting. The locations of employer-provided housing

were, I was told, in relatively close proximity to the office. For Western expatriates, four

of the five participants lived in other areas of Muscat prior to their current neighbourhood. These previous neighbourhoods include Al Khuwair, Bariq Al Shatti, Shatti Al Qurum, and Qurum. For two Western participants the move was their choice to make. For expatriates of Asian or African regional origins, four of the five participants lived in other neighbourhoods of Muscat, including Azaiba (1), Ruwi (3) and Wadi Kabir (1). Three of these participants made the choice to move. For Arab participants interviewed, two had lived in other neighbourhoods previously, Al Khuwair and Madinat Qaboos, and it was their choice to relocate.

Once more established in Muscat, participants stated that they relocated to another neighbourhood for the desire for quietness, privacy and space. Others mentioned that increasing wealth was the reason for relocation from one neighbourhood to another, and many had previously lived in the more affordable neighbourhoods of Ruwi and Al Khuwair, for example. I would characterize this as evidence of informal spatial segregation based on class, but also reflecting to a certain degree national origin. In addition, the choice to relocate from employer-provided housing in more affordable and more densely-populated expatriate neighbourhoods to a neighbourhood of their choosing is a method of negotiating or mediating the nation-building strategy of spatial segregation.

The creation of labour camps and expatriate compounds changes the composition of residential neighbourhoods and influences the spatial practice of expatriates. A western female participant mentioned that they rarely leaves her expatriate compound, Dolphin Village in Bowsher, unless going to a Western-catering hotel for drinks. I would characterize this, too, as more formal and purposeful residential segregation based on the

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dichotomy of Omani and 'other' to which some expatriates choose to conform or adapt. Other western expatriates, like Participant 5, however, purposefully avoid these expatriate compounds, considering them isolating and counter to their reasons for living internationally. These expatriates value the social interaction with the national population. I would classify this spatial practice as a purposeful renegotiation of the state's nation-building project, choosing to socialize and interact as much as possible with the Omani residents of the city.

When broadly asked what areas of the city participants frequent often or prefer, the responses correlated strongly with both the areas developed by the state as tourist zones and Western residency. Shatti, Qurum, and Madinat Qaboos were the most frequently cited by participants of all regional origins as neighbourhoods preferred. Reasons given included the infrastructure and facilities, familiarity, and comfortability. When asked what neighbourhoods participants purposefully avoid or do not frequent, the neighbourhood correlated strongly with areas identified as Asian and South Asian residency. Ruwi, Matrah, and Wadi Kabir topped the list as those neighbourhoods avoid, and Ruwi was a stand-out amongst the three. The reasons given for avoid these areas included congestion and traffic, and unfamiliarity. I found this interesting because Shatti and Qurum at specific times of the day become incredibly crowded. Traffic can come to a standstill and parking can be difficult to find, but this was not mentioned by participants as a reason to avoid these Western locations, but was quickly cited for Ruwi. Female participants of Asian and South Asian origins mentioned their uncomfortability in these areas based on the expatriate population residing there. There is a tendency for the men to stare and follow women, but European and Omani women did not mention this as a

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reason. I was surprised that this particular reason wasn't brought up with more frequency, as I personally have felt uncomfortable in Ruwi because of gender, and in a preliminary investigation, questionnaire responses were more forthcoming about the South Asian residents of Ruwi and the culture of the area being one that made women feel uneasy. I speculate that western women, like Participant 3, did not wish to convey this information for fear of coming across as racist. I also speculate that Omani women interviewed, given both their modest dress and their conspicuous national identity when wearing it, limited the level of blatant leering and touching when in the neighbourhood.

The state also influences the spatial practices of Muscat residents when it comes to their engagement in market activities. Firstly, the zoning of Muscat into specific residential, commercial, and leisure zones means that generally participants are shopping and engaging in leisure activities in the same areas. The locations of high coincidence in responses for market activities, conveyed by participants of all regional origins, including grocery and non-grocery shopping, were the numerous shopping malls, particularly Muscat City Center in Wilaya Seeb and Muscat Grand Mall and Avenues Mall located in Wilaya Bowsher.

Secondly, the construction of infrastructure, particularly the network of main roads, roundabouts, parking facilities, and expressways, increases the mobility of residents, who can travel more conveniently, extensively, and more rapidly within the Muscat Capital Area. The commute time for participants was frequently between ten and fifteen minutes, though many said at certain times of the day, corresponding to the workday, the duration of their commutes was significantly lengthened. Nevertheless, the city's infrastructure is increasing the extent of residents' spatial practice. It is notable that

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these shopping locations frequented most often are located just off the main roadway Sultan Qaboos Street, depicted on 10 mental maps, making these market locations both highly visible and, for those with cars, easily accessible. It isn't just about sound infrastructure and accessibility, however. It was conveyed by participants, notably an Indian female born and raised in the Gulf, that she shops frequently at the malls because she has been brought up in the Middle Eastern "mall culture". This is evidence of adaptation and conformity to the local culture, as Omani female participants also stated that they frequent the malls often with their friends as a form of leisure or recreation. Other expatriate participants, like the Egyptian architect, stated that he and his family frequent the shopping malls more often in the summer to avoid the heat of the outdoors. However, a British participant, married to an Indian participant, stated he does not like to frequent the malls for hours with his wife because they are an interracial couple, and get many stares that make him feel uncomfortable. Choosing not to frequent the malls is his method of renegotiation and dissent against the local cultural norms.

When reasons for grocery shopping at specific locations were given, convenience was the main reason cited, followed by product preference and availability. Many participants stated that there wasn't much choice for shopping, grocery shopping in particular, and that is why Carrefour in both Qurum and Seeb are frequented by participants. Many participants, Omani, Asian, and Western individuals, shop for groceries in locations in close proximity to their residences for the sake of convenience and expedience, especially if they don't need any items. If, however, they are running quite low they will venture further away from their homes for large grocery halls. It is a

way to avoid the traffic and large crowds, outcomes of Muscat's rapid development, as much as possible.

Product preference and availability was the second most cited reason for choosing grocery shopping locations. An Omani participant stated that she likes to shop at Al Fair and Sultan center because of the "fancy fancy" products available. Though the products are not necessarily fancy, they are western and more expensive than goods sold elsewhere. An Indian participant with extensive western influence also stated she prefers Al Fair because they have American products, and her husband, a British participant, prefers Al Fair because they supply a lot of Waitrose items, or British goods. The fact that some Omani participants are preferring to shop, when possible, at these more western grocery stores is evidence that they are conforming to, or at least influenced by, the state's identity project, in that they are choosing to frequent more cosmopolitan stores. Or this could be evidence of mediation, in that sometimes they choose western supermarkets while other times choosing local shops, like Maya. The fact that expatriate participants are frequenting the stores in which familiar products are sold is also evidence of conformation, in that they are shopping at stores that cater to their preferences, regardless of price. Or perhaps it is a form of mediation, in that they choose familiar comfort foods as a way to maintain their identities when it comes to diet while they engage in other more adaptive cultural norms. The empirical data doesn't allow for more conclusion other than speculation.

The *souqs* and stores in Ruwi, Seeb, and Matrah, though mentioned and occasionally mapped, were not locations visited frequently by participants, and if they were visited for commercial purposes, it was to obtain specialized services or

commodities, like fabric, silver, or frankincense. Omani female participants stated that they shop in Ruwi for fabric and Matrah for jewelry, specifically silver products. One Portugeuse male of a low economic class stated that he loves Matrah Souq and purchases traditional items there, specifically frankincense. It should be noted that this more specialized or 'traditional' market activity occurs in areas of the city that are older, and therefore characterized by mixed-use rather than specific activities. These neighbourhoods are also those conceived by participants as spaces that are more densely-populated, not easily navigable, poorer, and dominated by poor Omani or Asian expatriate residency. Likewise, it was stated by an Indian participant, and echoed by a British participant, that they avoid LuLu Hypermarket because of the crowd. The customers of this store are overwhelming Asian and South Asian, and so this particular chain of grocery stores, regardless of whether or not it is in a South Asian neighbourhood, is avoided because of the customer base. What I find interesting is that Omani women frequented these densely populated South Asian market areas are felt comfortable doing so. It could be that their modest dress that identifies them as Omani curbed any unwanted interactions.

When it comes to leisure activities, the areas mentioned with frequency as locations of recreation and entertainment also demonstrate the influence of state zoning upon spatial practice. The areas in which participants feel most comfortable in or frequent most often also more or less correlates with the national origins of their residence. Participants felt more comfortable in neighbourhoods of Western expatriate residency, like Madinat Qaboos, Shatti, and the Wave while areas avoided or unfrequented are those identified as South Asian neighbourhoods, like Matrah and Ruwi. The neighbourhoods

of restaurants mapped and/or mentioned during interviews include several in Madinat Qaboos, and Al Khuwair, both neighbourhoods in Wilaya Bowsher known for their expatriate residency and amenities that cater to western tastes. British and Indian husband and wife participants stated that they love Tuscany, an Italian restaurant in Shatti, as well as Kargeen Café, a traditional spectacle of a shisha bar in Madinat Qaboos, the British neighbourhood. An Omani participant stated that she prefers Lebanese food and frequents Lebanese and Omani restaurants located to the Wave, Shatti, or in Al Khuwair. The types of restaurants most frequently mentioned or mapped, by participants of all origins, are American fast-food chains including McDonald's, KFC, Pizza Hut and Starbucks. These more affordable fast food chains are frequented the most by expatriates of Asian origin, or those whose incomes are lower, like Portuguese florist Participant 9, who stated he frequents the McDonald's in Azaiba often. This is also due in part to his limited mobility, as he does not own or drive a car. In addition, these locations, particularly McDonald's in Shatti and Pizza Hut in MQ, serve as spatially orienting landmarks for participants regardless of how often these establishments are frequented, particularly for those participants of a higher socioeconomic standing.

The spatial practices of other city residents influence the spatial practices of participants in addition to state policies regarding migration and development. For indoor recreation locations mentioned regularly that serve alcohol, Shatti Al Qurum and Qurum are the neighbourhoods in which they are located, and many of them are either in or in very close proximity to the city's beachfront hotels. Participants of Arab, Omani, Asian, European and African origins stated that they frequent the bars and lounges of the beachfront neighbourhoods, including Left Bank, Rock Bottom, and Trader Vic's. It

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should be mentioned that female Omani participants and the one religious Omani male participant did not convey that they went out to those alcohol-serving venues. Omani women in particular are quite constrained by both their nationality and gender, and are socially excluded from these locations because of the "Victorian" nature of Omani society. Being seen in these establishments by Omani male patrons and the questions it would raise amongst Omanis regarding their character are too damaging to risk. Purposefully avoiding these venues is evidence of conformation to Omani cultural and social norms that are deemed to be 'traditional'. Omani female participants instead stated that they frequent the cinema and restaurants, including those in the upscale Royal Opera House, and visit with friends at their residences, for recreation. One Omani female participant stated that she prefers to just stay at home for her leisure, and doesn't consider socializing with friends as a recreation activity. This is likely the result of the Victorian approach to female conduct. The fact that she called socialization a chore is another indication of the importance of her reputation, and her conduct in public requires a great deal of self-regulation. It is therefore more pleasurable to remain inside, away from the public eye.

Another example of how spatial practices of other residents combined with state policies regarding migration and development was conveyed by Participant 5. He, a professional European participant, stated that he used to frequent Left Bank, but the atmosphere of the establishment changes with the renewal of Muscat's expatriate population, and so it is no longer to his liking now that it resembles a lower-class pub rather than a classy lounge. Similarly, another Western expatriate mentioned the crowd size of the Intercontinental and Grand Hyatt Hotels as being a deterrent in addition to the

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pricey cost of such locales. In the juxtaposition of these two examples we can see that national or regional origins of patrons is a factor, but class seems to be more influential than nationality when it comes to spatial practice and comfortability. This is an example of mediating the state identity project in that individuals are adjusting their spatial activities based on cost and patron preferences that change with the expatriate hiring cycle.

Similarly, in addition to these hotel or beachfront venues, the integrated tourist zone The Wave was frequently mentioned and mapped by participants a lot as the location to which they go for recreation and entertainment. Again, the types of patrons, be it their class, or regional origins, or both, seems to be a significant factor. Omanis also frequent the complex, particularly for the restaurants and shopping available within, but they are usually of a higher socioeconomic standing. British and Indian husband and wife frequent the Wave more so than other public areas because they are an interracial couple and are therefore stared at less, making them feel more at ease in this integrated tourist zone. A French participant stated he enjoyed because of its resemblance to Europe and the racially mixed crowd observed there. Likewise, a Portuguese participant in the service industry stated that he frequents the Wave, even if only to window shop, because of its European aesthetic and architecture in addition to the "European faces" he sees. The look and feel of the Wave in addition to the European expatriate presence makes him feel at home there, and so this would be a method of adaptation and/or conformation to the state's national identity project. He enjoys the Wave when he is homesick because it resembles his Europe, drawing in other Westerns for the same reason, which are both intentions behind the Wave's development.

Indoor recreation in private spaces was also frequently cited, especially by Omani female participants, as previously mentioned. However, other participants made similar comments. The British and Indian married couple interviewed stated that the way their interracial marriage is received has pushed them more towards the Wave, as mentioned, but also increased their preference for private gatherings and BBQs with friends. This is significant in that the closed group of friends allows for more social and cultural familiarity and comfortability. This is evidence of mediation of the informal social and cultural controls.

The cited outdoor leisure and recreation of participants of various origins reflects closely the state's promoted identity elements that emphasizes its seafaring tradition. Outdoor leisure locations were, like the locations of indoor recreation save for private houses, more or less concentrated along the coast, within or near the integrated tourist areas and zoned leisure areas. This locations included the beaches in Azaiba, Qurum, Seeb and Shatti. Participants of all regional origins conveyed that they frequent these beaches, but the reasons cited differ. An Arab participant stated he likes the beach in Seeb because it is quiet and peaceful. Another participant, an Omani woman, enjoys the beaches in Qurum and Shatti because of its development and the presence of shops and restaurants. A European participant stated he likes the beach in the Azaiba neighbourhood because he enjoys watching the fishermen engage in their traditional occupation, but also enjoys the beachfront in Shatti because it resembles Europe and feels like home, Portugal. These are ways of mediating the state's identity project in that, individuals are seeking out different spaces depending on whether they wish to access more traditional Omani culture or more cosmopolitan amenities. .

Though many of the cited locations of outdoor leisure activities reflect the locations of cosmopolitan development, reflecting the leisure zoning of those areas, which attempt to spatially segregate such activities and their potential influence upon the promoted Omani culture and identity, several of those frequently mentioned outdoor recreation locations were in wilaya Muscat and Matrah, a bit further south than the spatiality observed for indoor recreation. The Matrah Corniche was mentioned by European, Omani and Arab participants as a location enjoyed in the cooler months. Individuals expressed that they enjoyed the traditional environment they viewed while walking the corniche, despite the crowd. This area is the oldest in Muscat, and has been purposefully kept aesthetically traditional in promotion of a shared history and cultural longevity.

However, many of these more southern outdoor recreation areas are frequented because of privacy, not for the traditional culture. Arab, Asian, and European participants stated they enjoy going to Sifa Beach or the Oman Dive Center because they feel more free to dress and act as they wish. One of these locations is Bin De Rauda, a marina wherein people dock their private boats, and is the location from which individuals travel just off the coast to Bandar al Khiran, a cove where yachts and boats are anchored, to engage in leisure activities of their choice. This is essentially mobile privacy, and is a way to avoid the public eye and the potential damage to reputation while enjoying public space.

The concentration of economic activity and employment opportunities in the Muscat Capital Area influences the spatial practices of Omani Muscat residents in multiple ways, but when it comes to recreation and leisure, it has created a weekly

weekend exodus out of Muscat. Since the concentration of development in Muscat resulted in massive amounts of rural to urban migration, there is the trend amongst Omanis to leave Muscat on the weekends to visit with parents and extended family, and this was conveyed as a significant spatial practice by an Omani female participant. Another Omani participant stated that he does leave every weekend for the interior to visit with family and, leave the development city as he preferred the countryside, physically and culturally. This is a method of negotiating the state's development project, in that, when presented with the choice, prefers the village lifestyle over the congested cosmopolitan city.

Having discussed the spatial practice of Muscat residents and the ways in which participants conform, adapt, and renegotiate the state's identity and development project, the following chapter will discuss social space and socialization amongst city residents.

CHAPTER VII

REPRESENTATIONAL SPACES: SOCIAL SPACE

Having discussed the physical and mental productions of space, including

representations of the Muscat generally, representations of Muscat's neighbourhoods, and

the spatial practices of participants, social space, that is lived space, will be discussed.

Bertuzzo (2009) states that,

"The physical and mental processes of production of space are integrative of lived space,
called social practice. This social level of production of space directly implies time:
social practice originates from history, that of peoples as well as of individuals. This is at
present the field of a dominated, and hence passively experienced, space, whereby
'desire' and imagination seek to change and appropriate it….it represents social values,
traditions, dreams, collective experiences, imagination, as well as 'desire'... Socially
produced space is imaginary, directional, situation (or relational), transversed by
symbolisms and history, essentially qualitative, fluid and dynamic…" (pp. 31-32)

This chapter will first discuss the social experiences as conveyed by participants,

followed by the researcher's observations in some of the representational social spaces

identified through interviews. Particular attention is paid to spaces of social interaction

because "the effective centres of social practice are the loci of passion, of action and of

lived situations: the ego, the bed, the bedroom, the dwelling or house, but also the square,

church and graveyard." (Bertuzzo, 2009, p. 32) The nature of participant observation is

one that emphasizes vibe and atmosphere more so than description of space. This is an

attempt to follow Lefebvre's concept of rhythymanalysis, focusing on time more than

space, where the researcher "strolling about perceives more the ambience of a city, rather

than the image flattering the eye; more the atmosphere than the spectacle. He is all ears

but hears not only words and sounds." (Meyer, 2008, p. 156)

General Socialization

Asking more broad questions relating to socialization allowed insight into general Omani-expatriate interactions. Participants were asked with whom they socialize with most, and if they've ever been treated differently based on their national origins. Participant 17, who is half Filipino and half Omani, stated that he interacts with both locals and expatriates every day, but said, "Most of my friends are full blooded Omanis." Likewise, when asked how often he interacts with Omanis, Sudanese male Participant 1 said,

"I do a lot. I know a lot of Omanis. I've been living with them I mean like, I've been growing up with Omanis. I've been growing up you know what I mean. They've been growing up with me. They started speaking my language. Some of them speak my language also. I grew up with them in the hood, like, the neighbourhood."

Portuguese Participant 9 conveyed that he has a group of friends with whom he hangs out almost every day. When I asked where they were from he said they are Europeans, including, "A Serbian man, and Russian women" in addition to a couple of Omani families. Filipina Participant 18 stated she interacts with Omanis mostly at work, but stated "I have a few local friends from my previous work, and some of my Pakistani classmates are now Omanis. I do socialize with them too, does that count?"

Omani female Participant 10 rarely socializes with expatriates. She said,

"I actually don't have foreigner friends. But if I do have one I don't mind hanging out with them. In terms of interaction I guess it's nice 'cuz they don't interact that well I mean….from my experience from our neighbourhood we have some foreigners but we don't visit them they don't visit us. We don't really interact."

Likewise, Omani Participant 11 doesn't socialize much with anyone in Muscat, and expressed his discontent with the individualistic nature of Muscat, preferring the collective lifestyle of the village. He said,

"I like out of Muscat because it's very quiet, and the people there are very friendly very you know…in society or socially they are help each other and ask about each other more and here in Muscat sometimes your neighbours don't know if you are home, if you are travelling, and sometimes they don't know your name... Maybe they know your name but they don't know if you're sick or you're not sick or you're out…but there it's different." I asked if he knew or talked to his neighbours, and he said, "No. I feel they like this type,

I can't go to them even because I feel they like this style, private and being alone. But not

all of them… There is very big difference between here and outside of Muscat."

When asked with whom she socializes and where they go, Omani female

Participant 12 said,

"I'm kind of a friend of different walks of life so they have different preferences. You have a bunch who don't like to talk much so we go to the cinema. I think those are the ones really don't have much of a social life but I just ended up being there friend. Then I have, how do you say, Indian friends, who prefer to go to Ruwi because it's nearby to where they live in comparison to where I live, where I live there's nothing no attraction. And then you have the other friends who are quite active and go everywhere so we'll go to a coffee shop or go to the mall."

When I asked if she socializes more with Omanis are expatriates, Participant 12, who has

lived in both Europe and the United States, indicated that she mostly socializes with other

Omanis because of the shared culture and understanding of cultural context. When I

asked why, she replied,

"Maybe because we come from the same background they understand where I come from and if I complain about something in particular you can easily catch on but if you speak to a British person or Indian person you kind of have to explain like 'based on our tradition, our culture…' before you go into the story so I find if I'm friends with Omanis I can easily talk about something without being…I mean…without being politically correct I would say..…it depends on the story I would tell. I wouldn't share it with someone who wasn't Omani because maybe they wouldn't understand. For instance if I'm with a foreigner, generally, I would explain I went on the beach and swam and all that because they'd say 'so you swim and your head is all covered?!' 'Oh, God.' And go through that whole process again."

Likewise, even though he doesn't socialize much in Muscat, Omani Participant

11, of rural origins, inferred that shared experience is also a factor in terms of

socialization. Regarding his local group of friends he said, "Most of them are Omani. I

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have one Egyptian guy friend. I have also one from Jordan, but most are Omani and from different cities but they're living in Muscat. Like me." He did also state that he prefers to hang out with his family, in the interior, though he does acknowledge that he thinks everyone else prefers spending time with friends over family.

British Participant 8 said, "I probably socialize with Omani a lot basically when I came to Oman all my friends were Omani." But his wife, Participant 7, an Indian expat with extensive Gulf residency, wanted to clarify on his behalf that his mates are westernized. She said,

"Even the Omanis, and are more westernized. Actually all of his Omani friends are quite westernized. Let's just put that straight because people you actually give time to…mates-mates, are definitely westernized. I mean I do have a few Omani-Omani girlfriends but they still have a lot of western exposure and a lot expat friends because I went to an international school here so all my friends are westernized. Since I met [Participant 8] my friends have become his and it's all meshed into one giant group."

When asked whether participants have been treated differently for not being or being Omani, responses varied. Several participants stated that they've never been treated differently. Participant 1, who is Sudanese but has Omani citizenship, said,

"To be honest, not really. They keeping everybody in the same level. Which is really good...and you don't see that in other countries. Like you see but, but like you know maybe you hear something different about other countries in the media, blah blah blah, but it ain't really true."

This was echoed also by Participant 6, an Egyptian. When asked if he's been treated differently he said,

"No. The thing about the country is that when you stay here long you like it. Because the people are friendly… Of course there are some cases where you might meet people that are, you know, not very, yaani, they're not very open to deal with you. But in most of the cases, I've been here seven years I never run across any judgment or anything."

However, despite Participant 1's statement that he hasn't been treated differently for being Sudanese, his friend Omani Participant 2, expressing his enjoyment of our

interview, said, "This is nice this is different. Because me and '[Participant 1]…" and he then proceeded to imitate a generic African language with clicks to describe his conversations with Participant 1.

In some responses, participants conveyed that they have been treated differently, but think they've actually been treated better. Portuguese Participant 3, when asked if she's been treated differently because she's not Omani said, "Yes sure. I think everyone was more nice to me. They treat me nicer and offer me more things because I am not Omani. More generous yea." Related, Participant 15, a Bahraini male with unusually pale features, relayed that during his interactions with Omanis, his language use resulted in friendlier dealings. He said, "Omanis tend to assume I'm foreign and tend to begin conversations with me in English. When I respond in Arabic they tend to become friendlier and more receptive, not that they weren't friendly to begin with." Egyptian Participant 6 also mentioned the benefit of common language in his interactions with Omanis. He said,

"But about the culture also its easy to interact with them because my mother language is Arabic…especially Egypt we are...for some time our people, like teachers and others, were coming to this country to teach a long time ago and still come to this day. People know the accent, the Egyptian accent…from movies and TV series so they know our accent very well. If I go to somewhere they can easily understand me and we can interact very well so it's good to be here."

Other participants, however, say they have been treated differently, and that different treatment has been negative. When asked if he's been treated differently because he's Filipino, Participant 19, who has lived extensively in Muscat since adolescence, said "Oh definitely, most of the time." When I asked by who, he said, "Omanis, Arabs, and other expats." I asked him in what ways he's been treated differently for being Filipino and he replied, "Being cut in line, being cut in traffic…."

Participant 9, a Portuguese florist, stated that sometimes, when drinking, Omani men

shout mean things at expatriates. He didn't elaborate further, and because he was shy and

nervous in the interview, I didn't press further. Participant 18, a female from the

Philippines, made a similar comment, saying,

"I don't appreciate…how some locals shout out '*kamusta ka'*, meaning 'how are you' in
Tagalog, or yell '*Filipini*' or anything of that nature. I've somehow gotten used to it by
now, but it gets uncomfortable at times." Even in light of this, when asked if she knew
why she's been treated differently because she is not Omani, she said "perhaps it's
because of the language barrier more than not."

Even those with Omani lineage have been treated poorly. Participant 17, who is

half Filipino on his mother's side, stated, that he has been treated differently because he

is not full Omani. He said,

"I used to go to a predominantly Omani school and got bullied almost every day for not
being full Omani. I still sense a slight lack of respect nowadays when interacting with
some of my Omani friends and the people they introduce me to when they find out I'm
not fully Omani. But I've learned to cope with this."

Social Spaces

In terms of specific locations of Omani-expatriate interaction, the places cited

frequently as spaces of social interaction between nationals and non-nationals include

both public spaces and private spaces. Public spaces mentioned include hotels and their

bars and lounges, organized sports and recreational facilities and spaces, and places of

work and study. Private spaces of socialization includes places of residence, excluding

family homes.

Public Spaces

Public spaces are an important arena for understanding the influence of both the

state's nation-building project and the impact of migration upon culture and identity.

According to Meyer (2008), "state power and the citizens contend with one another for

urban public space. Political power tries to intervene, to dominate space with its own

monuments. The monuments and squares, the churches and palaces begin to play a role."

(p. 158) He asks,

"Who will emerge victorious? The citizens live their everyday and business rhythms in this struggle for the appropriation of public space. By making this urban public space the place of strolling around, of encounters, of discussions and negotiations, of intrigue and spectacle, they appropriate it spontaneously." (Meyer, 2008, p. 158)

Places of employment and study were cited by nearly all participants as the location in which they most frequently interact with Omanis or expatriates. Sudanese Participant 1, who holds Omani citizenship and has lived in Oman since childhood, said that he studies with mostly Omanis but "there is few like from Jordan, from Egypt. Sudanese also." Filipina Participant 18 stated that she studied at the Philippine School Muscat and that the majority of students were also Filipino, but "there were Sudanese, Indians, Pakistanis, and other national who've enrolled while I was there. I had the pleasure of interacting with them a lot since there weren't too many student at that time. To give you an example, in my senior year there were only 15 of us in class, and almost of them were non-Filipinos. It was cool." In addition to learning some Arabic during her residency in Muscat, she said,

"Oh! And I've picked up a few Hindi/Urdu words since I've been here as with most of my Filipino classmates…on a different point of view, I think we, as Filipinos, did rub off on some of our non-Filipino classmates. They now know a few Tagalog words and crave some Filipino foods."

Participant 17, who is half Omani and half Filipino, expressed to me that he was harassed by classmates at the government school because of his blended heritage, and only found relief from the bullying upon transference to The American International School of Muscat (TAISM). As a fan of spoken word and American underground hip-hop from the Bay Area of California, he provided me a song he wrote narrating these experiences. In his rap he said,

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"A little weirdo, that fact was obvious. In his seat relaxed that was all he did. The Filipino, half-caste Omani kid you couldn't see in class, yea, he often hid….I didn't have a posse, I just sat there watching my Tamagotchi. Got bullied for being half Omani, the Zanzibaris and Pakistanis would laugh and mock me….soon enough some bastards from grade ten were laughing away as they battered my face in. I thought they would stop but I was sadly mistaken. I'm happy to say that I transferred to TAISM where people were nice and the snacks were amazin', an actual great international haven for me. See I wasn't angered 'cuz they didn't laugh when I said I was Arab and Asian."

In addition to places of study, Filipino Participants 18 and 19 also both stated that they interact with Omanis every day, mostly in the workplace. Participant 15, an events manager from Bahrain, said he interacts with Omanis "Often through work, as well as occasionally Omani friends I made from my previous job." Bahraini Participant 15 stated that he finds Omanis pleasant and welcoming even in the work environment but said, "However, when it comes to work and being efficient, things tend to take longer than they should. I feel the culture lacks a sense of urgency in that regard."

Egyptian Participant 6, an architect, had some insightful comments about the work environment in Oman, and his statement echoes those made by others regarding local work ethic. When I asked him if he wanted to stay in Muscat permanently, he said,

"The problem is once you start to live and you get used to the …for each country their own type of system of work goes on. It is very unique and different between countries. The system of work in Egypt is very different than it is here is Muscat. The tempo of work for example sometimes in Egypt we are a very big country we have over 90 million people so the competition, the way of work, the standards are different than what we are using here in Oman. You'll find that when you want to go back to your type of work you'll find some difficulty."

Portuguese Participant 3, who works at the National Museum, said she interacts with Omanis "every day" but only in a professional capacity. She stated that she thought Omanis were a "very cheerful and happy people…" but that, "it's very different from how people react when they are at work." She also said, "Unfortunately I wasn't able to

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establish relationships on a personal level with Omanis." I ask her if she could think of a

reason why it never happened, and Participant 3 responded,

"I tried. Some colleagues from work. I was even invited to their houses…in the
countryside not in Muscat. Um but I think it's a cultural gap there is and suddenly there is
not much more talk. I used to have a friend, he was a guide tour and he used to take us
out every weekend in the first 6 months. I still keep in touch with him, we just don't have
any else to do together. And he is married and has a family so I don't think it's okay to
just invite him for coffee when his family is at home. And I never got to know is family
and I don't know why. So I felt weird and I stopped that. It's because I was with a group I
was not alone, so everyone has left and I'm still here…I don't find it appropriate
anymore."

Omani English translator Participant 10 stated that her interactions with

expatriates at work are pleasant, saying "we have some foreigners here and the

interaction is good. They respect the traditions and habits. They respect the culture here

which is good. We had one Israeli…and some other expatriates…" Omani Participant 2

said he works with Americans because, "It's an American company" but said the

composition of workers is mixed. He said there are also Indian coworkers, "but not much

because of Omanization. Like two last Indians were gone because they were old and

that's it. No one new. Omanization is very working hard on it." I asked Portuguese

Participant 3 what she thought about Omanization of the workforce, to which she replied,

"Omanization, I think it's positive. I think just by trying to do it by law probably might
not be the best way because what I see is that…it's complicated. People want to learn but
there is no management sometimes behind some companies or some sectors to allow the
people to learn. People are employed but sometimes they're not given tasks and I think
that's very brutal and very sad."

Participant 19, a Filipino with extensive residency in Muscat, stated that he's been treated

differently in the workplace because of his nationality, implying that Omanization is the

cause of such discrimination. He said, "If you work outside you will never get the senior

position, there is always an Omani manager higher than you, even if you are more

qualified and experienced."

Omani Participant 2, a petroleum engineer, stated that his interactions with his

expatriate coworkers is positive, and implied it has a positive impact on him personally.

He said,

"When you ask me if I like the Americans I work with. Of course. They taught me the job, first of all, and they treat me with respect. And they're very 'you work hard you go there if you don't work hard you don't go there' it's something that I respect, and it's something we don't have much here by the way."

I asked what he meant and he replied, "Among ourselves, we don't love each other that's

the problem. We don't help each other." I asked him why he thought that was the case, he

said,

"I don't understand, and I don't know. I'm not like that. I wasn't raised like that. But I've seen it. If you have a supervisor who is Omani, he will treat his Omani employees very bad. But if the supervisor is American or British, he'll treat them good. Then I came to find out that's everywhere in the world, you know that? I saw an Indian supervising Indians, he gave them shit like hell. It's like human nature…I don't know. It's something that…I think should change."

Omani Participant 12, who works in both the public and private sector, said she

worked with expatriates at both her places of employment. She said,

"Well now this is confusing. So like the radio job, the manager's a Lebanese guy and the other presenters are Brits and then the other job my direct supervisor is French Lebanese...it's like I'm haunted by this nationality haha and then the CEO is Tunisian and then you have the Indians so it's kind of a mix."

I asked if there were other Omanis to which she replied, "There are loads…but the radio

job I'm the only Omani." I asked why she thinks that is and she said,

"I'm doing English so it's not an Arabic station so it's difficult to find an Omani who is interested in or has the same level of expertise that I do and then unfortunately the radio station was not very impressed they tried to hire Omanis but their work contact wasn't the best. They don't show up when they had a show if you're a radio presenter you have to be there unless you're really sick and don't have a voice. It's not an office job where you can just call in late. And then when you contact them it's like 'yeaaa…I wasn't feeling well.' At least inform someone, you know? So based on that experience they stop trying to train locals and we'll just stick to what we know and hire someone from abroad who has experience."

Omani Participant 11, who works in planning in the public sector in addition to owning his own aluminum fabrication business, said he interacts with expatriates at work regularly. He said,

"Yes when there is any work related between my job and their job. Sometimes meetings sometimes when we trade information…once a week twice a week. Yaaani…I think if you know Simon, I was work with him many time because especially when we have team formation we have to work together for team evaluation of proposals of these companies… Simon was from Australia and before one guy was from Netherlands and most of them from Sudan…yes most of them Sudan."

In terms of his professional interactions with expatriates, Omani Participant 11 stated,

"We are one team so not Omani or not any other country we are one team and one work so we focus and give all our attention to the work we are doing...and we understand each other and they are very helpful guys. Until now I haven't faced any difficulties or obstacles with them." I asked him what it was like, the work environment, and Omani Participant 11 emphasized knowledge acquisition as a major benefit of work interactions, saying,

"This kind of job learn me new things and also practice language and also discover new things and learning new things. New ways. You are dealing with different minds so I learn from them. And they are experts and have good skills so we learn from them. But when we stay in the office there is nothing new. During the meeting most of them come with new style of work, new idea, also when we review technical proposals…how to evaluate…we have criteria to evaluate proposal in accordance with criteria. But this criteria come from experts…so every expert has good ideas to evaluate and give good, right scoring for company proposals."

Leisure and recreation locations are another public space characterized by Omani-migrant interaction. Sudanese Participant 1, when asked where he interacts the most with Omanis said everywhere, but mentioned a change in crowd over time, saying, "Back in the days, you wouldn't see it. But they took over." I asked to whom he was referring and he said, "Omanis. Bar side. Some of them back in the day some would go to bars but nowadays you see so many of them. So many. Just a few Omani before and now many all

over." Omani Participant 2 said he interacts with non-nationals daily "when it's not

Ramadan, because now I don't go out much." He said, "When I go to Left Bank I meet

everybody. It's a daily thing, unless I'm sick." When asked where Omanis and

expatriates most frequently interact, Participant 2 also unhesitatingly said,

"Bars. Hahaha. After Ramadan go to any bar you will see. After Eid, that's the day. You will see Omanis and foreigners they all get drunk and turn out. Coffee shops, bars. You name it. Wherever you guys go, Omanis go." Participant 2 also said he only socializes at "Left Bank, [Participant 1's] parties, and Zouk. You know Zouk? Left Bank, Zouk, that's it."

French architect Participant 5 used to go to Left Bank as well, saying, "I used to go to

Left Bank before, but lately I feel like it's a pub more than a bar. I used to like the wine

bar. It felt really more like a pub." I asked what he thought was the cause for the change

in atmosphere, to which he replied,

"Yea a change of crowd, being here in Muscat for 4 years, the expat crowd kind of renews itself every September, so the current crowd of expats is more pub-like. So I think they're trying to bring it back to being a lounge bar. The difference between a pub and a bar is that in a pub you're there to drink and chat whereas in a bar you're there to lounge, listen to the music, and occasionally chat with friends. It's a different vibe. I've been to New York once that only thing I can compare it to is that the pub is like a sports bar and the lounge is where you have ambient music."

Locations of physical recreation and organized sports were also cited as spaces of

interaction, as were other social or volunteer-oriented groups. When asked if she's a

member of any clubs or organizations, museum curator Participant 3, from Portugal, said,

"I do yoga with a local group…so yea I do. It's not an organized group just people who

do the same thing but it's always changing. Tourists as well. It's in the Safari village next

to the Hyatt hotel." When I asked what nationalities were present she said, "All

nationalities. Indian, Malaysian, Sri Lankan, Spanish, Italian, Chinese, Iranian, a lot.

Hahaha. They are very popular classes." Omani Participant 10, an alum of SQU, is part

of a "Sultan Qaboos University female swimming club...only for students and employees of SQU. They have a separate club only for women. Everything is separate here."

Filipino Participant 19 is a member of a bible study group, and said he joined, "to worship God and interact with members of my own Philippine community." He also plays basketball for a team as part of the Philippine community's basketball tournament. Omani Participant 11 did state that though he typically leaves the city on the weekends, in Muscat he engages in organized sport for recreation. He said, "In Muscat I only make sport near of the sea. So the beach, running and each Tuesday playing football with my friends…but other days sometimes walking sometimes running." Similarly, British Participant 8 said in our interview,

"I play football twice a week with two Omani groups. So I was lucky when I first came to Oman I went to school with three Omanis so when I came to Oman they literally I landed and within a week I was meeting people and going out for drinks. So at first I was going out and socialize socialize socialize…"

Sudanese Participant 1 conveyed that he used to partake in organized sports saying, "I used to gym, and um I used to play football and basketball. They were Sudanese, you see uh Egyptians they come around the way, Omanis, Italians, some whatever. It depends on the other team. We trying to be against with."

In addition to organized sports, Omani Participant 11 also regularly engages in community service as a volunteer. When asked about his membership in social clubs he said,

"In my area I have social group but I'm not close with them because of my work…this group is a football team but not only for sport. We do something new there in that area like preparing a good new place a park. We need to clean one area, cleaning…so we have to get together and arrange with other places to finalize new projects. We make a wall around the graves you know…new activities also yaaani there in my area this is usually open it should be closed…so we do it something like this."

Likewise, Omani Participant 4, an architect, also volunteers her time for the benefit of the

community. She volunteers for an educational program that teaches engineering concepts

to young children, and is involved in a charity organization as well. She said,

"The organization basically provides the necessity and needs for people that are less
fortunate and also gives then the skills and needs to be more dependent. A few things the
organization does is supply kids in school with all the stationary they need and uniforms
and meals for the entire academic year. Another one is providing cooking and baking
class's for women to use the skills and turn them I to businesses to support
themselves. We also help build and renovate shelters for people affected by any natural
disaster, and provide monthly grocery allowances for families in need."

Private Spaces

Socialization largely occurs in the private spaces of residents' homes, and these

private spaces are where the most extensive Omani-expatriate interactions occur, given

its privateness. French Participant 5, like many other participants of various origins,

stated that that one of the reasons there are so many house parties is because of

repercussions of gossip, as discussed previously. He said,

"You cannot be seen. For example I have a friend who was dating a royal, not very close
circle but she's royal and she could not be seen in Rock Bottom. She could barely be seen
just eating in Trader Vic's. She could not be seen in the bar area because 'what would
people say? What would they think?' And she could not go swimming unless it was at
her place because she'd be seen in a swimsuit."

I asked Participant 5 if he's treated differently as a western man, asking specifically if he

felt he had more freedom and less judged. He replied, "Yea but still, because you see my

wife is Moroccan and we have a take on the customs and things. So we have a lot of

friends some of them don't care and do their own things and others are completely

constrained in public and then really chill and relaxed at home."

British telecom manager Participant 8 addressed the lack of house gatherings in

the homes of Omanis, and related it to the traditional social structure, fundamentally, the

family. He said,

"The difference is for expats going to people's houses is…with local people I don't think it is so much because the culture. You have houses and cars and it's all kept in the family. You marry your cousin or….not so much anymore but you're marrying into another person's family and you can't leave your house as a man or woman until your married. And still sometimes what happens you have the house next door that you'll move into or there will be an extension like two houses where one brother will go and the other brother will go. This culture means that you don't…my friends who I play football with who aren't married, there's no chance that…there's hardly any chance that they'll invite people around to have a drink."

Another cited reason for the preference of socialization in private spaces was the nature of expatriate life in Muscat, characterized by transience, uncertainty and spontaneity. Participant 7, Indian mental health administrator with a thick American accent, stated, "We go to people's houses again…houses are a great place to hang out. I think another reason people like going to houses is because overseas if we go and call someone as say let's hang out they go 'uhm no.' You kinda gotta have a plan. Here you can just get together anytime there's not a lot that goes into it, people just come around. They're a lot more accepting to have you in their homes. "

Similarly, when asked why he thinks house gatherings are preferred, British Participant 8 stated,

"It's a lot more…like, I dunno…it's a lot more social I think. As in you know it's…I guess you're in an environment when people are always in and out and your more on your own when you're in someone else's country. It's not like I'm back in England where I have my routine or go to a pub and I know everyone there. It's more like someone would say we're doing this this weekend, we're doing that this weekend. It's like people are more willing to do stuff here. They make effort and you say 'yea okay let's go to the beach or let's do this or…' Like now, I don't know, one of my friends has just messaged me 13 minutes ago. We've got no plans tonight but I'm sure in the next half an hour we'll probably know what we're gonna do. Because we'll ring a few people and see. And also you can drink and it's quiet, and you like everyone that's there. I'm not saying every week there's a house party, but one or two people over and have a bottle of wine and that's about it."

Participant 7 responded to her British husband's comment to emphasize the exclusiveness and clarify on the size of such crowds. She said, "With the whole house get-togethers,

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I'm not gonna call them parties, there's rarely a new person in the mix, it's more or less a

regular crowd. So with that being said if one didn't have the connections, it could be a

very lonely place to be, because it's difficult to just be like 'Hi, can we hang out?' you

know?" Responding to this comment her husband said,

"You kinda have to, you're forced into it. Like I had friends I was introduced to but then I
was forced to…like if someone said 'we're doing this, would you like to do this?'
Normally I would say no I just met you I'm not coming to your house. But when you're
at a point where you don't know anyone except at work you're then like 'okay we're
going' like sometimes you even joke. Like when I go home, I have my friends: all the
same demographic, same age, same sort of like marital status, same income, all like you
know. But here one of my best friends is probably like 40. And sometimes she'll come
it's a weird mix."

I asked if "weird mix" included people of different national origins in addition to

socioeconomic class, and Participant 8 said, "Yea definitely. My best friends you could

say like in the social ladder or even high, and normal people from England and other

people from Sweden. Because I work in telecom I have a lot of friends who are Swedish,

Danish, you know. I like it. I *love* it. Greece, Lebanon, Palestine." His wife, Indian

Participant 7, verified this level of diversity saying that common interests, rather than

common cultural or social backgrounds, become the unifying factor in expatriate social

circles. She said,

"All different ages, incomes, interests. That's the thing I notice a lot of things back home
they rarely moved away and they stayed stagnant. Here is just interesting because his
mates are much older than he is, late thirties or forty-something and it's interesting to see
how they react with each other because I mean they're from various ages of life so your
interests become a focal point here which is good, not just how you're similar."

Participant Observation

Public Spaces

Al Hail Beach, Seeb. (Photos 7.1, 7.2, 7.3) In public spaces, there is the presence of both

national and migrant populations, but the socialization between the two appears limited.

Many residents frequent the beach on a daily basis after work and dinner to exercise and play organized sports. At Al Hail Beach in Seeb, just north of The Wave, I observed huge crowds that began arriving around 5:30-6:00 pm, when the sun begins to set and the temperature drops a bit. The majority of beachgoers were Omanis, but there were a few Western expatriates and South Asian expatriates observed. The activity seemed to be either a family or team-sport oriented. There were families with small children swimming in the water, and interestingly on one occasion I noticed a group of young Omani girls, teenagers, wearing the traditional, colourful Omani attire, rather than the black *abaya* most commonly seen in the city. There were pairs of old men walking along the water, talking, and others running the length of the beach, some running solo, others in pairs, and I observed running groups of 7-15 individuals, who, I assume, are teammates in these informal soccer matches. Soccer matches, too, took up a large portion of the beach area, with the 'fields' essentially touching, goalpost to goalpost, creating a chain down the beach. Those playing soccer were younger in age, and exclusively male.

Shatti Beach, Shatti (Photos 7.4 & 7.5) The public beach near the Intercontinental and Grand Hyatt is more diverse than that in the Al Hail neighbourhood, but the contact between beachgoers of different national origins is also quite limited. I went a bit earlier in the evening, closer to 4:30-5:00 pm, with a friend of British nationality who had grown up in Muscat. Again I observed many families, Omani, South Asian, and Asian, lounging, eating food, smoking shisha and enjoying the environment and the company of their relatives. There were more young children at this location than I recall seeing at Al Hail Beach. Another sight I hadn't seen in Al Hail was the presence blue-collar labourers checking out the beach, but they did not converse with anyone else, and no one

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approached them. It was largely families taking their children to the beach, or couples enjoying the environment without much interaction. If there were groups together, as far as I could tell, they were not of mixed Omani-expatriate origins.

Oman Club, Al Khuwair (Photos 7.6 & 7.7) I attended basketball practice games with an old Filipino friend at the Oman Club in Al Khuwair, The Filipino Community has a basketball league and the Filipino team on which my friend played were preparing for a league tournament, solely Filipino. During my time living in Oman, I served as this team's Mascot for a previous tournament, and, since I would be gone by the time the tournament began, was there only to visit with my old friend, and also keep score and time. There were also three Filipina spectators/girlfriends attending the basketball practice. At this practice game, everyone was speaking Tagalog for the most part, the only exception was if they were speaking to me directly, but that was a rare occurrence. At one point one player animatedly said something in Tagalog to another player after he missed a basket and everyone totally erupted in laughter. My former coworker, not wanting me to feel left out, told me "He said to him 'you were a better player when you were a Christian.'" That player had recently converted to Islam since living in Muscat. Even in the evening the heat and humidity was intense, and I wondered why, in spite of the fact that our sweat wasn't evaporating, the sports facilities were always busy. In addition to the two Filipino teams practicing, there were several friendly games of soccer between on the adjacent soccer fields. There were about ten individuals engaged in that soccer match, they were speaking Arabic and learned Arab, though I can't say with certainty whether or not they were Omani. The overall atmosphere of this social event was fun and light-hearted, and, though I couldn't understand what was being said, the

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tone of delivery and responses of others let me know that there was a lot of joking and the kind of benign "trash-talking" you'd expect amongst close friends and teammates.

Qurum Park, Qurum I only briefly went to Qurum Park, close to City Center Qurum and the shopping complex in Al Khuwair, with a Yemeni friend to rendezvous with another individual who needed a lift. What I observed, only briefly, was that the park patrons were mostly Omanis, usually as a family unit, and South Asian expatriates. There was also one South Asian woman walking with an Omani family. I assume she was their housekeeper, and was there to take care of the children, and other errands the family deems necessary.

Royal Opera House, Shatti. There is also a separation of the expatriate and national communities based on economic status. Certain places of prominence, like the Royal Opera House and its amenities, is informally off limits to the majority of the expatriate community because of cost. Omanis frequent these shops, restaurants, and cafes frequently, but expatriates do not. In addition to cost, expatriates feel informally excluded from these areas, as their presence was marked by discriminatory comments and glares. I went to the Royal Opera House three times, the first time I was meeting an Omani alum of University of Oregon to chat over lunch, in the interior, commercial area of the Opera House. I observed only Omanis and Western expatriates, with the exception being those working the shops and restaurants, though some employees were western expatriates.

The second time I went to the Royal Opera House was with an Omani friend I initially met back in high school in South Africa. Through her work at the National Museum, she made acquaintance with and befriended Anil Khimji, a wealthy

businessman from one of Muscat's most influential Indian families. He owns an upscale Indian restaurant in the Opera House, and we were invited for a private dinner in his company. Also in attendance were two Italian women of middle age. I wish not to share that majority of that conversation considering that I wasn't there in a research capacity, but Mr. Khimji did convey that he may have to relocate this restaurant because of the high rents at the Royal Opera House, in addition to liquor license issues impacting the revenue the restaurant generates. He also mentioned that his family has been in Oman continuously since 1870, and that is why he wears the *dishdasha* and takes pride in doing so.

The last trip to the Royal Opera House was with my high school friend, two of her three sisters, and four of their female cousins. We ate iftar at Al Angham, an upscale traditional Omani restaurant, serving only Omani foods, and employing only Omani wait staff. It was really pricey, and, actually, now that I think about it, during each visit to the Opera House I felt sloppy and underdressed in comparison to other patrons. The topics of conversation over dinner were mostly relating to family drama and gossip, which, I came to realize, is what dominates conversation between Omani women.

Muscat City Centre, Seeb. (Photos 7.8, 7.9, 7.10, & 7.11) I went to City Center Seeb several times because of its proximity to where I was staying and the need to occasionally buy groceries. Sometimes my high school classmates and I would go to the mall for clothing, but it was only occasional. In the summer, and especially during Ramadan, the time of day changes the atmosphere of City Center Seeb. Before 5:00 or 6:00 pm the mall will be sparsely populated, the exception being, obviously, those employed there, but also

western expatriates, including myself. Though I did fast during Ramadan while there, the presence of only westerners could be because they aren't constrained by fasting, and so their schedule was less nocturnal.

I went to City Center Seeb on a weekday at 5:00 pm, though, and it was as crowded as I anticipated, given the shopping culture and popularity of malls in Muscat. Mall-goers I observed were mostly Omanis, conspicuous because of their national dress. I saw many family units and many, many children. I also observed several groups of teenagers, Omani teens mostly, who were, like teenagers at malls all across the world, traveling in packs, window-shopping, and just generally being awkward and silly, especially when around the opposite sex. I saw one woman of middle age wearing a Bedouin-style niqab, which I had not previously seen being worn in the city, and only a couple times had I seen it worn in the interior of Oman.

After wandering around and taking in the atmosphere, I posted up at the Starbucks on the edge of the food court, near H&M, Chili's restaurant, and The Body Shop. The employees of this Starbucks were South Asian. Sitting behind me was a sizable group of Filipino friends, both male and female. In front of me was a table of three Omani men, two of whom were wearing kumas and the third was wearing the Bedouin style hat. Observing the people walking by, I observed a lot of South Asian men in western clothing hanging out together, a few family units of western origin. I also observed three men wearing Saudi national dress walking together, which was worthy of note because, from what I have seen and what was conveyed in interviews and off-the-record conversations, there are not many Saudi nationals in Oman. I also saw one Indonesian housekeeper shopping with an Omani family. At one point a Western man and black

woman, I won't speculate as to her nationality, walked by together. Because of what I had heard from participants about their experiences as part of an interracial couple, I looked at others around me to see their reaction. For the most part everyone was too busy or distracted to take notice, but I did notice a lot of people looking at them, or I saw moving as if watching the couple walk. Otherwise the reaction to their presence was, thankfully, uninteresting.

Muscat City Centre, Qurum. I went to City Center Qurum on a Friday night around 10:30 pm to catch a movie with some new friends, accompanied by my old classmate. The group we were meeting up with included two South Africans, cousins, one Ugandan female, and a Yemeni male. There were a lot of Omani families at the mall, but the quantity of teenage hordes was notably increased. Again, these groups of teenagers were divided by gender, and more or less aimlessly walking the halls chatting with each other, and, when another group of teenagers was encountered, of the opposite sex anyway, they would chat and flirt with each other in that familiarly awkward and self-conscious teenage way.

LuLu Hypermarket, Avenues Mall, Bowsher (Photos 7.12, 7.13, & 17.14) I went grocery shopping with my female Omani friend to LuLu Hypermarket at Avenues Mall on a weekday afternoon. The store itself is incredibly large and two-stories, with products ranging to food stuff to clothing to electronics. The food was a variety of products that cater to both Asian and Middle East tastes. Looking at the labels of some food items, origins included India and South Africa. There was a very sizable seafood section that partially resembled an aquarium, with both live and dead fish for purchased. The produce section was incredibly different than that of other grocery stores like Sultan Center and

Carrefour because of its variety. The, dare I say, exotic variety of fruits and vegetables were of Asian origins. There was a notable dates, nuts, and dried fruits counter that was busy. LuLu was in fact very crowded as conveyed by Participant 7, and the majority of the shoppers were of South Asian and Asian origin. I did observe, however, many Omani shoppers.

Al Khuwair Shopping Complex, Al Khuwair (Photo 7.15) In this commercial area in close proximity to City Center Qurum the majority of shops and business are fabric and tailoring related. There are also jewelry and ready-made clothing stores a pet store, and a miniature tourist-friendly *souq*-style souvenir shop. There is also a couple electronic shops, and an Amouj store, which is an Omani perfume company that's insanely expensive. Amouj perfume has a particular heaviness to it that to me smelled typically Arab, if that makes any sense. It's a thick, strong, and expensive type of scent, rather than the subtle perfumes popular in the United States. In this shopping area, most store owners were Asian or South Asian, as were most employees. The patrons I noticed were mostly Omanis, but I also saw Asians, South Asians, a just a handful of westerner expatriates.

Matrah Souq, Matrah (Photos 7.16 & 7.16) My female Omani friend and I went to the *souq* in Matrah to buy fabric and trim for her older sister, who has interest in clothing design. We went on a weekend afternoon during Ramadan, so the *souq* was relatively slow and empty except for the store owners and a few Omanis who seemed to just be passing through. The *souq* is largely underground, for reasons relating to climate, and is a labyrinth of small alleys connecting to a larger thoroughfare like spokes, the center of which is a larger circular intersection with a stained glass ceiling. The fabric 'section' of the *souq* is towards the back, in a side alley passed the tourist and souvenirs section,

which is immediately upon entrance. The store owners looked and sounded to be of South Asian origins. The business interaction was professional and actually somewhat unfriendly. I assume this is because we were females and she was Omani, so familiarity in our interaction would be inappropriate for the place and context. When we left, there was an elderly Omani male in clothing that would indicate rural origins. He had a wheelbarrow of lemons to sell. When it tipped over and I assisted in placing the loose lemons back into the wheelbarrow, there was no conversation at all, including a thank you. I can only speculate as to why, and think either my action was expected, or again, that I was female and the older generation would not engage with me because of my gender.

The smaller alcohol-serving venues, like Irish pubs and the various lounges were spaces of interaction. Though you can see both populations, identifiable partially by the wearing of national dress, in the bars of the international hotels, there is still segregation and limited contact between the two. For example, though some Omanis were sitting with a group of friends of various origins, including the group of friends interviewed, there was an entire table of men in *dishdasha* drinking pints and singing their own songs without so much as an acknowledgement of others around them. Many Omani men were visible in the bars, but often came alone and would stand aside observing others.

Rock Bottom, Ramee Guestline Hotel, Qurum (Photo 7.18) My first trip to Rock Bottom was on a weekday even from 1:30-3:00 am, and the venue was very crowded. The type of music played on this weekday night was electronic/techno music, as many top 40 pop songs from the UK and a few American pop songs. The crowd was

particularly pleased to hear Bailando by Enrique Iglesias, and many more people joined the crowded dancefloor upon commencement.

Based on external appearance including race and clothing and languages overheard, as well as random short conversations with fellow club-goers, I estimate that roughly 2/3 of patrons that night were expatriates of African, Asian, South Asian and European origins. I spoke with Filipina females, one Latina female, and one Romanian female. There were several, roughly a dozen, Omani males wearing *dishdasha*. Some of these conspicuous Omani males were drinking, while others were just standing, observing the dancefloor keenly. The number of male patrons greatly outnumbered female patrons, and I did not observe any Omani females. The patrons of European and African descent dominated the dance floor, with groups of males cheering on an enthusiastic performance of a single friend as well as doing choreographed dances as a group, specifically the African expatriates. In the smoking section of the location, a poorly-ventilated fish tank-style glass room to the right of the dancefloor, I casually conversed with several British expatriates, male, and Indian expatriates, male. There were several Omanis in the smoking room. Substances being smoked included both tobacco cigarettes and dokha pipes.

On my second visit to Rock Bottom, at roughly 2:00 am, I went with a couple British expatriates in an impromptu and last minute continuation of the nights' festivities. Again, the room was mostly occupied by expatriates of Western and South Asian descent. There were many, many more Asian women than the previous visit. I noticed a group of 3-4 Asian women dancing under the watch of an Arab man. Dancing up towards them and introducing myself, their enthusiasm to dance with me seemed genuine, and

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somehow slightly flirtatious. When I asked one of the women where she was from, she said the Philippines. When I asked if she was with the man at the bar, she nodded yes and said "…and also my friends." The Arab man watched me intently and when the woman approached him at the bar they had a brief verbal exchange, he looked back at me suspiciously but never left his barstool. I began to realize that these women were prostitutes. On the dancefloor I asked the friendliest of the group with whom I had been conversing if she was okay. The question was met with confusion and no answer was provided. Not wanting to bring unintended consequences to her, I quit asking questions and just continued my observations without direct communication.

Left Bank Lounge, Qurum (Photo 7.19) My first trip to the frequently cited and much-loved Left Bank Lounge took place on a weekend night from 11:30 pm to 1:00 am. I attended at the invitation of several interview participants. I was told that this place was "the new Zouk", a reference to a since-closed club that was incredibly popular amongst the club-going crowd. Indeed it was a very popular and very crowded venue atop a steep hill. Most patrons drove together to Left Bank, and parking atop the hill was imperative, as walking up the hill was definitely strenuous. The music was of an understated, European lounge variety, and there was no dance floor, as dancing was not the focus of the venue. The outdoor tables, where smoking was permitted, was prime real estate, and every group that came in after us I observed at least peaking outside to look for available space.

I couldn't help but feel that I was amongst the city's hippest and most globalized residents. Many, many expatriates of numerous origins were gathered in the space. The group with whom I met up with were expatriates of Sudanese, Iranian, Ugandan, Omani

and Yemeni national origins. I spoke with expatriates from Lebanon, India, Sudan, the UK, and China at the same table we were occupying. I made acquaintance with Omani men in western dress, and observed a table of four: three Omani men in *dishdasha* and an Omani girl dressed modestly Western but without *abaya* or hijab. They were largely silent and observant, and, to be honest, looking rather uncomfortable, the reason for which I cannot say. It could've been that the environment of indulgence was overwhelming and they felt out-of-place, or that, given the culture of gossip, secrecy, and the importance of reputation, they hoped not to make eye contact with familiar faces. I returned to Left Bank twice more. The second visit was much like the first in terms of crowd demographics, size, and music choice with the exception that I observed more Omanis in *dishdasha* than I had on my first visit. However, the last time I frequented this venue it was a Sunday during the early evening. I was with three Omani sisters, childhood friends, and we attended specifically because the youngest sister learned that Left Bank had a Sunday Roast dinner every Sunday. This was appealing to her as she attended university in the UK, and felt a sense of nostalgia for the tradition.

Cornucopia, Grand Hyatt, Shatti. I was invited out with a group of participants to Cornucopia after spending a few hours at Left Bank. It was a weekend night between 1:00 am and 3:00 am. The group with which I was socializing included 3 Sudanese male expatriates, two Ugandans, one male and one female, an Omani male, a Yemeni guy, a Lebanese guy, a girl from Venezuela, 3 British females and one British male, a girl from Ukraine, and a Chinese female. The venue was largely empty, maybe 20 patrons, when we first arrived but as the night progressed the venue became more crowded. There were many Omani men in *dishdasha* amongst the small group, more than I had seen in other

venues. There were expatriates as well, and I spoke with a Lebanese male, and observed expatriates, both male and female (but again, mostly male), of Asian and South Asian origins. House and techno music was the dominant genre, with sampling from Western pop and hip-hop, but the majority of patrons were not dancing, the men in *dishdasha* were lined up along the periphery of the dance floor just observing those who were. Over the course of our time in Cornucopia I observed African expatriates dancing. Our diverse group danced all together, and our enthusiasm seemed to embolden some to also dance.

The most interesting observation at Cornucopia occurred for me upon our group's arrival at the venue. I realized that the only other people dancing were three transvestites of Asian origin. Even more surprising was the observation that a man in *dishdasha* was dancing with and physically/sexually groping one of the transvestites, who was, with her heels and bunny ears, literally towering over the Omani man. When I asked an acquaintance about the very visible engagement of the Omani man and Asian man in woman's clothing, I was informed that though being homosexual is still illegal in Oman, it's gradually becoming more socially accepted, and that in a place like Cornucopia nationals are feeling more comfortable publicly engaging with male prostitutes.

Another notable observation at Cornucopia occurred on my second, and last, visit to the venue. It was Arabic Music Night and I immediately noticed several, maybe 4 or 5, Arab women in *abaya* dancing together on the dancefloor. If I saw Arab women in club environments they were usually in Western clothing, so the presence of these women was conspicuous to me. Intrigued by their dress and presence in such an environment, I turned to my Omani acquaintance and asked what the deal was with the Muslim women on the dancefloor. I asked if this was acceptable to their families. I was informed that these

women were not Omani, but Moroccan prostitutes that are collectively called 'Arab Princesses'. With the exception of the women in our group of friends, I got the impression that all the other women in Cornucopia were sex workers. The nightclubs seemed to serve a specific purpose, and our presence as regular party-goers was seen as odd in such establishments.

On the Rocks Lounge, Golden Tulip Hotel, Seeb. At the invitation of a participant, I went to On the Rocks Lounge on a weekend night between 10:00 pm-2:00 am. The venue had an 'icey' feel with modern furnishings and a cool colour scheme. At the back wall was a DJ booth with a sizeable dancefloor in front of it. A VIP section was to the left of the DJ's booth, and it was elevated above the rest of the room. There were several tables in addition to the bar sitting area. It was Hip Hop and R&B Night at the venue, and the music choices were popular amongst the crowd. Genres of music played included Rap, Hip Hop, Dancehall, and the occasional R&B slow jam. The Yemeni participant and I met up with a larger group of friends. The group consisted of Bahraini, Omani, Swiss, Yemeni, Lebanese, Sudanese, Ugandan, Ukrainian, South African, Russian, and Egyptian nationalities. The Swiss female in attendance was visiting her Yemeni boyfriend, and it was her first visit to Oman. She and her boyfriend had met while training to be pilots in the UK. The group made sure to make her feel welcomed, as she was quiet and reserved. In addition to our group, I observed that many of the patrons were of African origins, a larger turnout than present during other participant observation experiences. The dance floor was more or less informally segregated, not by race or ethnicity but by groups of friends who arrived together. As the night progressed, however, these dancing groups of friends intermingled, cheering each other on when sweet dance moves were attempted.

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The vibe of setting was one of easy-going, casual friendliness that reminded me of social interactions I experienced living in South Africa. I don't know if that is necessarily accurate, but it was a friendlier and more informal atmosphere amongst strangers than previously observed.

Route 66, Shatti Al Qurum (Photo 7.20) I went to Route 66 three times with acquaintances and several interview participants for their weekly Wednesday Karaoke Night, usually earlier in the evening around 9:00 or 10:00 pm. The nationalities present included Yemeni, South African, Sudanese, Filipino, Indian, Omani (men), Palestinian, Lebanese, British, Moroccan, Macedonians, and Chinese. The employees of Route 66 were mostly Filipinas, including the bartenders and servers. The songs chosen by patrons to sing included American songs, like Mustang Sally, and songs by the Black Eyed Peas, Madonna, and Beyoncé. European pop songs were also chosen, like Zombie by the Cranberries, an Irish band. Wasn't Me by Shaggy, a Jamaican artist, was the chosen song by an Omani in *dishdasha*, who sounded so similar to the original artist that the crowd erupted in cheers of encouragement. There were many Omani males in attendance as compared to my observations in other public drinking venues, conspicuous because of their national dress. However, the Omanis seemed to be less keen on interacting with others, preferring to sit together drinking pints and singing Arabic songs in unison instead. The atmosphere of Route 66 was the most informal of any bar or lounge visited, as people weren't dressed to the nines or particularly concerned about being seen with their hair down. It was an incredibly friendly and relaxed vibe between all patrons and employees, though interaction between groups of friends was rather limited.

Private Public Space

Before I discuss my experiences in private spaces, I should first discuss a social

space somewhere between private and public. Because of the strict cultural social

segregation of men and women, as well as the cultural norm that an individual only

leaves his or her family home once married, the role of cars in socialization is significant.

Women and men can't openly hang out together in public spaces without fear of gossip

or tarnished reputation, and their families won't allow for such conversation or

socialization to occur at the family house, and I doubt individuals would want to socialize

under their parents' roof either, whether or not the opposite gender would be in

attendance. However, despite this 'traditional' gender segregation, a cultural shift

towards courtship and dating is happening. So the automobile is also a vehicle for

intersex socialization, and other socialization activities deemed illicit or otherwise

inappropriate in public spaces. This seemed to be more pronounced with Arab and

Muslim participants than others, though respect for local values limited such behaviour

on the part of non-Arab and non-Muslim participants, who are also not immune to the

problem of gossip. It was a very common sight to see cars, several in close proximity, or

several with a bit of distance between each car, parked just off the roadway. Having

asked participants and acquaintances, dating was cited frequently as the reason for their

presence. The location of these parked cars was usually in an undeveloped open space,

but not necessarily in an unfrequented area. In addition to parking in close proximity to

roads, their presence was conspicuous given that this social activity usually occurred in

the evening and drivers left their headlights on. For me, this is a significant point because

these individuals are concerned enough about privacy and the disapproval of their

activities, but not concerned enough to warrant attempts to be invisible to police or other residents.

Younger residents would drive around with friends and engage in whatever activities they did without having a destination. In an informal conversation with Participant 17 and several of his friends, drug abuse and government censorship was the topic, and two of the friends relayed a story wherein they were stopped at a traffic light and the passenger door of the car in front of them opened. The passenger vomited on the road, then shut the car door. With a flabbergasted tone these two individuals said no more than half a minute after the passenger vomited the driver's side door was opened and he too vomited on the road. Missing the significance of this, I said, "Okay, they got sick. What does that mean?" and one friend said, "Morphine. Nausea is a side effect of morphine." It is this conversation that first alerted me to the use of cars in socialization, and the reason why the younger population is so fond of the car culture: the traditional family living arrangements and a lack of fixed private spaces. The conversation quickly changed to how dangerous it was for so many young residents to be driving around under the influence of such narcotics, and in this informal conversation it was speculated that this use of the car as a social space is a factor in the frequency of auto accidents in Muscat. In terms of hashish smoking while driving, the company was more agreeable and believe it to be a nonissue, especially in comparison to driving while under the influence of morphine and tramadol.

In other participant observation experiences, acquaintances, of Indian and Arab origins, showed me other locations whereat one could typically see several parked cars in close proximity. These transgressive areas were at the margins of residential

development, in areas under construction, where pavement abruptly meets the sand. Usually, they were more secluded than those areas I observed at the beach, and higher in elevation with scenic nighttime views of Muscat. Upon our approach, I noticed headlights were off, and also noticed looks of suspicion towards our vehicle and nervousness in the eyes of those already in the area. Once, however, we parked and exited the vehicle to enjoy the view, the others continued with their socializing, probably, I assume, because they were certain we weren't the Royal Oman Police. Whereas in other intimate social gatherings people tended to greet one another and introduce themselves, in these areas they did not. Each group of car passengers kept to themselves and did not approach or engage any other parties. This, coupled with the fact that headlights were off and the air of anxiety was heavier, leads me to believe that the legal ramifications of drug and alcohol consumption are more impactful than the social ramifications that would come from being found to have socialized privately with the opposite gender.

Private Space

In private spaces I was given access to, the level of Omani-expat socialization was significantly higher than observed in public spaces, and more meaningful given both the intimacy and level of conversational exchange. Sudanese, Omani, Indian, Burundian, Yemeni, South Sudanese, Filipino, American, South African, and Trinidadian nationalities, among others, drank and conversed together, mostly bonding of music tastes. Some of these private gatherings involved smoking hashish. I was invited for such socialization to only one family house in Shatti, where the activity was confined to one room, and five apartments rented by unmarried expatriate men, Indian and American, and three unmarried Omani males.

Though I was invited to several 'boat-parties', I didn't attend. These gatherings seem to be characterized by high levels of Omani-expatriate interaction. Several boats would anchor close together off the coast, I heard several times people say it was Bandar Al Khiran, and its passengers would drink, talk, listen to music, and dance for the entire afternoon, sometimes into the evening. Women would be in attendance, but they would not be Omani. I would assume the conversation would be similar to that observed in the parties thrown in the residences.

House Gathering I, Qurum. My first house gathering was in Qurum, at the upscale villa of an Omani male. The décor was high end, with a very large salt-water fish tank serving as the division between the dining room and living room. There were four stories, and the fourth floor was mostly an outdoor veranda with an ocean view. It had several comfy seats, a fire pit, a giant fan for comfort, and a sizeable bar area. The size of this outdoor space gave me the impression that it was used frequently for entertaining, especially the presence of a bar and the fan, which would mean that even in the heat, the veranda is used. There were, in addition to the male Omani homeowner, two Omani sisters, 1 Omani female who was also half Kenyan, 1 Sudanese male, and one Moroccan female. The music being played was that globalized variety, including American and British Top-40 pop music you'd tend to hear on the radio. Everyone knew each other and became acquainted with each other through past social gatherings and socializing events at Left Bank.

Everyone was dressed in western, globalized attire. The Omani sisters were dressed modestly, with blousy, long-sleeved tops. Though definitely not immodestly dressed, the Omani-Kenyan woman was dressed in a t-shirt and wrapped sarong or

wrapped skirt. Alcohol was available but because it was Ramadan so the Moroccan girl declined a drink. The two Omani sisters, despite facial piercings that would indicate a Western outlook, also didn't drink. When drinks were declined, the Omani male said "What you're only good Muslims during Ramadan?" To which everyone giggled and there was some playful defensive remarks made but the choice was not really judged, and was never brought up thereafter.

Overall, the social gathering was incredibly pleasant and informal. We talked about sports, particularly windsurfing in Masira, because the Omani-Kenyan female just returned from windsurfing in Masira, and other neutral subjects relating to like trips and events of note, and tentative Eid travel plans. There was a significant amount of gossiping about individuals I didn't know, but nothing that seemed important to record and so about what or who the group was gossiping about I do not recall.

House Gathering II, Qurum. My second private gathering was also in Qurum. The owner of the house was an older Omani male that everyone seemed to be trying to impress, or towards who everyone was overly respectful. I came as the plus-one of Participant 1, a Sudanese male, and there were two other European individuals present, a couple, I assumed, though I didn't catch from which European state the originate, and couldn't gather from their more globalized expatriate accents. The Omani homeowner has a yacht and routinely invites younger friends out for yacht parties in Bandar Al Khiran. This is the reason I assumed Participant 1 was eager to be in his good graces, in addition to his investments in entertainment ventures, a distant ambition of Participant 1. Upon arrival to his modest one-story home, we went out for a late dinner to Tokyo Taro at the Falaj Hotel. The Omani male was incredibly polite, gracious, and generous, buying

the meals of all four of his dinner guests. We were sitting at the sushi bar instead of a table made conversation with anyone not sitting right next to you difficult, but he routinely directed questions towards me to make me feel included. In addition to the food, sake was ordered and consumed. When we returned to his home we smoked shisha and watched television. There was a South Asian housekeeper there, who prepared the shisha for us. He did not ready the shisha himself, but instead his housekeeper of Asian origin readied two shisha pipes for us. The interaction between the Omani homeowner and his housekeeper actually seemed very fond and warmhearted. She joked on him, he joked on her, and I witnessed no condescension on his part.

There were two couches and a large recliner chair, in which the Omani man sat. This reminded me of my father, who referred to our reclining chair as *his* recliner, or 'The Old Man Chair.' The European couple there quickly fell asleep on the couch. It was a cozy and comfortable environment but the air of it still felt noticeably formal for some reason, and not on the part of the homeowner, who was incredibly relaxed and informal, as if we weren't there or as if we were all old friends. The Omani male put on a show from Pakistan that I can only assume was Pakistan's Got Talent or Pakistani X Factor, something of that sort. He put it on because he had watched this particular clip before, found it to be hilarious, and wanted to share it with us. It was a group of Punjabi and/or Sikh men who began to beat each other with wooden planks and other various sturdy objects, it ended with one of the performers having an incredible amount of weight stacked upon his body. I understood why the Omani man found this performance to be outrageous and amusing, and have since tried to find this clip on YouTube but have not been successful.

House Gathering III, Madinat Qaboos. I attended another socializing event at a private house in Madinat Qaboos, just around the corner from KFC, and Al Fair. The homeowner was again Omani, and three of his male cousins were present. There was one Sudanese male, an Iranian male, a Spanish male, one Serbian female and three Venezuelan females also in attendance. Again, the music chosen to be plated was European and American pop or Top 40 tunes heard on English radio stations.

The house was a large, single-story home with a walled courtyard. The décor inside was more modern, in an aesthetic sense, and western than anticipated. Nevertheless, it wasn't particularly well-kept, and felt like a bachelor pad. The living room or sitting room was more or less tidy, but the kitchen was a mess. Under the sink was a substantial pile of empty vodka bottles, maybe 15-20 empty containers of liquor, indicating to me that heavy consumption was a regular occurrence. That being said, alcohol was available, and I assume obtained through illegal means rather than by permit, not only because clearly the house has run through its allotted alcohol rations, but also because alcohol was brought to the house by a non-Omani employee of the male homeowner. All those present at the gathering drank alcohol. Hashish was also provided and many present engaged in its consumption. It was melted with a lighter and mixed with loose tobacco leaf to coat, then rolled into a cigarette.

I felt a sexually-charged undercurrent to the gathering once it got started. A highly flirtatious environment developed especially when the Venezuelan females, accompanied by the Iranian male, arrived. There seemed to be a lot of posturing amongst the men, with the Omani male homeowner being treated as someone in whose good graces you'd like to be. He was divorced, with one child, and was a man of means, because of his family.

With the increasing consumption of alcohol a verbal argument occurred between the homeowner and the Sudanese male when the Sudanese male overstepped and extended an invitation to the house without first consulting with the homeowner. There was repetition of the word 'respect' and 'this is my house' to which the Sudanese guy profusely apologized and kept reiterating that it was a misunderstanding. Upon this, both the Sudanese male, with whom I came, and myself left, though in the driveway the homeowner came out, made an attempt to be less argumentative and more understanding. I sat in the rental car while this conversation continued. The Omani hugged the Sudanese guy but at that time the atmosphere was too awkward so we left.

Discussion

In terms of expatriate-Omani socialization, the level of daily interaction is highest in the workplace or place of study. This can be seen as an outcome of state development, in that expatriates are brought in for work, and, unless they are dependents, all expatriates must be employed to live in Muscat, and their residency is tied to employee sponsorship. In addition, the fact that professional or formal relationships are the most common between expatriates and Omanis can also be attributed to the culture of gossip and reputation, as well as cultural familiarity and understanding.

A Sudanese participant stated that he studied with mostly Omanis at a government school, but that there were a handful of other nationalities present, including Egyptians, Jordanians, and other Sudanese children. The reason this participant of Sudanese origin attended an Omani government school is because he has Omani citizenship, obtained by his father's contributions to state development and fulfillment of other citizenship requirements, including language proficiency. It is interesting to note that his stated

fellow students were also Arab or Arabic-speaking nationalities. This is evidence of conformation to the state's identity-building project.

A Filipina participant stated that she attended the Philippine School Muscat, but that nearly half of her classmates were non-Filipino, including Pakistanis, Sudanese, and Indian students. She stated that she socializes mostly with her former expatriate classmates, and only interacts with Omanis in the workplace. This was echoed by a male Filipino participant as well, and I would characterize this as evidence of adaptation to the state's identity building project in that these separate schools are intended to segregate the expatriate population from the Omani population, and that is the outcome for these particular participants.

For the majority of participants, the interactions had with the 'Other' in the work environment were pleasant. Participants of both non-national and Omani origins stated that there was a high level of respect and cultural understanding from both sides. Language and knowledge acquisition were cited by Omani participants as positive outcomes of this socialization. A male Omani participant stated that he works with a lot of expatriates, most of them Sudanese, and stated that they are knowledgeable, competent, and that everyone works effectively as a team regardless of their regional or national origins. He conveyed that working with expatriates was a learning opportunity for him personally. In addition, other Omani participants expressed admiration for a merit driven work culture. An Omani petroleum engineer works mostly with American expatriates, and cited promotion based on performance and the respectful nature with which they interact as positive facets of working with Americans. This is evidence of the influence of expatriates upon the local work culture, as well as a conformation to the

state's identity building project when it comes to both the emphasis on the Omani tradition of hard work, and a cosmopolitan approach to diversity in the workplace.

A female Omani participant stated that working with expatriates is pleasant and stated they respect the Omani culture, and this mutual respect was reiterated by expatriates of Western origins as well. This is evidence of adaptation or conformation to the state's identity project which emphasizes respect and hospitality, but is generally reserved for specific expatriates, particularly those of Western origins. In terms of work culture, the expatriate responses were mixed. Asian expatriates expressed that they feel frustrated and overlooked for promotion, while others, including Arab and European participants, said that they have been influenced negatively by their work environment in that they are now more acclimated to the lax and unprofessional work culture in Muscat. A Bahraini participant stated that his Omani colleagues are incredibly friendly, and that he socializes with former Omani coworkers with regularity, but that when it comes to work ethic Omanis tend to be inefficient and ineffective. Another Arab participant, an Egyptian, expressed his concern about returning to the work environment of Egypt, conveying that he is becoming acclimated to the work environment of Muscat which is much less demanding than in Egypt.

When asked if non-national participants have ever been treated differently for being foreign, the responses were quite interesting, and again validate the presence of an expatriate hierarchy. Arab expatriates stated either that they haven't been treated differently, or that they are generally treated better once their regional affiliation was noted, usually through language proficiency. Western expatriates also stated that they either haven't been treated differently, or that they believe they've actually been treated

better because they are European. Asian participants, as mentioned, stated that they have been treated differently, not just in the workplace but also in public spaces.

This racial-class hierarchy of course runs counter to the state-promoted cultural value of tolerance and respect, and is in operation in both professional and public spaces as well as private and informal spaces and from an early age onward. The participant who is both Omani and Filipino discussed the teasing he faced in the government school for his half-Asian heritage. The racism he encountered was so unbearable that he transferred to The American International School, the students of which accepted his biracial background without prejudice, unlike his previous fellow Omani classmates. This transfer to an international school is evidence of the participants' renegotiation of the state's identity project, in that he, as an Omani citizen on his father's side, having been informally classified as not a real Omani by his countrymen, decided with his parents' support to attend a more Western and cosmopolitan school where his pedigree was not in question. However, this participant stated that while his group of friends is diverse the majority of his friends are "full-blooded Omanis", also indicating a conformation to the state's identity-building project, considering the legal definition of citizen and allowance for intermarriage. Though not fully accepted by all, there are Omanis that accept or have come to accept his blended background and shared nationality.

Omanization leaves many expatriates, particularly Asian expatriates, resentful of Omanis in the workplace, often describing them as lazy and incompetent employees who only received their position because of their nationality. Much like the discourse in the United States regarding Affirmative Action, expatriates of all origins describe Omanis as both unqualified and lacking incentive to perform well, even, as Filipino Participant 19

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conveyed, "pacified by their government." Asian participants interviewed expressed resentment for, firstly, being excluded from consideration for managerial positions, and secondly, having to work for someone they consider less qualified and capable than themselves.

A Portuguese female participant, however, saw Omanization as a positive endeavour, but expressed her concern that Omani employees were not being adequately trained or even given tasks in their positions, which she saw as incredibly 'sad'. Even still, this is evidence of a stereotypical view of the Omani worker, influencing individual and collective identity, which is counter to the longstanding hardworking citizen narrative.

A female Omani participant stated that she felt like she was treated differently by expatriate coworkers, and believed they saw her as incompetent. Additionally, she expressed resentment towards the fact that expatriates preferred to hire or work with those of the same national origin, avoiding Omani workers altogether. This negative stereotype of the Omani population, the result of labour nationalization and migration management, is directly contradicting the national rhetoric of a diligent and hardworking Omani identity, and is influencing the decisions of private-sector employers. This is potentially made worse by the requirement of Omanis to wear national dress at work, making more visible the distinction between Omanis and non-Omanis in the workplace.

Some Omani participants conveyed their own frustration at the local work culture, characterizing it as inefficient and unprofessional. A well-travelled female Omani employed in both the public sector and private sector stated that in her government job she has many Omani colleagues, but that at the radio station, she is the only Omani

employee, and this is because the supervisor are unhappy with the unprofessional work ethic of the Omanis they had previously employed. The unprofessional work ethic of Omanis was shared by expatriates more frequently than Omani participants, but she too relayed that her expatriate employers prefer to hire other expatriates because of their experiences with Omani employees behaving unprofessionally. Her statement demonstrates private-sector employers are negotiating the state's nation-building project, particularly Omanization policies.

This participants' response also demonstrates that, broadly, there is a dissent, unconscious or conscious, against the state's national identity project in that Omanis are not conforming to the hard-working narrative of Omani culture. However, her response also conveys that she is conforming to this same state narrative. This participant has two occupations and is expressing her own disapproval of the work ethic of fellow Omanis, demonstrating that she herself is conforming to the hardworking Omani narrative.

Outside of the workplace, social interaction between Omanis and expatriates is quite limited, with the exception being Omanis characterized by participants as westernized, or having had a lot of western exposure. Several Omani participants stated that they had few or no expatriate friends with whom they socialize. A male Omani participant who works mostly with Americans stated that he has many expatriate friends with whom he socializes regularly, evidence of his conformation to cosmopolitanism. Another Omani male's response demonstrates his more traditional social lifestyle but also a subdued adaptation to the cosmopolitanism of the city itself. He stated that he prefers to socialize with his family in the countryside, but while in the city most of his friends are Omani males of rural origin, but also has a couple non-Omani Arab friends.

One female participant stated that though she doesn't have any expatriate friends, she is open to having them, indicating a willingness to engage rather than remain socially segregated. Her response is an indication that she is negotiating the state's identity project, both its emphasis on cosmopolitanism and friendliness as well as the traditional Arab social and cultural expectation, particularly its constraints on women. However, another female Omani participant, who has extensive residency in Western states, chooses not to engage socially with expatriates, preferring the company of other Omanis because of the shared cultural understandings that can go unspoken in social conversation. I'm not quite sure what to make of this participants' response while considering her background. Because she makes this decision based on the perceived ease of social interaction and conversation, I would consider this response evidence of unconscious conformation to the state's identity project, particularly the element of traditional Arab culture and social structure.

As mentioned, there is limited interaction between expatriates and Omanis outside of the work environment, some expatriates stated that, although they interact mostly in the workplace, that they did occasionally socialize with Omanis, or had Omani friends. Those who stated they socialized the most with Omanis included Western, Arab, Asian, and African non-nationals alike. A Portuguese male stated that he socialized with Europeans, as well as with a couple Omani families on occasion. A British participant stated that he socialized with a lot of Omanis because in the UK he went to school with Omanis and they extended their warm hospitality to him upon arrival, but stated that most of his Omani friends are very westernized. This information signals that these Omani friends are negotiating the state's identity project in that they are adhering to traditional

values of hospitality and cosmopolitanism, but are also more western than perhaps intended by the state.

His wife, an Indian with extensive Gulf residency, also stated that she has "Omani-Omani" girlfriends but that they too have had a lot of western exposure, hinting at the idea that they are not conforming to the traditional social and cultural expectations. A Filipina participant stated that she has some local Omani friends from her previous place of employment, as well as former Pakistani classmates who had since obtained citizenship. The fact that, when she said this, she asked, "does that count?" signals that though the state has defined the Omani citizen and has declared these former classmates citizens, that her definition of Omani is still based on ethnicity and lineage. This is evidence of negotiation of the state's identity project.

A Sudanese participant, who held Omani citizenship, also stated that since he went to school with mostly Omanis that he has many Omani friends, some of whom make an effort to speak his language. This is evidence of conformation to the state's identity project in that Omanis are accepting this Omani citizen of Sudanese origins as a fellow citizen and embracing that diversity. However this may not be the case either. When asked if he has ever been treated differently, this participant stated that he had not been treated different for not being "Omani Omani". However, during a conversation between this participant and an Omani male participant, a differentiating (and, as I interpreted it, racist) remark was made about this Sudanese participants African origins. These two participants, however, were friends that socialized together frequently, and the remark was laughed off. I can only speculate as the reasons for laughing off the racially differentiating comment. It could be a way to deflect the comment to which offense was

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taken in an attempt to avoid conflict or an upset to the friendship. It could have also been interpreted as a light-hearted joke that was not intended to offend, and chalked up to ignorance. Or, it could have been, given their familiarity with each other, an intentionally offensive joke wherein the intention was interpreted as positive. As an expatriate myself in an international high school, I heard this type of friendly joking often, between Israelis and Arabs, or Hindu and Muslim Indians, for example. It was a way of marking such differences as trivial by making light of contentious political or ethnic issues by pointing out these differences amongst friends. The fact that this Sudanese participant stated that he had never been treated differently leads me to believe that the comment was this latter possibility, or that this participant willfully dismissed or ignored such interactions.

Though the response of Sudanese Participant 1 is difficult to analyze, the responses to whether or not participants had been treated differently in social situations because they were non-nationals is further evidence of the existence of a racial-national hierarchy of expatriates. As mentioned, Arab participants said they were treated the same, or better once it was discovered that they were Arab, and European participants stated that they have been treated better than other expatriates of Asian or South Asian origins, for example. However, the Portuguese florist, stated that Omani men shout mean things at expatriates when drunk counters this trend a bit. It could be because of his occupation, perhaps a point where regional origins because a sort of a substitute for class. This treatment in public, however, could've come after an ill-informed assessment of physical appearance, as he was short with a darker complexion than a stereotypical Western expat. Similarly, a Filipino participant stated that Omani men will yell at her in Tagalog in public spaces. She said, however, that she's used to it by now, and speculated that she has

been treated differently because of the language barrier more than anything. This justification on her part seems to be a coping mechanism, or way to adapt to the local social environment and her position within it.

Considering specific locations, outdoor sports and recreation clubs are avenues of social interaction. Team sports and group exercise, like soccer and yoga classes, were mentioned as activities in which there is social interaction, but the extent of this interactions is limited, likely due to the physical nature of this type of activity. Participants of Omani, Asian, Western, and Arab origins all stated they engaged in organized sport with expatriates and Omanis alike. However, some of these team sports and other community clubs were more exclusionary, or at least inward facing. For example, the Filipino community's basketball tournament was only for the Filipino community.

The women's only swimming club, too, is exclusive to women affiliated with Sultan Qaboos University, and is segregated not only by time but also space, in that the women's swimming club has its own separate facility. This is due to the local culture and its emphasis on modesty and the segregation of the sexes. Likewise, the fact that two Omani participants are engaged in volunteer-oriented clubs serves as evidence that the promoted cultural value of community and self-sacrifice is in part effective.

In terms of bars and lounges in the zoned leisure areas, interaction between Omanis and migrants seemed limited. Even if both were occupying the same space, little interaction was observed. Groups of Omani males would be present but would not be interacting with other patrons. The regional and national origins of customers observed in the majority of these locations were mostly Western and Arab. It's important to note,

though, that rarely was an Omani woman seen in these public spaces, because, although there would not be any formal penalty for their presence and engagement, the informal consequences, relating to local social structure and culture, if they were to be seen by others. I would characterize this as conformation to the state's identity project.

The state's influence upon these public spaces is significant. It is in these western-catering establishments where one can buy and consume alcohol without formal penalty. Non-Muslim and/or nonreligious city residents enjoy the consumption of alcohol in addition to the social environment. In addition, it was conveyed that the expatriate community renews itself every few years, which alters the environment or atmosphere of these spaces. This can be attributed to the state's employment and residency policies. In response, individuals adjust their spatial practices. A French participant stated that he used to go to Left Bank, for example, but with the renewal of the expatriate population, the perceived classiness of the venue changed and he no longer frequents this public space. This is an adaptation to the state's identity project. The music played in the public venues and private spaces demonstrates the influence of globalization and the influence of western culture in particular. Partiality for American and European pop and Top-40 hits was strong. In addition, it was conveyed by participants that more and more Omanis are frequenting the bars, indicating a shift in lifestyle in the direction of westernization. This is evidence of a renegotiation of the state's identity project in that there is an increasing preference for cultural products of a non-Omani nature. The observed engagement in sexual behaviours in select public spaces is also a significant indication of a reconstruction of the state's identity project. Homosexuality was acceptable and prostitution pervasive in certain bars and clubs, signaling a shift away from traditional

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social practices. Such activities would not be deemed acceptable in certain public spaces, like outdoor recreation areas or shopping malls, but in spaces like Cornucopia or Rock Bottom being openly gay or approaching prostitutes, for men anyway, is perfectly normal and even expected in such spaces.The observed engagement in sexual behaviours in select public spaces is also a significant indication of a reconstruction of the state's identity project.

The most extensive or meaningful Omani-expatriate interactions occurs in private spaces, the home, the car, the boat in the middle of the bay, the isolated construction site. In these private spaces is also where most transgressions occur. The influence of the state is notable in that many of the activities in which people would like to engage are confined to the private sphere, both because drinking out is expensive and, participants stated, house gatherings are more talkative and social than a night out. Why? It was conveyed that individuals feel more relaxed in private space because of the privacy it affords. Omanis and expatriates alike express concern about gossip and tarnished reputation, and feel like they cannot engage freely in public because they are ever mindful of this informal social constraint. In addition, remaining in private spaces means that one can avoid the roadblocks set up by the Royal Oman Police, and avoid formal penalties for consumption of alcohol. It isn't just the consumption of alcohol and illicit substances but also socialization between the sexes. In this private spaces women and men socialize freely and, quite often, flirtatiously. Socialization in public-private spaces and private spaces is both dissent against and adaptation to the state's identity project in that the activities in which people are engaging in illicit or unapproved activities, but the spaces chosen for such activities are beyond the public realm.

It is notable that these house gatherings are usually in the homes of expatriates and not Omanis, attributed to the traditional social structure, where children do not leave the family house until they are married. It was conveyed that though Omanis and expatriates frequently socialize together in private spaces, the Omani friends are usually westernized, having grown up or traveled abroad extensively. The prevalence of house gatherings was also attributed to the uncertainty and spontaneity of the expatriate lifestyle. Individuals are more prone to gather without much planning or notice, because there is the pervasive feeling of instability and uncertainty in regards to employment and residency. This, too, can be attributed to the state's influence and is an adaptation to expatriate living characterized by uncertainty.

Having discussed socialization and social space in Muscat, the following chapter will discuss how such socialization and the state's national identity project is influencing culture and identity for Muscat residents.

CHAPTER VIII

IDENTITY AND THE PRODUCTION OF SPACE

The following chapter relates to the issue of culture and identity in the context of

Muscat, particularly those influences that challenge the national identity project. This

chapter will first explore substate Omani identities, followed by a discussion of cultural

exchange resulting from migration and urbanization. This chapter will then conclude with

a discussion of participant identities and how they have been influenced by globalization,

migration, and cultural exchange.

The Influence of Tribal and Regional Affiliation upon the Nation-building Project

Tribal membership is still an incredibly strong element of identity amongst Omani

participants, and all those interviewed, whether or not they had been born or raised in

Muscat, mentioned in interviews their regional origins without solicitation. Omani female

Participant 12 said tribalism,

"…is the major integral part of society. Like everything is ruled by tribes by default...like you're getting married, 'What tribe is he from? Let's go ask about his tribe.' They'll ask about his tribe and come back and say 'yea we like…red light yellow light green light.' We're very much a tribal society."

Geographic origins is also clearly important in the negotiation of identity amongst

Omanis. When asked how many tribes exist in Oman, Participant 12 said, "I have no

idea, but we could reach 2000, 3000, 4000. There's so many tribes it's ridiculous like

'where is that? I've never heard in my life the name of this tribe.'" This regional tribal

affiliation extends also to family names. Participant 12 added, "And then you know them

from their surnames, like the tribe is in their surnames so you know exactly where they're

from basically. 'Oh you're from this family from this side of this side?'" I conveyed to

her that I interviewed an individual with the surname Busaidi, to which she replied, "I'm

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also Busaidi. There are two roots of Busaidis one in the east in Ibra and the actual one is from Nizwa, just south of Nizwa so that's the origin of all Busaidis." But Participant 12 indicated that internal migration is altering the place-based element of tribal identity, saying, "But then with time everyone dispersed somewhere else."

At the conclusion of every interview, because of my outsider status and lack of comprehensive understanding, I would ask participants if there was anything I didn't ask that they thought I should have, or if anything they thought were important elements relating to identity and socialization wasn't discussed. To this question, Participant 12 said, "migration of Omanis from the interior to Muscat because it's the hub but not everyone here comes from Muscat. So focus on the migration that happens every weekend." Relating to weekend leisure and holiday activities amongst Muscat residents she said,

"For example in Eid the streets are empty and that's because nobody's in Muscat nobody…very few of the population of Omanis have families who are originally from Muscat. Everyone has settled here but their forefather so everyone meets in their towns so a big percent of Omanis not from Muscat. Very few tribes are actually from here. The majority just migrated here. Most of the jobs are here, the ministries the government sector jobs are here. They have to move. So most people to work."

This point is perfectly supported by the information conveyed by Participant 11, who is from village of Sumail in the Dhakaliyya region and a member of the Busaidi tribe, and migrated to Muscat for public sector employment. He stated that he leaves Muscat every weekend to visit his family, and prefers that more communal, collectively-oriented social structure and rural lifestyle more than the alienating and solitary urban culture of Muscat. Likewise, Participant 12, the female radio DJ, also spends religious holidays in the interior, telling me she spent the second day of Eid in Manah because "the family home is out there. I expressed interest in this making an off-hand comment saying it was cool,

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but she begged to differ: "I don't know if it's cool…you have different mindsets. It's like someone from a rural area and then you go to the city and it's so sparkly with lights and they still have the same mentality so it's hard to conform while you're there for a few days."

Relating to the identity of the newly urbanized young generation of Muscat, Participant 12 stated, "The new generation, our generation, the younger ones say I'm from Muscat but you ask 'where did your tribe come from?' and they'll say 'oh this or that place.'" For example, Participant 10, a female English translator, said "I'm originally from the as Sharkiya region." Likewise, Participant 2, the petroleum engineer who was born and raised in Muscat, considers Muscat to be his home but still says he is from the Sharkiya region. This is because his family's roots are in Sharkiya, and tribal affiliation is implied also in historical tribal territorial occupation.

I asked female Participant 12 if people notice differences between tribes, and what those differences might be, and language was a giveaway. She responded, "Well North and South is different. Like completely different like even dialects are different…" Her response to this question also indicates a serious transformation of language and communication resulting from Oman's urbanization. Discussing the regional dialects she said, "…because like I could know a person like, nowadays we all speak the same dialect, Muscat dialect…so you wouldn't know a person unless they speak to their mom or grandfather and the other dialect comes out and you're like, 'oh.'" I asked again, what she thought were the biggest differences between tribes from the North and the South and she without hesitation again said language, but added,

"And people from the south are more traditional in the sense that they stick to their culture more of what the previously generations…like for instance some of them are

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against women driving women, or working. You're supposed to be married off very quickly, that type of thing. But you have some people who are progressing."

This comment reminded me of a relevant interaction I witnessed while out with Omani and expatriate acquaintances. To get her insights, I shared with Participant 12, "I was out with friends and one guy said "stupid Dhofari" and I thought it was rude but everyone was joking and giggling about it." She replied, "That's the main reason because they call them backwards in comparison to us but how can you blame them if they stick to their traditions?" Participant 12 stated that when people from the North come to Muscat they aren't treated any differently, and their propensity for tradition improves their success in the city, adding that, "they're richer than the North because they have business and so on and they actually are more united in terms of helping each other than they are in the North. But these are of course stereotypes so it's not the case with everyone." This indicates a shift in Muscat towards an individualistic rather than collective or communal mentality.

The influence of the state's historical education and Omani collective memory is also a factor in the social interactions between different tribes in the Omani territory. Participant 12 said,

"There's always been riff raff between North and South. There was a rebellion in the 60s and so most people hate them because they wanted to cut off and become communist all together so everyone has this hidden rivalry between the north and the south and because you hear from your grandparents what they wanted to do and you're appalled, like, 'how dare they.'"

The fact that she too expressed that she's appalled is indicative of the success of the state's use of historical education in the promotion of collective unity and loyalty to the state of Oman.

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When Participant 17, who is half Filipino, was asked whether or not his identity

has changed over time, he said,

"I think so. Growing up, I didn't really see myself as an Omani because most of the
Omanis rejected me. I felt, and still kinda feel like an outsider in my own city, so I've
always had a bit of an identity problem. I kept switching from Omani pride to Filipino
pride throughout many years until I finally decided that I'm not really either. I just see
myself as me."

Despite governmental permission for his parents' intermarriage, the negative social

stigma on impurity remains strong. Arab society is patrilineal, and his father is Omani.

Participant 17 has Omani citizenship, and has lived in Oman is whole life. He speaks

Arabic, and wears *dishdasha* when occasion warrants. But even though Yousef fits many

of the characteristics of the constructed Omani national identity, he is not considered by

other Omanis to be Omani. This is likely due to the persistent influence of tribal

affiliations, especially when it comes to the marrying of two families but more likely due

to racism and the expatriate hierarchy.

Cultural Exchange: Globalization, Urbanization, and International Migration

Omani female Participant 10 said she has been influenced but expatriates "A little

bit but not that much because I don't have direct contact with them." Oman petroleum

engineer Participant 2, when asked if he has been influenced by the cultures of

expatriates said, "No. I'm me since I was born. And not only me but my family. My

family. You choose who you want to be. I can choose to be you, to live like you, it's all

up to me. It's not because the influence we get from foreigners. When a man changes it's

because he wants to change." This was echoed by Omani Participant 11 from the interior

who stated,

"It depends...but when you believe on one thing and strongly believe in one thing you
cannot be influenced by any other culture. But we also have to understand and learn other

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cultures. It's okay to learn to know but not by being influenced by them…you can take advantage take good things so add this things to you."

Indian Participant 7 is sure she has been influenced by the Omani culture, but isn't exactly sure how. She said, "I think I have as spent most my life here I grow up here moved to Oman when I was 7 so big part of me." Likewise, Participant 13, a British chef who has resided almost his entire life in Muscat said, "I don't know I grew up in Oman so I don't know any different." However, Yemeni software consultant, Participant 14, who has also grown up in Muscat, stated,

"Well I've been living in Oman for over 18 years and during this time I have met a lot of Omanis and other people from all over the world as well. By interacting with other people from different backgrounds and different cultures for so many years has changed me in many ways. For example, back in school I sued to wear *dishdasha* and *kuma* and I used to speak with the Omani dialect with most of my friends, my family sometimes, and almost everyone to the point I forgot that I was from Yemen. Then I started hanging out with people from different nationalities and it has impacted me in so many ways. I always ask people that I meet for the first time to guess where I'm from, and they would never guess that I'm from Yemen! Maybe because the way I dress, my accent, and my personality as well."

Omani-Filipino Participant 17 had a similar response. When asked if he thinks his culture has been influenced by the cultures of both Omanis and expatriates. He said, "Of course. Everyone is a product of their surroundings and environment. I've grown accustomed to Omani etiquette like shaking everyone's hand, being hospitable, and having overall respect for personal space and privacy." When it comes to the influences of expatriates, Participant 17 said the influence is mostly western. He stated, "I've also, however, been highly influenced by my western friends from Europe and America. I'm a bit all over the place when it comes to my cultural influences."

Omani female Participant 4, an architect, mentioned that the presence of a large foreign population has both strengthened and weakened her own cultural identity, stating

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that she has picked up both good and bad habits. For clarification, I asked which good

habits and which bad habits she has picked up from other cultures, and she responded,

"A bad habit that I have gained is mainly that I tend to use more English than Arabic and actually feel more comfortable expressing myself in English. A good thing I adapted is being my immigrants developed my ability to relate to other and understand their origins and be more considerate and aware about the differences between us. Also I tend to be direct and polite instead if sugar coating or beating around the bush, something seen a lot in Oman among the locals."

Relating to language, Filipina Participant 18 said she was a mixed of cultures, and

for clarification I asked "which culture's do you feel influence you the most? You've

been here almost your entire life, do you feel Omani?" She responded,

"No, I'm not Omani. Filipino. But most locals, even at airports, shops and food places, would agree that I could well be an honorary Omani for having been here for that long and for being able to speak a few Arabic words with the proper pronunciation, learned from almost a lifetime of hearing them. Oh, and I've also picked up a few Hindi/Urdu words since I've been here - as with most of my Filipino classmates who've been here since forever as well. On a different point of view, I think we, as Filipinos, did rub off on some of our non-Filipino classmates. They now know a few Tagalog words and crave some Filipino foods, too."

Portuguese Participant 3 said she has certainly been influenced by her residency

in Muscat. When asked, she said, "I'm sure, yes. I think I'm more tolerant. Culture wise I

find everything normal and I'm very offended when people say 'those Arabic people'.

I'm like, 'No! You can't say that' haha so I think I'm more open towards everything in

general." I asked her if she can think of any other ways her culture has changed, asking if

she finds herself speaking and communicating differently, to which she replied, "I am

Portuguese so I speak with my hands already ahahaha. The gestures they represents

different things the waving hand means in Portugal doesn't mean wait it means

something offensive."

British Participant 8 conveyed that he has fundamentally been influenced by

Omani society, especially with regards to social behaviour and hospitality. He said,

"I love this country. I know this is a place I will come back to. Even when I leave and I go to England this is a place I'll holiday to. I know people will always invite me and for me I'm gonna make sure I don't buy a two bedroom place I'll buy a 3 bedroom or 4 bedroom place so that when people come to the UK from here I'm gonna show the same hospitality to them. Anyone who I know or worked with. I will always have an open door to my house. That's something I would've never said 7 years ago, and I feel very strongly about that."

French architect Participant 5, too, conveyed that he's been influenced by the social

norms of Omani society. He said that the culture of gossip and reputation,

"… seeps down to the whole society… so, eventually, you'll start being like that as well. It sticks to you. You can't help it because you are who your friends are…The thing is it's something that eventually seeps towards you and you end up doing things you wouldn't do in Europe, like for example if I'm outside having a drink, here in Oman you look left and right and myself I wouldn't do that...because you know it just happens you start behaving like that...in the West you're not raised to be that way but here its constraining. That's why I can't live here permanently…and that's why you have expat ghettoes, they don't feel someone watching or someone with a prohibitive eye."

Likewise, British Participant 8 added to his statement about the influence of Muscat's

culture upon his own, citing awareness of expected behaviours, gossip, and the desire to

be respectful as key factors in his cultural adaptations. He said,

"The difference is I understand where I am. I don't want to be going out and wearing hardly anything in a Muslim environment. It is like everyone talks here like 'oh, did you see that person?' they talk an awful lot so that's…gossiping and judging. So this is the thing…I used to not give a shit. I don't care. Talk, whatever. But after a couple years it starts to nibble at you. You go you know what I'm not gonna do this cuz I don't want people talking. So we'll go to the beach and she [referring to his wife, Participant 7] is wearing a bikini and I'll think is this…'Can you cover up a bit more?' just because I'm here. But when we're in Brazil…wear whatever you want I'm not bothered."

Longtime Muscat resident Participant 7, his wife, defended her transgressive

choices, saying,

"First about bikinis. It's a bikini it's not meant to cover up a lot. I think he [referring to her husband, Participant 8] has gotten more conservative in terms of his demeanor. He's gotten like you know… For me I've always been aware that people talk, that's just how it

is. You can let it get to you or not. And for me I'm an outspoken person. I like having a good time. Not being a mess, you know running around but I like being open and if there's something to be said just say it."

However, the clothing choices of Participant 3, a Portuguese female, has been influenced by location culture, even when not physically in Oman. She said,

"Um I dress differently now. I'm covered all the time. When I go home, also because I feel cold, but I look in the street and think people aren't dressed appropriately so I changed regarding that." Likewise, Filipina Participant 18 said, "as far as Omani culture goes, dressing appropriately when out and about has been a norm for me."

When it comes to national dress, the majority of male participants with Omani citizenship, whether Omani or Sudanese, stated that they sometimes wear national dress but really only when it is required. Sudanese Participant 1, when asked if he wears *dishdasha* said, "Um. For me, I used to when I used to go to high school. I used to wear that because I was in the government school. I used to wear the *dishdasha* but since then I *never* wear that." When I asked why he conveyed that it's simply not his style, and he's not really into traditional culture. Omani Participant 2 stated that he sometimes wears the *dishdasha*. I asked why he sometimes wears it but other times chooses not to. He replied, "I prefer to wear *dishdasha* when I go to official thingy. But when I'm out with friends clubbing or whatever I don't." I asked him if he is treated differently when wearing it, and he stated that he's treated the same but says women might be given more respect when wearing *abaya*. He told me that just how one is required to wear a suit to court in the United States, "When you go to official things, you wear a *dishdasha*." I asked what if he went to the ministry in a suit, and he said they're usually okay with it. Participant 2 said,

"cuz um I remember once I went in my coverall. I was fixing my car, and my father said 'you need to take this to the ministry'. I told him I have to change, shower. He said just go like this tell them you were on duty. So I went there. But usually they will say 'why are you not wearing *dishdasha*?' especially if you go to the police." I asked if people

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know he's Omani when wearing western clothes, to which he replied, "Can I be honest with you? We have features. I'm Omani but we have features. They know I am Omani if I'm wearing trousers or *dishdasha*. If I got to a ministry in *dishdasha* they know I am Omani so things will be better. You can't go there wearing [western clothing]. It's official. Say you go to the court in the US you have to wear a suit. Without a suit they won't know."

Participant 16 discussed the thought process behind his clothing choices. Although of Sudanese heritage, is an Omani citizen because of the length of residency in Oman of his parents, and their contributions to state development. Because of this, he is allowed or required to wear Omani traditional dress, depending on the space. Participant 16 works in the IT department for a company that is majority publicly-owned. Because it is publicly owned, he is required to wear the national dress to work. However, in addition to his primary occupation in IT, Participant 16, as previously discussed, is trying his hand as a restauranteur, and recently opened an American-style steakhouse in Madinat Qaboos, a well-known western expatriate neighbourhood. During our interview at his restaurant, he stated that he just changed out of his national dress into western clothing. I asked him why he chose to change. He confided in his interview that he wears the *dishdasha* in professional environments because of the automatic respect it is afforded. He wears 'regular,' or western-styled clothes when he doesn't want to be recognized as an Omani. He said that when he wears the *dishdasha* he is not treated like a "regular person" but is treated better. Participant 16 said,

"Oman has this mentality of, unfortunately, if you wear a *dishdasha*, you have more power and more presence. Your presence isn't scary, but it's more present…more noticeable. You're gonna be noticed. But if you wear regular clothes, you're treated like a regular guy. Don't ever judge a book by its cover."

The tastes of participants interviewed were varied, but the cuisine did not necessarily reflect the expatriate population of Muscat, which means the impact of migration upon food culture is limited, or at least is less impactful than globalization at

large. Sudanese Participant 1, when asked what he favourite cuisine was, said, "Thai food baby!" Portuguese Participant 3 stated, "I love the rice. The biryani. I know it's not Omani. But for the Omani food I would say the hawala and the homali…the dessert is very good." Omani Participant 10 and Bahraini Participant 15 both said Lebanese food was their favourite. British Participant 13 and longtime Muscat resident had a diverse palate, citing "curry, sushi…and shawarma" as his favourite foods. Yemeni Participant 14 said seafood but then quickly exclaimed with excitement "oh and pizza!" Omani Participant 12 stated that she likes to frequent an Indian restaurant in Ruwi, Woodlands, saying it was the best in Muscat. Omani-Filipino Participant 17 said "I've loved French fries since I first started chewing." And, though he's not American, Sudanese Participant 16 opened an American-style steakhouse in the Madinat Qaboos nieghbourhood. He conveyed that he enjoyed that style of food but also believed it to be a good business venture because he thought others would enjoy it as well.

The restaurants cited frequently in interviews and/or included on participants' mental maps include different McDonald's franchises, the Mexican restaurant Pavo Real located in MQ, Al Maeda and Zaher El-Laymoun in Seeb, which both serve Lebanese cuisine, Lai Thai restaurant in Al Khuwair, and two Italian restaurants, Tuscany in Shatti, and O Sole Mio in Al Khuwair. The restaurants frequented by participants, if they reflect the impact of migration upon local culture, would imply that the expatriate population is largely comprised of Americans, Lebanese, Thai, Japanese, and Italian individuals. However, this is not the case, as we know, based on the data available regarding the composition of the foreign workforce. The restaurants chosen therefore reflect both

individual preference and economic and cultural globalization, not so much a high level of influence on part of the foreign residents.

In addition, several Omani restaurants were either mentioned during interviews or included on mental maps. These include Kargeen café, in MQ, and Al Aktham restaurant in Al Khuwair. Grand Fish Market is an Omani seafood restaurant that's a favourite of Participant 10, reflecting the continuity of traditional foods among younger Omanis, in spite of the great global variety now available in the city. Likewise, I went to Omani restaurants with Omani friends for iftar, and these restaurants included Al Angham located in the Royal Opera House, and Bait al Luban on the Muscat corniche. I also went to Zaher El-Laymoun in the Wave for iftar. Participant 1, Participant 2, and I went to the Cave, a collection of diverse eateries, in wilaya Muscat, situated between Matrah and Qurum, for fruit juices and post-interview conversation. It is significant that the restaurants chosen as the meal to break fast were Omani because it indicates a steadfastness and preference for local, familiar food. This could also be because the set-up for iftar at these restaurants was buffet-style, an attractive and relatively 'traditional' approach to iftar dinner. In any case, the preference for local restaurants during this religious tradition indicates that the cultural element of food, when it comes to religious custom, is maintained. However, sushi was also a food preference for many. After Ramadan, I went out for sushi with a diverse little group, including an Omani and Sudanese Participant 1, who was born and raised in Muscat, to Tokyo Taro situated between Ruwi and Matrah. This also shows the influence of globalization and urbanization as being greater than the influence of expatriates on food preferences.

Omani Participant 2 relayed that he isn't necessarily influenced by the cultural

practices of others when it comes to eating. I asked Participant 2, 'you haven't seen

something and said 'this is positive, I like this type of music or food and changed?' He

said,

"Well you see something and you feel that it's right, you do it. That's how it is, as a
human being. You are in a place and you see everyone is eating with a fork and a knife,
ok? And you eat with your hands. So for example you love to eat with your hands, we
love to eat with our hands. But sometimes there are some things you can't eat with your
hands. See I eat pizza with my hands. I don't care where I am. Even if I'm in a restaurant
I just *blach* but uhh see spaghetti, you eat with a fork and knife so you can just roll it
and you know."

I asked him how he eats fish and rice, to which he responded "Fish and rice I eat with my

hands" which is how that Omani meal is traditionally consumed.

Music is another cultural element that reflects cultural and identity changes, and

these can be attributed to globalization generally as well as local interactions. When

asked what genre of music is his favourite, Sudanese Participant 1 began beat boxing and

said, "Hip to the hip to the hip hop." British Participant 13 also said he listens mostly to

rap and hip hop, as does Participant 14, a Yemeni resident of Muscat since childhood,

who added trance to the list of music genres preferred. Bahraini Participant 15 had quite

different musical preferences than others interviewed, citing his favourites genres as

Blues, Classic Rock, and Heavy Metal. Omani Participant 2, when asked about his

musical preferences said, "Anything. Classical, opera, R&B, Arabic. Thai. Anything,

anything good."

Participant 11, the pious Omani of rural origins, responded with laughter and said,

"This question is maybe I'm different I have different taste because I usually listen to

Islamic music…not to other music. So Islamic music is preferred." I asked where his

favourite singers are from, and he said, "UAE, also from Malaysia, from Saudi Arabia."

Portuguese Participant 3 conveyed that her music tastes have been influenced since she's lived in Muscat. She said, "Actually…Arab music I started listening to a bit more. And this summer on holiday I rediscovered Lebanese young lady, very nice. I remember some the lyrics in Arabic, traditional lyrics."

Also reflecting regional and local influences, Participant 10, an Omani female, said, "I listen to Arabic English Indian music. In Arabic I listen to Gulf music, Lebanese music." As for her English language music, evidence of global cultural influences, she said, "In English I listen to for example an old one…Celine Dion. Nobody listens to Celine Dion maybe." Participant 17, who is half Omani and half Filipino, is another interesting example of the influence of globalization upon the cultural element of music. Participant 17, as mentioned, is half Omani and half Filipino. He is a passionate rap "enthusiast." He said, "I love rap so much that it's becoming a part of my life and it's kinda forced its way into my friends' lives, too. A lot of them hate the music I listen to bit can't avoid it." The residence of Participant 17 is the go-to hangout spot for him and his friends, and he relayed to me that he used to require friends to freestyle rap before entering his room, but since stopped the requirement because of push-back from his friends. Additionally, Participant 17's interests reflect globalization and modernization explicitly. I asked how he got into rap music to which to replied "YouTube." Participant 17 is partial to rap from the San Francisco Bay area of California, and invited me to watch a pay-per-view rap battle in the early morning hours. Several of his friends said that they would be watching it also.

The influence of cultural globalization is apparent in the response of one participant. Participant 12, an Omani female with extensive experiences living abroad

said, **"My favourite type of music is jazz but not many people listen to it."** I asked how

she got into jazz, and she said she was introduced to it during her times spent in the

United States. She said,

"The first time I discovered jazz I was in New Orleans on Bourbon St. and I was just like "oh, it's so cool. Let me just download more" and I just got hooked. Before that I didn't have a specific type of music I just listened to what my parents listened to so then I kind of came up with my own tastes and things when I was independent and alone."

Trying to see whether or not she has influenced others with her musical tastes, I

asked Participant 12 if she tried to get her friends into jazz. She replied,

"Oh, no. I feel like music is something personal and over here everyone is into pop…I'm a presenter as well so most of the people request all popular songs and it's all bubblegum pop. US and UK pop, One Direction for instance. And if I try to educate someone I feel like I need to educate someone on the type of music they should listen to that they're like "what is this? Change it!" so I feel like…and I love to listen to different types of world music…African music and Indian music and everyone finds it very eclectic and weird so they'll say 'your music is weird.' Because I work in radio we're the ones that break a new song into the market so it's like 'have you listened to this song?' 'Uh yea it's been playing on the radio for the last four weeks.'"

Her diverse musical preferences are evidence that her state-funded experiences studying

and living abroad have been very influential in altering her personal culture. In addition,

her response indicates limited exposure, or at least, preference, for world music. The

preference of her friends for US and UK popular music shows the impact of

globalization, specifically the cultural hegemony of the West.

In addition to music, the movies and visual media consumed by participants also

reflects the influence of globalization upon local culture, particularly American culture.

When asked what he tends to watch, Sudanese Participant 1 said, "Fresh Prince of Bel

Air uh what else I've been watching. Power. Um. BET, BET Awards, BET Hip Hop

Awards, MTV and all the other shows." Bahraini Participant 15 stated "I enjoy all types

except for typical Rom-coms and most musicals." Participant 15 also conveyed that

English language movies have had a significant impact on his culture. He said, "I think I have been influenced more by Western culture than by Omani or Bahraini culture." I asked him why he thinks that's the case to which he replied,

"When I grew up my mom made a point to get us Disney movies in the original English language, even though Arabic was available. I think part of the reason I embraced western culture faster than Arabic culture was because I started getting comfortable with the English language at an early age. My school also had most subjects in English, so it quickly became my dominant language, as in I think in English. We also used to go to cinema at least once a week as I was growing up and watched mostly Hollywood based films. A mixture of all of this made me comfortable with western culture I guess."

The impact of globalization, pop culture, and language is also noticeable in my informal conversations with participants. Many used American vernacular popularized in the media, particularly with Participant 1 and his social circle. Words and phrases like "feel me?", "nah mean?", "turnt" and "bounce" are evidence of American cultural hegemony and the popularity of African American culture in the city. In addition, on multiple occasions I heard both Gulf Arabs and Arab Africans refer to each other using the *N-word*. When I asked why they use the word in reference to each other, they justified its use by saying they had Zanzibari and/or African ancestry.

Likewise, Omani participants cited Hollywood productions as their favourites. Omani-Filipino Participant 17 said, "When it comes to movies I prefer Sci-Fi and zombie related genres." When asked why he likes these types of movies he said, "Sci-Fi because I enjoy the imaginative imagery and plot lines, and I've enjoyed zombie flicks since I was a kid." Omani radio DJ Participant 12 said her favourite movies genre is, "Rom com but then my favourite movie of all time is the Godfather...like a paradox." Action and historically-oriented films in particular were enjoyed by Omani participants, like Participant 2, who said, "I like drama, true stories. Troy, Gladiator. History movies."

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Religious Omani Participant 11 also prefers American films, saying, "I'm not like to

watch TV in public but movies I like Gladiator, I like this movie and the movie which has

good actor like Sylvester Stallone and Arnold also. I like action movies." Recalling his

musical preferences being strictly Islamic in nature and in the Arabic language, and also

recalling his voiced preference for the traditional lifestyle of the village, I asked

Participant 11 if he watches any Bollywood or Egyptian movies, he said "No. none.

Arabic movies no except to watch historical movies...like educational." Omani

Participant 10, an English translator said she frequently goes to the cinema for

entertainment, but doesn't care for action movies as the other participants do, saying, **"I

go to action movies because my friends like action movies but if it was up to me I like

more drama and romance movies." When asked if she watches Egyptian or Bollywood

films, she replied,

"For Egyptian I go to comedy movies I like Egyptian comedy movies. Bollywood movies
most of them are romance movies but not action ones…Indian action movies are an over-
exaggeration of action, and Hollywood I mean, all drama and true stories…like war
stories, I like it."

Bahraini events coordinator Participant 15, in addition to his use of English as his

dominant language, credited religious freedom as another element that made him relate

more to Western culture. He said,

"…so when I lived in Canada I felt more comfortable than home, in the sense that I also
didn't have to pretend I was religious more than I was or pretended I believed in things I
didn't actually believe in, religion wise, because they are more accepting of varied
beliefs."

I asked if he was religious, why he felt the need to pretend to be pious in Bahrain, and if

he feels the need to pretend to be religious in Oman, to which Participant 15 replied,

"I'm not religious. I didn't have to pretend to be fully religious in Bahrain but I still had
to make it look as if I was fasting in Ramadan, and pray when I'm at my uncle's house
and they were doing a group prayer for instance. My parents aren't very conservative and

they know I don't pray otherwise….but not fully practicing is one thing and telling them I don't believe in religion is another. That would just create unnecessary issues between us. In Oman it really depends. The only time I would do anything religious here is if I was invited to an Omani's house and all the men would go to the mosque."

Filipino Participant 19 made a similar comment. When asked whether or not he wanted to live in Muscat permanently, he said, "No. I want to live in a free, normal country. Besides, we can't unless we become Omani Nationals, convert to Islam. That's a big no for me." He also stated that religious beliefs in Muscat are both positive and negative, in the context of the Philippines, saying,

"Plus I think because of the religion and strict implementation of it, the society does not seem normal as we were accustomed to growing up. We grew up in a culture that is pro American and feel like I'm being choked up in a restrictive society. But the pros is that because of this strict laws nobody gets out of line, like you have in our countries."

However, some expatriates converted to Islam during their residency, like the basketball teammate of Participant 19, as well as Portuguese Participant 9, who converted to Islam just before Ramadan, even though "he was so attached to the church." He said the Quran keeps him calm, and that he regularly prays at the mosque in Azaiba, his residential neighbourhood. Despite this conversion, Participant 9 stated that he loves to decorate and bake for Christmas, and that he friends love to see his Christmas tree, but justifies this paradox because "it's about tradition not about religion. The Christmas tree is not religious, it's a tradition."

Influence of Globalization and Transnationalism upon Identity

Omani female Participant 12 said her identity has changed because of her time abroad. She responded to my question, "Yea. I think it's the main why reason I changed but I moved when I was young so I don't know how I would've turned out if hadn't gone abroad...so many lived happened in my life and changed me and made me who I am so I'm not sure if the circumstances were different would I be the same person with the

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same ideologies or not. It's quite difficult." Participant 12 went on to say, "When I'm abroad I really do notice the difference what makes me unique and what I miss about here so my identity...I feel like I notice my identity more there." Female Participant 10 also conveyed that she's more aware of her identity as an Omani because of the presence of migrants. She stated, "It's more awakened...it doesn't affect it negatively but I'm more aware of it."

In terms of identity and culture, it is clear that the expatriate experience is more binding than national origin, or length of residency in Oman. That's what I assume anyway from the fact that expatriates of diverse origins socialize together more than they do with Omanis. But national identity also gains more importance to the migrants than it may in the country of origin. South Africans, for example, were keen to introduce me to other South Africans given my residency there through high school. Their shared origin was highlighted, and that bond was significant though not as significant in who would hang out with whom. When I asked if people felt more South African in Oman, the answer was a nuanced 'yes'. That larger national identity was more pronounced outside the country of origin. Most when asked would identify as Sudanese if their family originated from Sudan, regardless of place of birth, citizenship, or length of residency. However, most identified Muscat as their home, and felt an attachment to the city, more so than other locations 'back home'.

Participant 6 is also more aware of his Egyptian origins living in Muscat. He said, "You can say that I'm always Egyptian when I'm here. You know when you're living in a country and your life is going on you don't think much about Egypt and what's going on there. But when you move on as an expat you always think about your country and how is it…so you can say that you're more aware of your identity when you're outside. I don't consider myself an Omani I love Oman as a country but I'm not Omani. But since you're staying here for a long time there a few words you can pick from Omani accent

you can use it…so you find yourself using it as well since you're staying for a long time but again it doesn't make you Omani. You'll find people asking you 'how is Egypt, how are things there? I would like to go for a visit.' So you feel proud and advise people of places to go."

Feelings of inbetweenness and non-belonging are incredibly pervasive amongst the expatriate community. When asked where he is from, Participant 16 initial response is Sudan, though he has grown up in Muscat, and holds Omani citizenship. He said he feels more Sudanese than Omani, saying "Yes I'm Omani but the thing is…I wasn't raised in Sudan but I'm still until this day in contact with my cousins…..I never like, um… singled them out no matter what. Every year I go to Sudan twice. I'm the only one who visits that much. I'm from Omdurman." Indian Participant 7 implied that she has a fluid identity, saying, "I think when you're an expat you learn to have an alter ego. You play your part. You talk their language and you come back here and you're more yourself." She went on to say, "At the end of the day being an expatriate isn't that easy. You have to check yourself a lot when you first get here but after a while it becomes second nature. And I think after leaving the Middle East and a place like this you become more socially aware and in tune with what people need." Her British husband, Participant 8, when asked if he thinks his identity has changed since living in Muscat said, "Yea I think so. Definitely. I'm not so much a lad...like I think more like serious. More hanging around people in my sort of situation, professional circles." Participant 5, an architect from France, had an insightful response to the question whether or not he's more aware of his identity living in Muscat. He said,

"Yes the way I put it is that...we all identify ourselves. I definitely wasn't aware how French I was until I moved from France. And that's when I realized being an American or a Frenchmen is not about the passport or your origins. It's the culture in which you were reared. You then acquire habits and ways of thinking that you didn't realize you have, until you're not in that setting. Then you realize because you're comparing them to others. My daughter, she was born in France but raised the UK by both me and her

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mother a French national and speaks French and she tells me I speak English with a funny accent. I said, 'what do you mean?' She said I'm foreign. I said of course I'm foreign. She says 'yea but still.' And I said, 'well you're not British either.' She said 'I don't want to be British.' I said 'where are you from then?' 'I'm from London.' I said, 'that's not what your passport says.' She said 'well it should be.' Like her I realized how French I was when I moved to the UK and how Western I was when I moved here. I realized do like my glass of wine, little things like that. Same thing out here. Like I never used to worry about buying alcohol, until I came out here and had to get a license. So you check to see how much you have on your license. You've got friends asking you if you could spare a few, your Omani friends asking if you could spare a few."

The modernization of Omani society and the western development approach of the state is resulting in my western cultural preferences and behaviours. In clothing, music and media, dress, and language preferences there is evidence of convergence on western culture. Materialism and the consumer culture is quite strong in Muscat as well. Likewise, the liberal behaviours both observed and expressed by participants of Omani, Asian, African, and Western origins, in addition to the more unanticipated secular nature of their daily lives is also evidence of western influences. This isn't to say that Muscat is becoming western. Indeed the nation-building strategy can't be considered ineffective, and is influencing the city's material, cultural, and social composition. Western expatriates, for example, find themselves conforming to the expectations of modesty, in dress and in social interaction in public spaces, as do Omanis. On top of these two competing forces, globalization and the state's identity project, is the layer of the individual residents, who are involved in the production of space, reconstructing nation-building project through acts of transgression, adaptation, and negotiation, and adapting elements of globalization to the local context. What's emerging is an entirely new Muscat culture, one that is neither 'traditionally Omani' or westernized, and this is reflected in the adjective used to describe its culture and its residents: Muscati.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

While the Omani state is promoting a unifying national identity, Muscat residents are reconstructing and renegotiating culture and identity in the capital city. Individuals are adapting and conforming to, mediating, and contesting both the state's identity project as well as to the equally, if not more, influential social control that is the culture of gossip and reputation..

In popular understandings of migrant experience, the host population is typically conceived of as privileged, prejudiced, and exclusionary, whereas the immigrant or expatriate community is generally conceived of as underprivileged, exploited and excluded. However this host-migrant distinction is too simplified for nuanced understanding of host-migrant relationships and the diversity within and between these two broad categorizations. Similarly, the expatriate community is generally conceived of as a false dichotomy of 'rich-white-Western and poor-brown-third-world' dichotomy. Though this distinction, like the former, holds merit at a broader, more superficial level, this gross oversimplification ignores diversity of experiences.

Given the existence of an expatriate hierarchy, an individuals' origins and/or class has a significant impact on their reception, and hence their reactions to the identity project, and the local culture of gossip, as well as their influence upon the culture and identity of other city residents. But there are, as there always are, exceptions that do not follow to such neat patterns. The result is a unique local Muscati culture that is a mixture of global and local elements, and the varied influences of individual residents.

This chapter will first discuss the ways in which Western expatriates, being those who are of European origins, adapt to, mediate, and contest the Omani state's identity project as well as the local culture of gossip and reputation, followed by the ways in which non-Western expatriates adapt to, mediate and contest both the state identity project and the local culture of gossip and reputation. Non-Western expatriates are broadly characterized as those immigrants from the developing world. The ways in which Omanis adapt or conform to, mediate, and contest the national identity project and the local culture of gossip and reputation will then be addressed. The culture of gossip and reputation refers to, as discussed in the previous empirical chapters, the social importance of an individual's reputation, as an extension of familial reputation, and the widespread prevalence of gossip amongst Muscat residents regarding public actions that influence one's reputation amongst the community

Western Expatriates

Westerners conform and adapt to the state's national identity project in subtler ways, as the project, culturally and socially, is focused more on influencing the Omani population than the Western guests. More influential than the national identity project is the local culture of gossip and reputation, and white Western adaptation to the local culture of gossip results in an alignment with the state identity project in many ways. Because of the mutual influence, a tandem discussion is appropriate.

The ways in which the national identity project influences Western expatriates is through spatial and social segregation. Specific areas in Muscat are designated as the residential areas for the Westerners and/or upper-class Omanis. Such neighbourhoods have larger flats and villas, updated amenities and smooth paved roads. Westerners tend

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to remain in these neighbourhoods, and shop at the more expensive grocery stores, like Al Fair, which cater to Western guests by carrying familiar products. Some Western expatriates expressed that they reside on an expatriate residential compound, created to mitigate the social and cultural influence of the Sultanate's foreign guests, and that they prefer not to leave their residential compound unless it is to visit one of the hotels for a drink. White westerners prefer to frequent the Integrated Tourist Zones, like the Wave and Shangri La Resort, and westernized leisure zones in close proximity to the large beachfront hotels, like Shatti and Shatti Al Qurum. This is conformation to the state identity project in that the state is attempting to control and limit their social and cultural influence upon the Omani population by controlling and limiting the spaces in which they feel free, and European and American expatriates are remaining within, or mostly remaining within, these zoned areas, effectively minimizing the extent of their westernizing influence.

Western expatriates promote some of the state's promoted national identity elements, specifically those conceptions of Omani cultures as one of tolerance, respect, and hospitality, no doubt a result of their socialization with Omanis and a reflection of the expatriate hierarchy. More than expatriates of non-Western origins, white Western expatriates emphasized and expressed awe of Omani hospitality, even if they recognized the mistreatment of other nationalities and races. In response, Western expats adapt to this hospitality by increasing their own displays of friendliness and generosity.

In addition to the ways in which Western expatriates adjust their spatial practices to adapt to the state's identity project and promote the state's conceptions of national identity, they also adjust their socialization behaviours in an alignment with the national

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identity project. It was conveyed by Western women that they have adapted to local culture and dress much more modestly in public than they otherwise would and that this more modest dressing sense remained even outside the country. Secondly, Western female participants expressed their conformation to the local culture with regards to male-female socialization. A Portuguese participant, for example, saw her friendly relationship with an Omani male as inappropriate once the larger group of expats through whom she met him had dissipated. She deemed it inappropriate because of the potential to perceive impropriety in the eyes of the public.

In addition, though public spaces are available that accommodate to western tastes, it was conveyed also that Western expatriates prefer to have social gatherings in private spaces for the freedom it affords. Western expatriates do not have to worry about their actions and behaviours being seen or worrying about how they will be perceived by a public keen on gossip and concerned about reputation. Though they are adapting to the cultural of gossip and reputation, it is to the benefit of the state's identity endeavour. Their western and perhaps *haram* activities are quarantined to private spaces, effectively limiting the influence of such behaviours upon the public. Similarly, Western expatriates contest the national identity project in their use of illicit substances, but mediate the culture of gossip and reputation as they choose occasionally to utilize public-private spaces for such activities. When it comes to illicit activities like prostitution, however, public spaces like bars and lounges are utilized, signaling contestation of the national identity project and the gossip culture.

In addition to adaptation, Western expatriates mediate the national identity project and culture of gossip in several ways. Omani-expatriate socialization is typically confined

to professional interactions in the work environment, and those individuals who seek out friendly, personal relationships with Omanis are already mediating the identity project, one that hopes to limit collective solidarity between Omanis and expatriates. The private socializing events of wealthier Western expatriates are usually exclusive to other Western expatriates. It was conveyed by participants that there is rarely a new face in the mix at such events, and that if there are Omanis present, they are incredibly westernized individuals. This is mediation in that Omanis are being invited into the private spaces of Western expatriates, and could very well gossip amongst others about topics or events which the expatriate would prefer not be shared. However, western expatriates are taking such a risk in an attempt to socialize with the local population, including those with whom they have a professional working relationship.

Though Western expatriates typically adapt to the state's identity project in addition to the local cultural of gossip, Western expatriates can also contest the state's identity project. For example, a French participant with West African heritage stated that he purposefully avoids expatriate compounds, or ghettoes, because they prevent dialogue between expats and Omanis. He stated that he prefers to go to locations wherein the local and migrant populations mix and interact. This increases the potential for cultural and social influence upon the Omani population, and is therefore not aligned with the state's identity project.

Non-Western Expatriates

Non-western expatriates, like Western expatriates, tend to conform to the cultural of gossip and reputation that aligns with the national identity project. The ways in which the national identity project influences poor and/or non-Western expatriates is through

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spatial and social segregation. Specific areas in Muscat are planned for higher density residency and the infrastructure in these areas are poorer, with more narrow streets, and no Integrated Tourist Zones. These neighbourhoods include Ruwi and Wadi Kabir, and these neighbourhoods are dominated by non-Western expatriate residency, notable South Asian and Asian. Non-western expatriates initially adapt to this spatial and social segregation and then mediate the national identity project, as they tend to remain in these neighbourhoods unless, after lengthier residency in Muscat, they increase their economic standing and move to a middle-class, but still non-Western, neighbourhood like Al Khuwair. This impacts the national identity project in that relocation to a less segregated neighbourhood increases cultural and social contact and influence. Non-western expatriates have adapted to this spatial and socioeconomic segregation, and don't typically frequent those Integrated Tourist Zones or those areas in which amenities and establishments cater to wealthier Western segments of society, like Shatti. There is more nuance amongst the expatriate community in this regard, as Arab expatriates frequent these locations more often than South Asian or Filipino residents, for example. This is further evidence of how one's race and perceived socioeconomic standing influences both reception and individuated influence upon the local culture.

In addition to the ways in which non-Western expatriates adjust their spatial practices to adapt to the state's identity project, they also adjust their socialization behaviours in an alignment with the national identity project. Generally speaking, socialization between Omanis and expatriates is basically limited to professional and formal, and so, because of the expatriate hierarchy in operation, socialization between Omanis and non-Western expatriates is more limited than social interaction between

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Omanis and Western expatriates. And, taking note that this broad categorization includes migrants from the developing world including Africans, Arabs, Asians and South Asians, one can conceive of a sort of graded scale in terms of social interactions, with Arab immigrants socializing more with Omanis than South Asians, for example. A means of adaptation to this exclusionary mentality is broad sense of solidarity with other non-white expatriates based on shared experience, effectively aligning with the Omani-expatriate distinction made by the state.

With regards to the culture of gossip and reputation, I noticed that non-Western female participants conform to the local culture with regards to male-female socialization in public, but socialize more openly with the opposite sex amongst their own communities or, in expatriate-dominated space like the hotels and Integrated Tourist Zones. It was conveyed by non-Western expatriate women that they have adapted to local culture and dress much more modestly in public than they otherwise would, but I observed that in those public bars and lounges that cater to western tastes that outfits worn by non-Western women were decidedly less modest, such as short and sleeveless cocktail dresses, characteristic of a tactic of mediation that is both space and patron dependent. In addition to adapting and mediating local culture with regards to female modesty, other non-Western expatriate women, particularly one highly-educated westernized South Asian woman with long-term residency in the Gulf and Omani in particular, choose to contest the local culture of gossip, and not conform to the state's identity project, wearing a bikini because "it's not meant to cover much" and because of a dismissal of culture of gossip and its potential repercussions. Given her background as a well-educated, Westernized Indian Gulf resident, this example in particular is

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characteristic of the research endeavour: a realization that responses to both the national identity project and the local culture of gossip varies all the way down to the level of the individual.

More interestingly, the creation and existence of community-specific clubs and organizations, like the Philippine Community Muscat, is evidence of a mediation of the state's identity project. As migrants marginalized and discriminated against by the host population, a sense of a solidarity based on national origin emerges and such clubs serve as social capital. Though there is an American Club with a clubhouse in Madinat Qaboos, these Western social clubs are neither as prominent nor as active as those amongst the Sudanese, Filipino, and Indian communities, for example. An outcome of this mediation of the local context is an alignment with the state's identity project, in that *they* are generally keeping to *themselves*, hence limiting their social impact upon the 'local' population.

Unlike Western expatriates who tended to promote the conceptions of Omani culture that align with the national identity project, non-Western expatriates, with the exception of Arab expats, contested the element of tolerance, respect and hospitality. Based on their dealings with Omanis, and therefore also a reflection of the expatriate hierarchy, non-Western expatriates regardless of their economic standing conveyed that they have experienced discrimination in both professional and non-professional interactions with Omanis.

Lastly, nonalignment and contestation of the Omani state's national identity project also comes in the form of alcohol and substance use. However, non-western migrants are mediating the culture of gossip and reputation in their usage, choosing to

engage in such activities in private spaces or in public-private spaces, like the car or the isolated construction site.

Omani

Omanis have adapted and conformed to many elements of the state's national identity project. Islam plays a central role in the Omani national identity, and indeed the majority of Omanis are practicing adherents. Regardless of their level of religiosity, Omanis fast during the month of Ramadan and reference and recite Islamic phrases and scripture often. However, cosmopolitanism is another element of the national identity project to which most Omani conform. In addition to the role of Islam in national identity, religious tolerance is also emphasized, and Omanis generally conform to this element of national identity as well. There is no proselytization and religious beliefs seem to be viewed as a personal matter about which public discussion is inappropriate and perhaps rude. Such hospitality, tolerance, respect, and respect for personal privacy carries beyond religion, and expatriates of Western and Arab origins conveyed such claims, stating that Omanis were genuinely warm, welcoming, tolerant, and friendly in their behaviour and conduct in public space.

Arabness is another key element of the promoted Omani national identity, and one to which Omanis most closely conform. Arabness is a general term I use to refer to many cultural and social elements, including the use of the Arabic language, adherence to a traditional Arab social structure that emphasizes family and family legacy, social and cultural values viewed as typical of Arab societies, and a sense of ethnic Arab identity.

Omanis use the Arabic language more than any other in both public and private spaces and professional and personal conversations. The majority of Omanis listen to

music in the Arabic language, read Arabic news media, and watch Arabic-speaking television shows. Even in conversations with expatriates in English, specific Arabic words and phrases are peppered into the conversation, like *inshallah, mashallah*, and *yaani*, for example. In terms of dress, Omani males tend to wear the *dishdasha* and *kuma* in public and women wear the black *abaya* and *hijab*, which marks them as both Arab and Omani to each other and the public.

Omanis also conform to the social structure that is characteristic of Arab societies. The importance of the family as the basis for society as well as personal achievement is a prominent feature in the minds of Omanis, and weighs heavily on their decisions and public behaviours. Unmarried Omani men and women remain in the main family house until, *inshallah*, they are married to an individual, whose reputation and status are approved of by the family. This family-home residency is absolutely the norm and is an expectation amongst the Omani population, particularly for women, who in most cases do not have a choice but to conform to this facet of Arab identity as well as the local culture of gossip and reputation. Omani women also tend to remain socially segregated from men, Omani and expatriate alike, and expatriates in general. There is generally limited socialization of Omani women outside of family, particularly in public spaces, as a tarnishing of their reputation is more damaging to the family name than a stain on the reputation of a male relative.

In addition to the family as the basis for society, the paternal leadership element of the traditional social structure is also something to which Omanis conform. There is a genuine respect for and appreciation of Sultan Qaboos and the paternalistic leadership he provides. Qaboos is generally referred to in such a way, with both a distance and a

closeness, that it is reasonable to conclude that he is popularly viewed as the father-figure of the nation.

Arab ethnicity is an element of the national identity to which Omanis conform. The fact that Arab expatriate participants expressed that once their regional affiliation is known they are treated more favourably by Omanis is evidence of this strong Arab collective identity amongst the national population. Most expatriates, regardless of national origins, stated that they mostly interact with Omanis in the workplace and characterized such relationships and only professional This regional ethnic affiliation, though, is superseded by national identity, as expatriates of all regional origins, including Arabs, stated that they felt a sense of exclusion or exclusiveness amongst Omani populations, regardless of the level of intimacy or length of friendship. The national solidarity amongst Omanis supersedes even a broader shared ethnic or cultural identity.

Though Omanis tend to adapt and conform to the national identity project, there are cases of mediation of elements of the national identity. For example, though the majority of Omanis are religious and adhere to religious practices, the level of religiosity influences their level of adherence to the state's identity project. An Omani male participant expressed that he drank a lot and often, but refrained from doing so only during the month of Ramadan. Likewise, Omani females at a private gathering were also not drinking alcohol during Ramadan, to which another Omani said, "What? You're only good Muslims this month?" Still, they chose not to partake because of the importance of the religious tradition.

There is also a mediation of identity amongst Omanis when it comes to religious tolerance and cosmopolitanism as well. It was conveyed that though Omanis respect

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Christians they do not afford the same respect to Hindus. Though I speculate that the lack of respect of Hindus has more to do with race and national origins, it could be due to the polytheistic nature of the religion. If the latter is the case, this is mediation of the cosmopolitan element of the national identity in that Omanis are choosing to respect those religions more closely related to Islam and making a spiritual judgment on those they deem more idolatrous and farther from the right path. In addition, there is evidence of mediation of the cosmopolitan aspect of national identity. For example, an Omani participant who socialized extensively with expatriates of various origins, particularly a Sudanese participant, gave the impression of his conformation to the tolerant, cosmopolitan element of national identity, but made a language-use joke about the Sudanese participants' African origins, effectively calling out his difference. Though in every other way this Omani individual exemplified tolerant cosmopolitanism and has friends of every regional origin, such comments can be a way of mediating that element with a need to differentiate *us* and *them*.

With regards to Arabness, Omanis also mediate specific elements. Amongst the younger segments of the population is emerging a pidgin language referred to as *Arabeesi*, which is a combination of Arabic and English. Given that both English and Arabic are taught in schools, as well as the globalization of Western English-speaking media, Omanis are mediating language, not abandoning Arabic or opting to speak only English, but engaging both depending on best fit for the message intended to be communicated. Generally, it is the case that English is used when discussing pop culture topics or when the message of hip and cool is required. Topics pertaining more to local cultural context and/or references are typically discussed in Arabic terms. When it comes

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to clothing and modesty, the choices made by Omani women indicate a mediation of traditional Arab culture and Westernization. Omani women can be seen wearing *abaya* and *hijab*, in line with traditional expectations of female chastity and modesty, but will have a bejeweled and gaudy *abaya*, an abundance of colourful and dramatic makeup with only half of their heads covered by the *hijab*, demonstrating their individuality and displaying their beauty. Omani women are navigating both global and local influences.

Traditional Arab social structure is also mediated on occasion by exceptional Omani individuals. For example, an Omani male participant in his forties, having not yet married, decided to split his time evenly between his family house and a private flat he rented. It isn't outright nonconformity or contestation of the traditional social structure in that he maintains half-time residency in the family house, eating meals, having his laundry washed, and socializing with his immediate family. However, at forty years of age, he is also mediating between the social expectations of Arab culture and the western influence and desire for personal privacy and autonomy. He hasn't abandoned the former altogether, but is operating within both cultural frameworks.

Relating to the traditional social structure of Arab societies, Omanis are mediating with regards to the role of women in family and society. Women typically have a central role to play in the Omani family, and are responsible for the majority of domestic tasks. However, with the globalized Western influence, the increase in wealth amongst Omanis, and the availability of cheap, and sometimes free, domestic labour from Asia, Omani women are stepping outside of private spaces and engaging in the workforce, which, traditionally speaking, is not the norm. Women in the workplace is both accepted and applauded amongst Omanis, though their socialization outside of place of employment is

more scrutinized, an adaptation to the culture of gossip and reputation. Even though they are providing for the family monetarily, women are still expected to keep house and raise children more so then their husbands. This increase in female responsibility is a mediation of the influencing forces of both tradition and modernity.

Lastly, with regards to traditional social structure, Omanis mediate both national Omani identity and tribal affiliations. Before the creation of the political territorial unit that is the Sultanate of Oman, marrying within a tribe or between a few select tribes was the requirement. This served many purposes, like maintaining specific alliances, for example. It was conveyed by participants that this tribal affiliation is still a very important and prominent feature of Omani social life. However, with the urbanization of Muscat and the rural exodus, tribes that were once geographically far-removed are in closer proximity, and meeting and mingling in the university classroom. Because of this, before marriage for example, families ask about the potential spouse's tribe's reputation and membership. Previously the tribal affiliations would take center-stage in that union. I characterize this minute shift in courting and marriage practices as a point between tribalism and nationalism; specific tribal origins matter a little less, and Omani nationality matters a little more, with nuance. In addition, this is also mediation of the culture of gossip and reputation, and tribe reputation is a matter of concern when it comes to marriage.

Though the majority of Omanis conform to the majority of the state's identity project, or mediate its elements in various ways, there are some instances when Omanis contest or do not conform to elements of the national identity. When it comes to religious adherence, many Omanis do not pray regularly, if at all, and a lot of Omanis tend to

secretly eat during the day in Ramadan while claiming to be religious. It was also said, and observed, that many Omanis drink and use other illicit substances despite the Islamic proscription. This contestation of the national identity project is also evidence of a mediation of the culture of gossip and reputation, as these activities are reserved for typically for private spaces as well as public-private spaces, like the car and the isolated construction site.

With regards to the promoted cultural identity element of cosmopolitanism and tolerance, Omanis are non-conforming when it comes to specific demographics. Though expatriates of all origins mentioned the friendliness of the Omani people, this characterization could be entirely relational. It was previously mentioned that though Omanis respect Christians they do not afford the same respect to Hindus, and I speculated that this could be due to either its polytheistic nature or the colour and occupations of its adherents. If the former is the case, I said this is mediation of the cosmopolitan element of the national identity. I believe the latter to be the reality, and so it is contestation of the element of cosmopolitanism. Expatriates of low class and/or Asian, South Asian, and Sub-Saharan African origins are not afforded the same level of hospitality, respect, and tolerance that is given to white, western expatriates. Most Omanis, unless westernized, do not even associate or socialize with expatriates on the low rungs of the expatriate hierarchy, and treat them as nothing more than temporary labourers. Even though some foreign nationals are treated respectfully and some not at all, I would characterize this as mediation because true cosmopolitanism requires respect regardless of race, creed, or culture.

Clothing is a way of contesting the Arab elements of Omani identity. When it comes to national dress, some Omani men explained that they wear *dishdasha* only when it's required, like visiting a ministry. In their downtime at home, around the neighbourhood, or out enjoying the nightlife, it was conveyed that they preferred to wear Western clothes and rarely wear *dishdasha* worn in Left Bank, for example. Several participants stated that the *dishdasha* conveys authority and commands respect in public, and the fact that such benefits are forgone in favour of trousers is contestation of an aspect of national identity. Use of the Arabic language is losing favour among some Omanis as well, marking a contestation of, or at least non-conformation to, this important element of Arab-Omani identity. Omanis expressed that they feel more comfortable communicating in English and have felt a shift away from using Arabic to communicate with others in public and private spaces alike. The popularity of English-speaking music, television shows, and movies, in addition to the formal English education, is accelerating the preference for the English language, and continuing to development a unique and localized Muscati culture.

While the Omani state is promoting a unifying national identity, Muscat residents are reconstructing and renegotiating culture and identity in the capital city. Individuals are contesting, mediating, and adapting to both the state's identity project as well as to the equally, if not more, influential social control that is the culture of gossip and reputation. Because there exists an expatriate hierarchy, individuals' origins and/or class has a significant impact on their reception, and hence their reactions to the identity project, and the local culture of gossip, as well as their influence upon the culture and
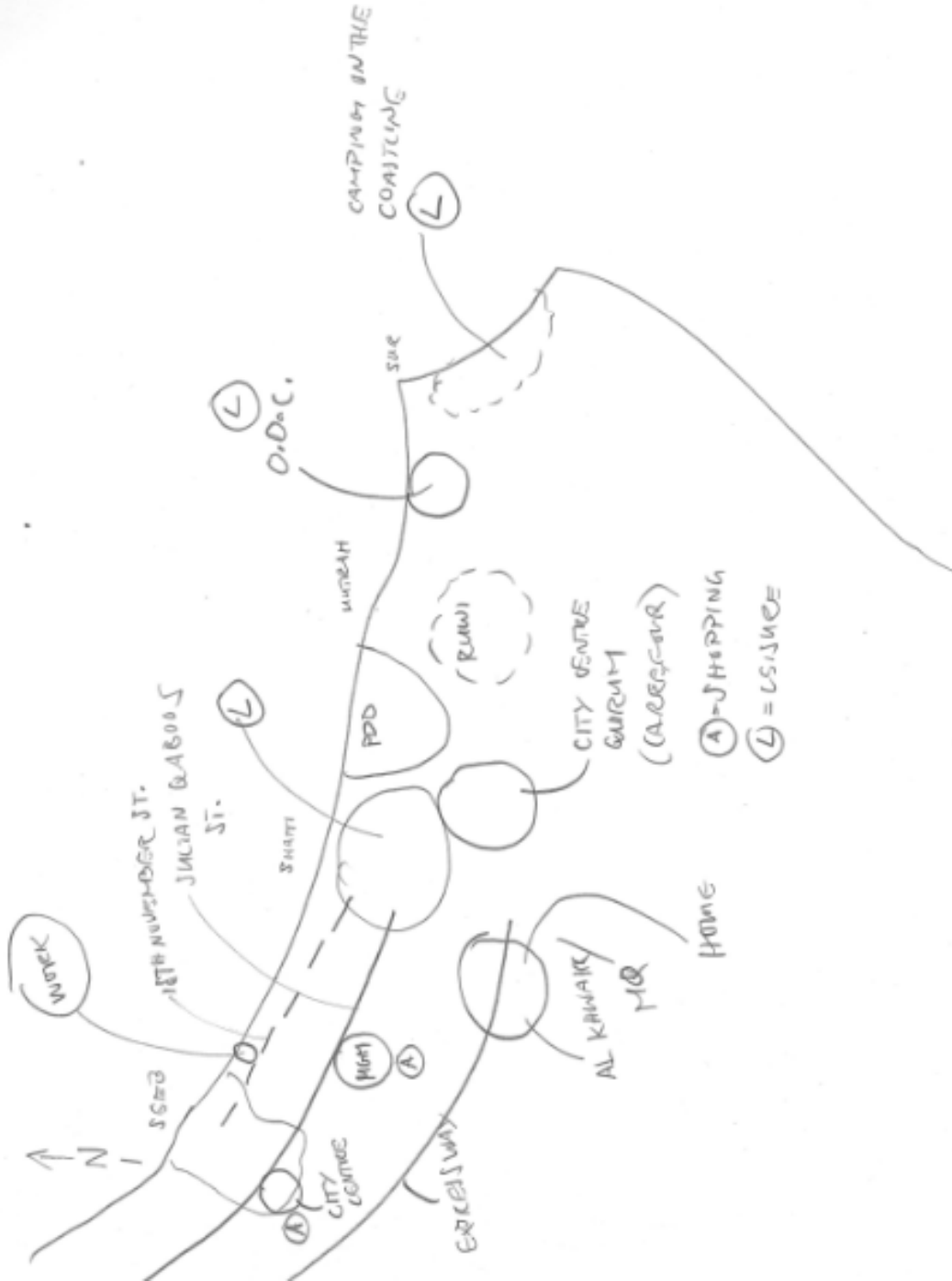
identity of other city residents. The result is a unique local Muscati culture that is a

mixture of global and local elements, and the varied influences of individual residents.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Where do you work and what do you do?

2. Where were you born?

3. Where are you from?

4. Do you have Omani citizenship?

5. How long have you lived in Muscat?

6. Do you plan to/ did you attend university?

7. In what neighbourhood of Muscat are you living now?

8. How long have you lived in this area, and why did you choose to live here?

9. Have you lived in any other parts of the city? If so, where? Why did you choose to move?

10. Do you live far from where you work/study?

11. Where do you do your grocery shopping?

12. What do you do for recreation and entertainment?

13. Are there areas of the city that you try to avoid visiting?

14. Are there areas of Muscat you feel more comfortable in? Why?

15. Do you think there are distinct areas where noncitizens live? Where are these areas?

16. Do you keep in touch with friends and family back home?

17. What do you think about the culture in Muscat? Are there aspects you like more than others?

18. How often do you interact with Omanis/foreigners?

19. Have you ever been treated differently because you are/are not Omani? By who?

20. Is Omani society welcoming of foreigners?

21. What is your favourite type of food?

22. What is your favourite type of music or movies?

23. Do you think you have been influenced by Omani culture, or the cultures of other foreign-born people?

24. Do you want to live in Muscat permanently?

25. Do you consider Muscat to be your home? Why?

26. Has your identity changed over time?

27. Are you a member of any social clubs or groups? If so, which ones, and why did you join them?

Mental Map 6.1

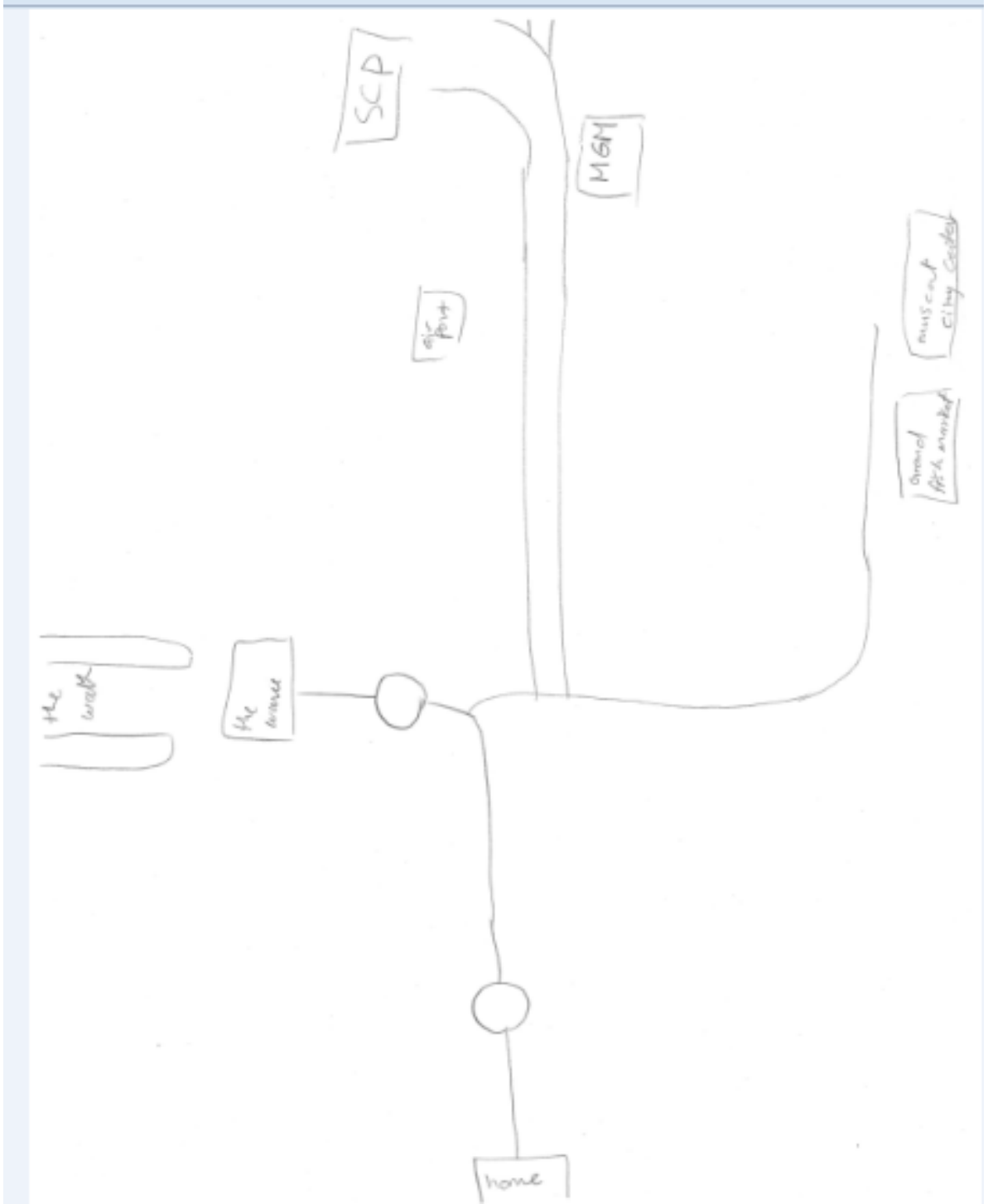**Mental Map 6.2**

291

Al Amerat

Musaat
Sdab
Nallia Souq

Qurum city Centre
Shatti Qurum /cinema

Grand Mall

city centre
beach

friends

Mc Donalds

Afras

Friend

Friend

Sultan centre
Al araibu
ME

Araibu beach

Qurum

Mental Map 6.3

292

Mental Map 6.4

Mental Map 6.5

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MARAILAH
- FRIENDS

SEEB
- BEACH

MANALEH / AL HAIL
- WORK
- FAMILY

AL KHOUDH
- SHOPPING
- DINE IN
- FAMILY

ATHAIBAH
- MC DONALDS
- FAMILY

GHUBRA
- HOME
- BEACH
- GROCERIES

KHUWAIR
- WORK
- DINE IN
- FAMILY

SHATTI QURUM
- HANGOUT
- OPERA
- DINE IN
- COUSINS

QURUM
- GYM
- DINE IN
- FAMILY

RUWI
- SHOPPING
- DINE IN
- HANGOUT

MUTTRAH
- SOUQ
- DINE IN

MUSCAT (PALACE) (BEACH)

Mental Map 6.6

295

Sohar

Al-khub, mm novilety, M'hail, Seeb, muscat

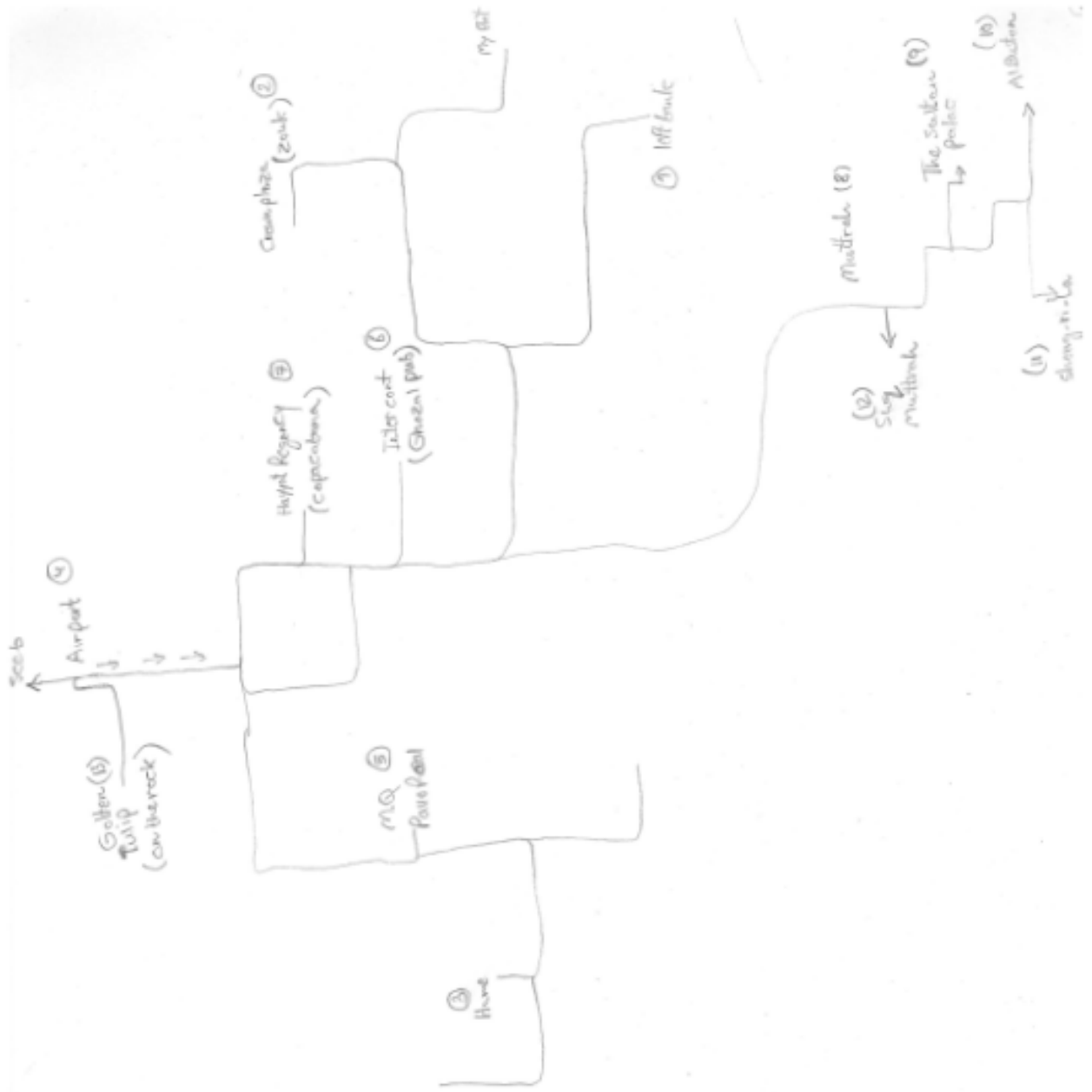Bowsher

wattahya, MQ, Aziba,
khwair, Ghubra, Qurm

Sur
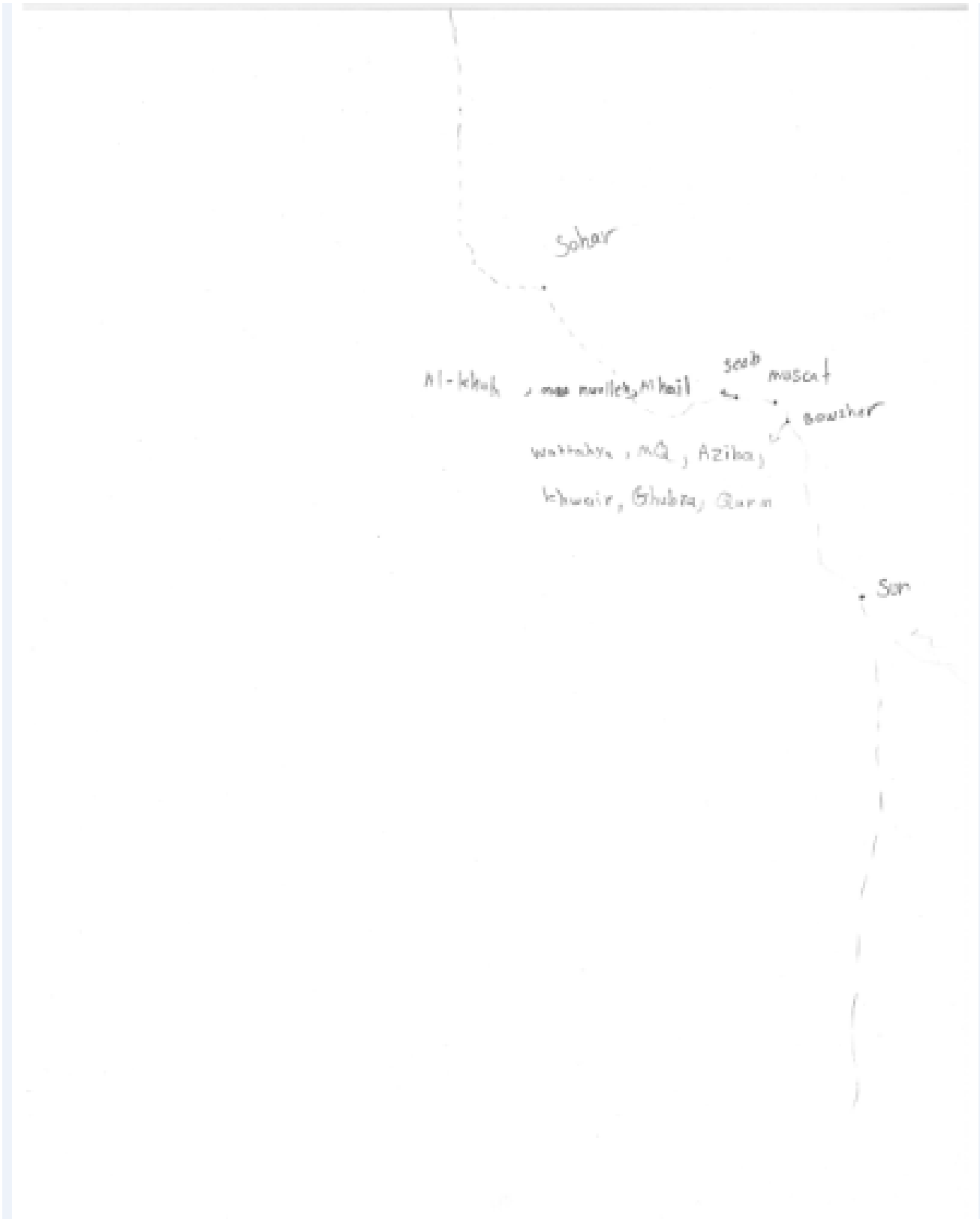
Mental Map 6.7

Mental Map 6.8

Mental Map 6.9

APPENDIX C

PHOTOS

Photo 5.1: The Sultan's Image, Seeb near City Center

Photo 5.2: The Sultan's Image, Seeb near City Center

Photo 5.3: Modern Arab style villa, Al Khuwair

Photo 5.4: Homogenised architecture to resemble forts; Al Hail, Seeb.

Photo 5.5: More humble abodes in the older neighbourhoods. Matrah

Photo 5.6: Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque

Photo 5.7: Tourist area of the Matrah Souq, Matrah

Photo 5.8: Lived space of the Matrah Souq; Matrah

Photo 5.9: The Wave Integrated Tourist Zone, Seeb

Photo 7.1: Seeb Beach, Seeb

Photo 7.2: Seeb Beach, Seeb

Photo 7.3: Seeb Beach, Seeb

Photo 7.4: Shatti Beach, Shatti

Photo 7.5: Shatti Beach, Shatti

Photo 7.6: Oman Club, Al Khuwair, Philippine Club Basketball Practice

Photo 7.7: Oman Club; AL Khuwair, Philippine Community Basketball Practice

Photo 7.8: Carrefour City Center Seeb

Photo 7.9: Carrefour City Center Seeb

Photo 7.10: Starbucks City Center Seeb

Photo 7.11: H&M clothing store, City Center Seeb

Photo 7.12: LuLu Hypermarket fish counter, Avenues Mall, Bowsher

Photo 7.13: LuLu Hypermarket produce section, Avenues Mall, Bowsher

Photo 7.14: LuLu Hypermarket produce section, Avenues Mall, Bowsher

Photo 7.15: Al Khuwair Shopping Complex, Al Khuwair

Photo 7.16: Matrah Souq fabric and tailoring section, Matrah

Photo 7.17: Matrah Souq fabric and tailoring stall, Matrah
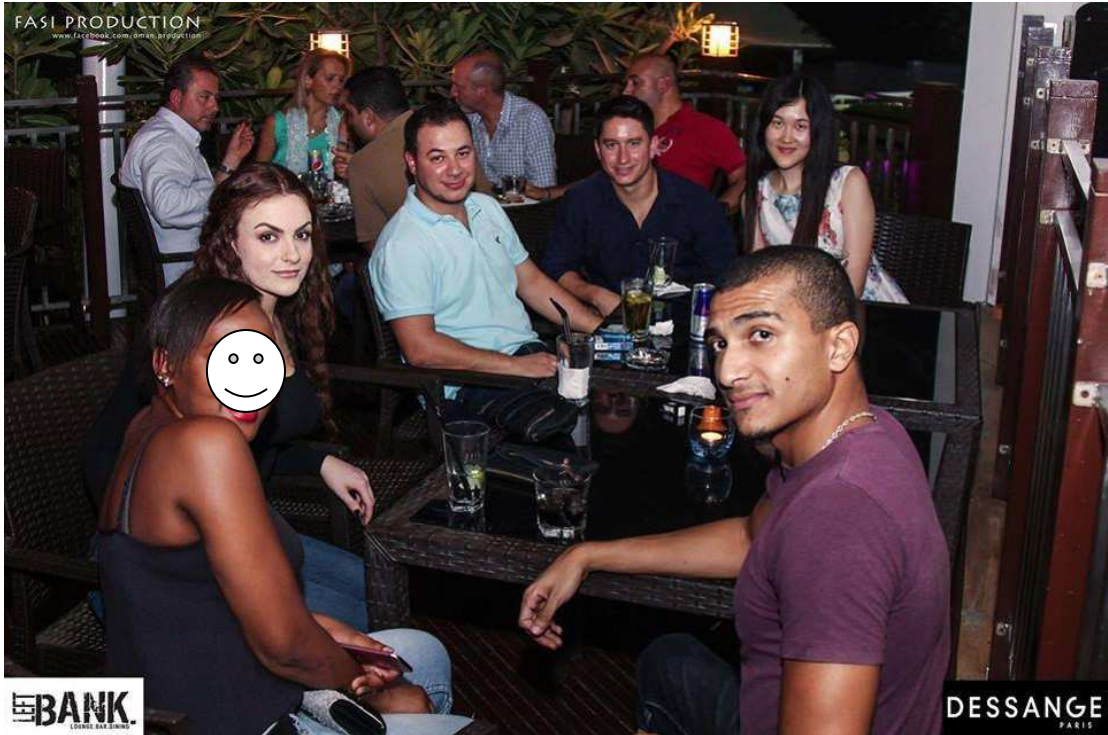

Photo 7.18: Last call, Rock Bottom, Qurum

Photo 7.19: Expatriates at Left Bank, Qurum

Photo 7.20: Yemeni expat and his dohka, Route 66, Shatti

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