
I. MUSCAT'S MANY CITIES

ETH Studio Basel
Contemporary City Institute
Pietro Del Vecchio, Seraina Schwizer

Prof. Roger Diener, Prof. Marcel Meili
Liisa Gunnarsson, Mathias Gunz, Vesna Jovanovic,
Christian Mueller Inderbitzin

Spring Semester 2013

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I.

MUSCAT'S MANY CITIES

FORM, STRUCTURE, LIFE

BIRTH OF A METROPOLIS

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Muscat's many Cities

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MUSCAT – BIRTH OF A METROPOLIS ?

The discovery of petroleum and the rise to power of the progressive Sultan Qaboos in 1970 transformed Oman, developing it from one of the least to one of the most advanced countries in the Gulf region.



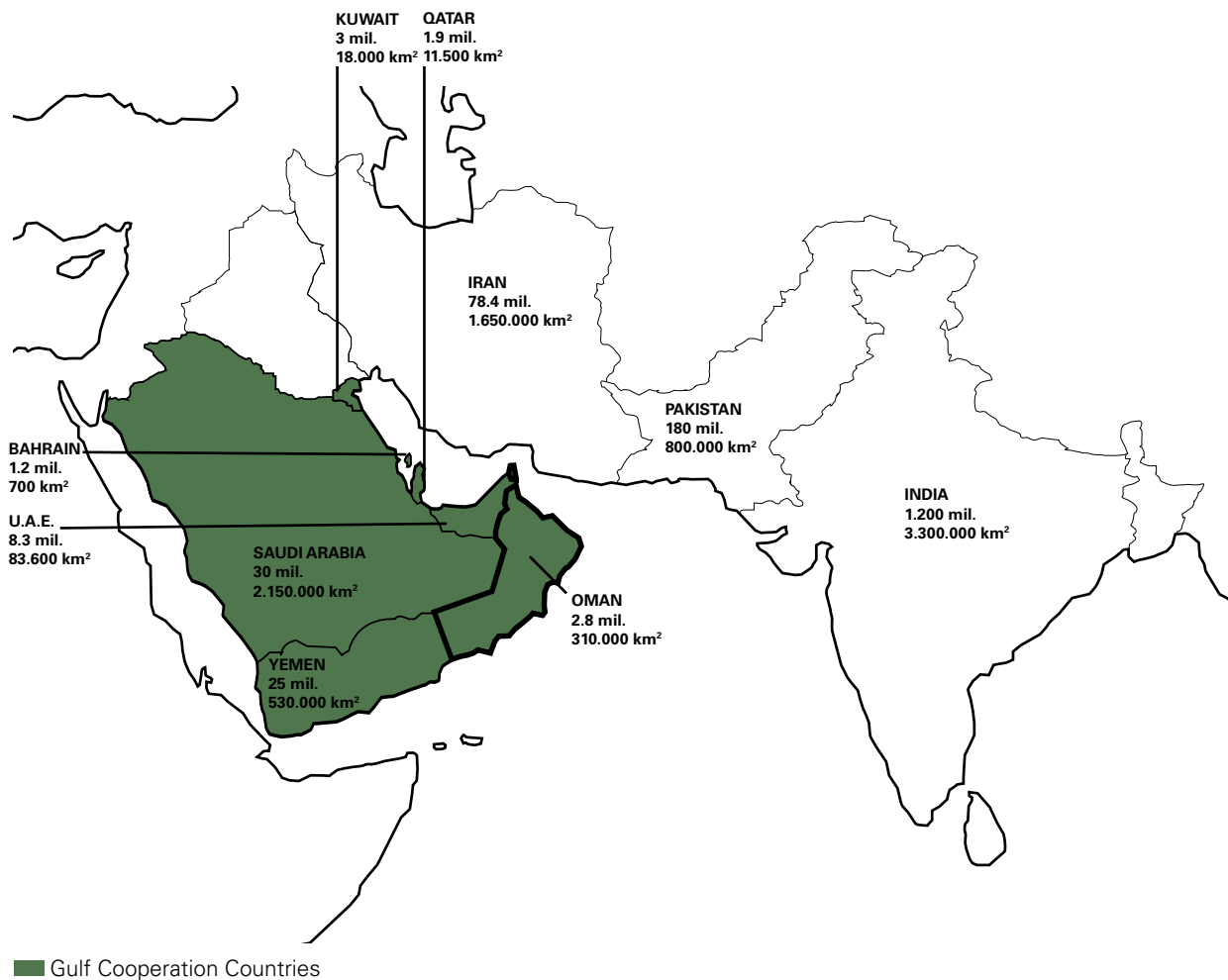
Ruwi Before 1970

The Wadi Kabir plain was equipped with only an airstrip before 1970. This photo shows the valley in the year 1965.



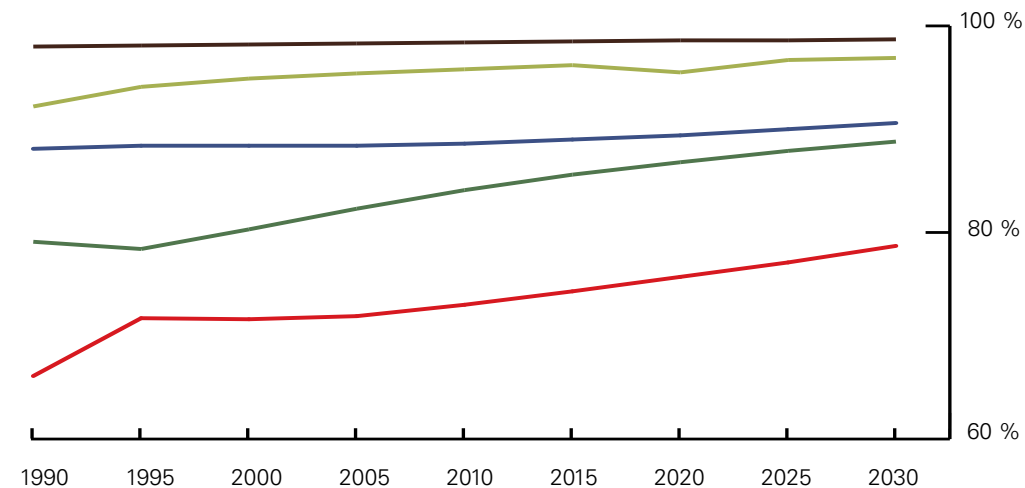
Ruwi CBD after 1970

A business district was planned that provided companies enough office space from 1980 to 2000.



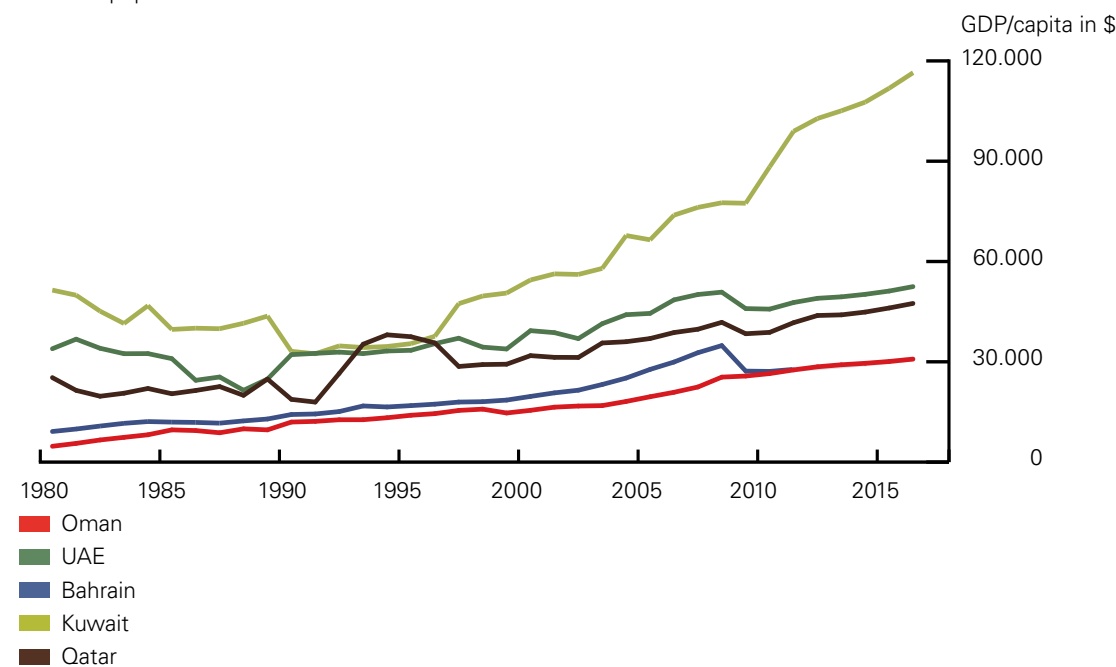
Oman's Large Leap

The Sultanate of Oman is located in the southeastern end of the Arabian peninsula, reigned by the absolute monarch Sultan Qaboos. Together with its neighbours and adding Qatar and Kuwait, it forms the Gulf Cooperation Council, GCC, the most important middle east international treaty organization. Oman covers 310.000 square kilometers, nearly the area of Italy, but has a small population compared to its neighbors. The official language is Arabic and the second language is English, spoken especially by the young people. The GCC is the major recipient of migrants in the region. About one quarter of the 15 million migrant workers in the GCC are Arabs, including a mix of well-paid expatriates from developed countries and low-paid workers from South and Southeast Asia. Most of the low-paid migrant workers come to the GCC through the sponsorship (Kafala) system. Immigration and sponsorship laws give sponsoring employers broad powers over workers. Poor living conditions, economic exploitation and the lack of public oversight has drawn international criticism.



Population Living in Urban Areas

The GCC is one of the most urbanized areas in the world. Despite the slowing urban growth rates, the urban population in all countries will continue to grow more rapidly than the total population.

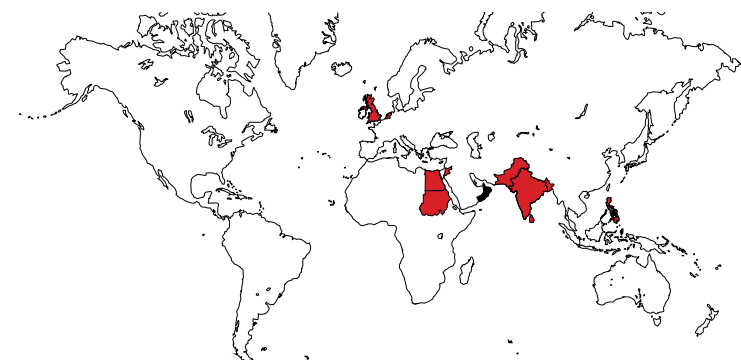


Growing Wealth Equals to Urbanization

Historically, most countries in the GCC region were modest fishing and trading settlements. The discovery of oil has increased wealth and spurred significantly development and economic expansion. The GCC countries now have among the highest GDP per capita in the world.



Kuwait



Oman

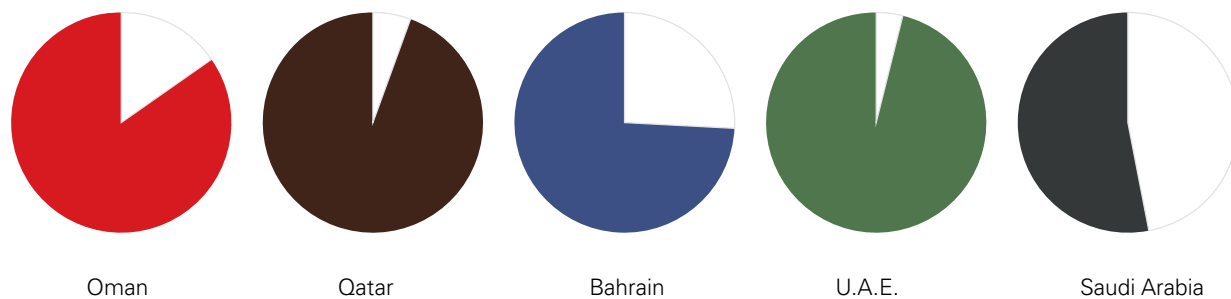


Bahrain

Small GCC Members - Top 10 Source Countries

Since the discovery of oil, the GCC has drawn increasing numbers of migrant workers. From 1975 to 2005, the number of migrants rose from 1 million to 12.7 million, while the total population increased almost fivefold, from 7.8 million to 34 million. In dependence of their progress in becoming modern industrial states, the GCC countries find themselves in different phases of progress. Each phase equals to the need of certain workforce. Generalizing, one

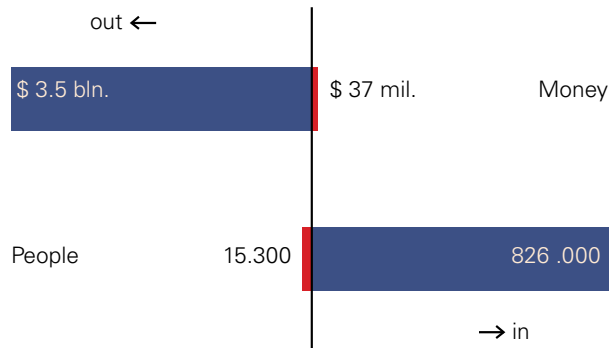
can come to the opinion that the top ten of source countries are interrelated to the phase a country is in. Bahrain’s source countries are those in south Asia who particularly contain masses of low income labourforce, while Kuwait attracts world elite specialists in search for investments an profit, mainly from western countries. Oman might be seen in a middle position, attracting both low-income workers and highly educated individuals.



Attraction of the Gulf

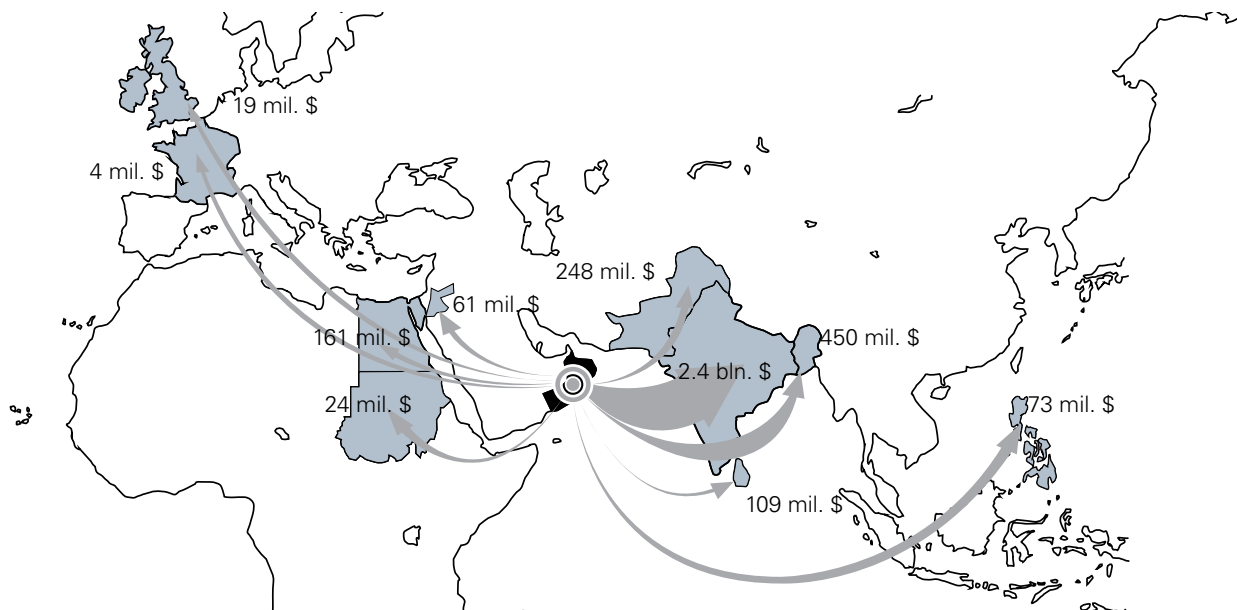
All GCC countries are concerned about the threat of having such large populations of foreigners within their borders. To deter migrants from staying, GCC countries have established strict residency permit requirements, set high standards for granting citizenship, adopted tougher recruitment policies and deported surplus workers. Through formal and subtle ways, the GCC states prevent migrants at all income levels from integrating into the national society. Continued dependence on migrant labour presents a significant challenge for governments as they try to reduce both local

unemployment and subsidies, either in the form of government jobs or unemployment benefits. For decades, the public sector has absorbed nationals who could not obtain jobs in the private sector, but efforts to “nationalize” jobs have had limited success. Therefore every country conducts a policy of exchanging non-nationals with nationals. Omanisation, Bahrainisation, Saudi-Arabisation, Qatarization are state programs to increase the national’s share. A brain drain in the public sector is inevitable, resulting in a painful drop of the productivity.



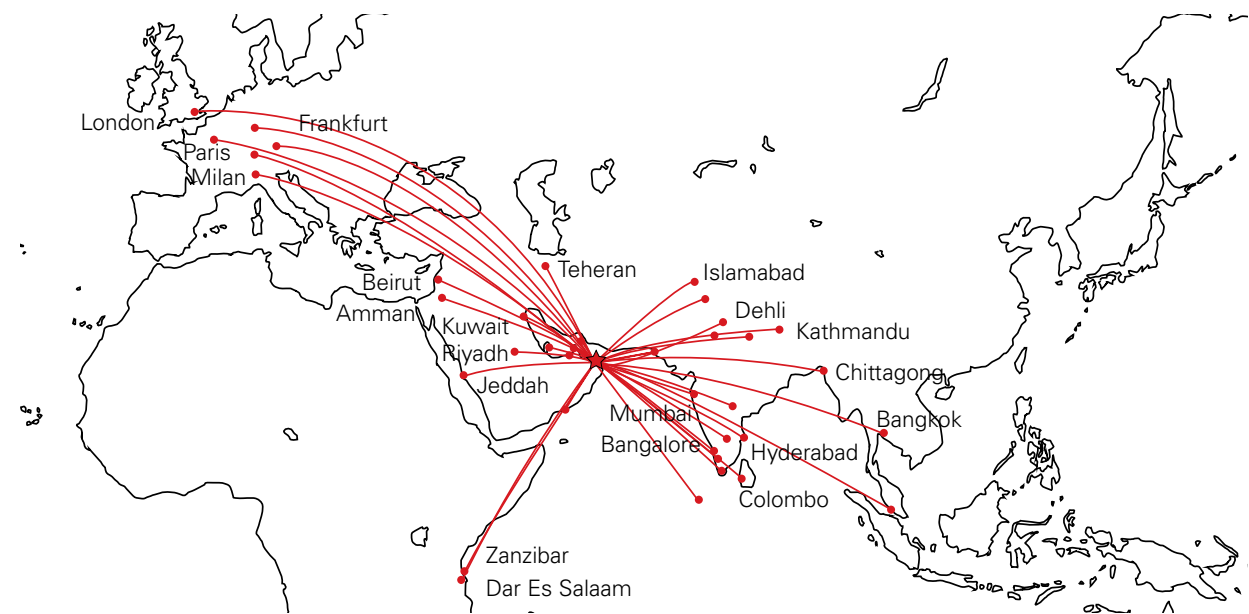
People and Money Balance

People rush in and money flows out of Oman



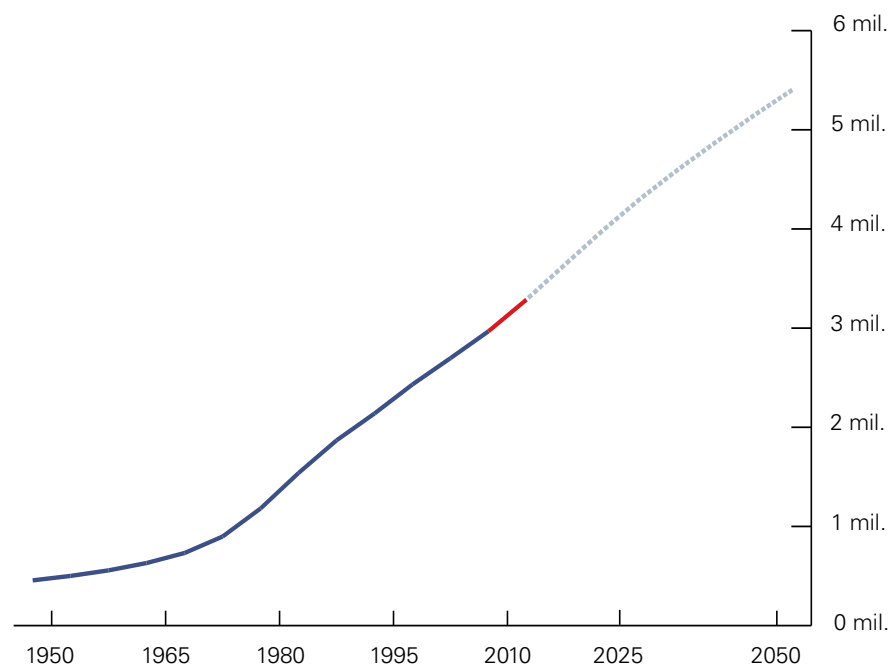
Money Flowing Out

Due to the number of migrant workers, the Gulf has become one of the top remitting regions in the world. In 2009, remittances equalling 7% of GDP were sent from Bahrain, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia and remittances equalling 11% of GDP were sent from Oman. In 2008, the remittance outflows of Bahrain, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia as a percentage of GDP were ranked as the world's fourth, ninth and 12th highest. In Qatar, the value of remittances rose from QAR 5 billion (USD 1.4 billion) in 2001 to QAR 19 billion (USD 5.2 billion) in 2008. With such large shares of national income leaving the country, the GCC countries feel certain negative impacts on their economy: The large remittance outflows can distort the exchange rate and place pressure on foreign reserves; they weaken fiscal policy and government spending multiplier effects, exert pressure on monetary policy; disrupt the business cycles through lack of local reinvestment and spending. In addition, it fosters black market activities such as the potential for money laundering through the Hawala system, an informal transfer system.



Oman Air - The Connections

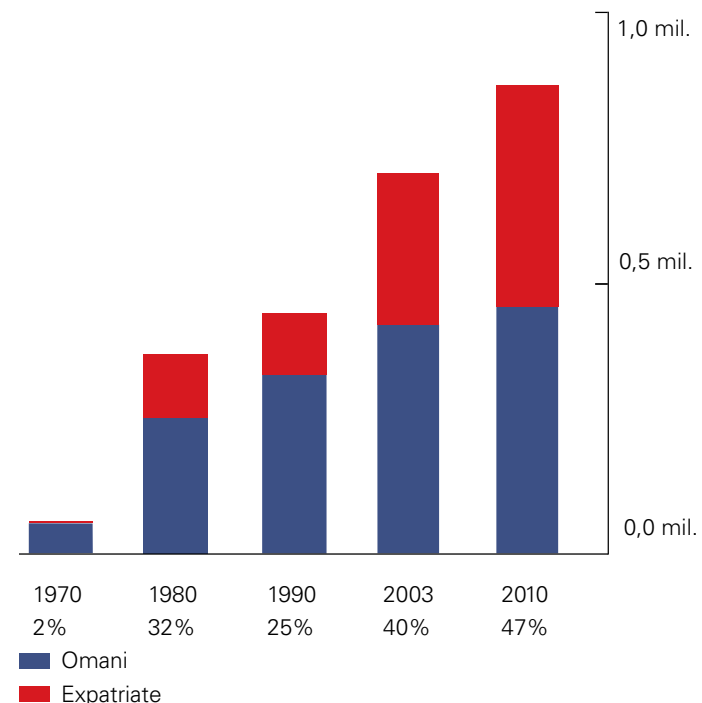
Oman Air was founded in 1981 and is based on the ground of Muscat International Airport. It is a well advanced flight company, that was the first in the world to offer both mobile phone and wi-fi services. It takes high positions in international rankings of airlines. It is not a coincidence that it connects Muscat to the most important cities of countries that are strongly involved in Oman.



Population of Oman between 1950-2050

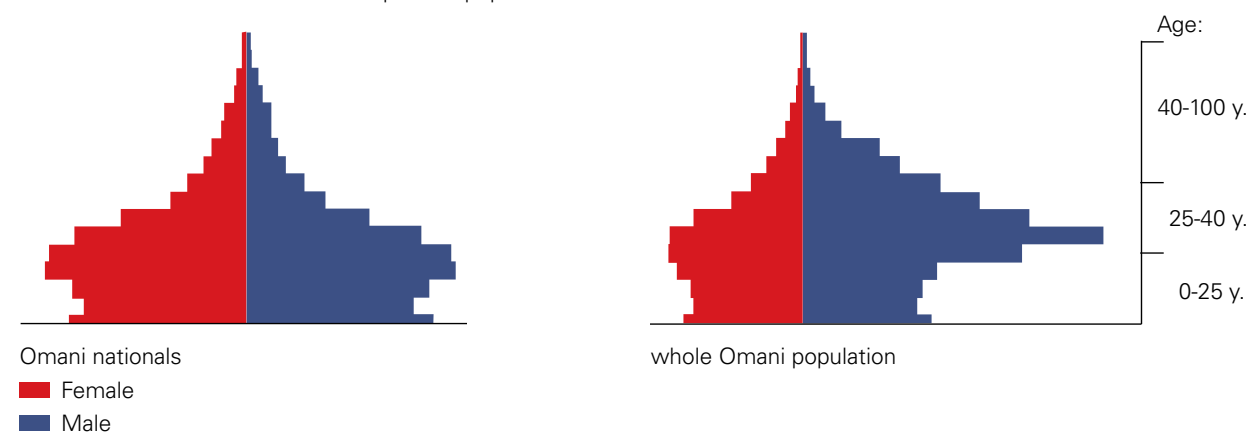
Insights into the Present Society

Oman's 2.8 million inhabitants form a very young society. The country experienced an incredible growth from 1970 on. UN predictions assume 5.5 mil. inhabitants in 2050, meaning that the population will nearly double in only 40 years. Before 1970, only three formal schools existed in the country with fewer than 1000 students receiving education. Since Sultan Qaboos came into power the government has given priority to education. Since then, the literacy rate rose to 86.6% in 2008. Today there are over 1000 state schools and about 650,000 students. About 75% of Oman's inhabitants are Muslims. Around half of the population follows the Ibadhi school of Islam, which is distinct from the Sunni and Shia schools. Despite their influence over the governance of Oman, Ibadhis only comprise around 45% of the population, with Sunnis in the slight majority. Non-Muslims are found in the large part of foreigner communities and include Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, Zoroastrians, Sikhs and Christians.



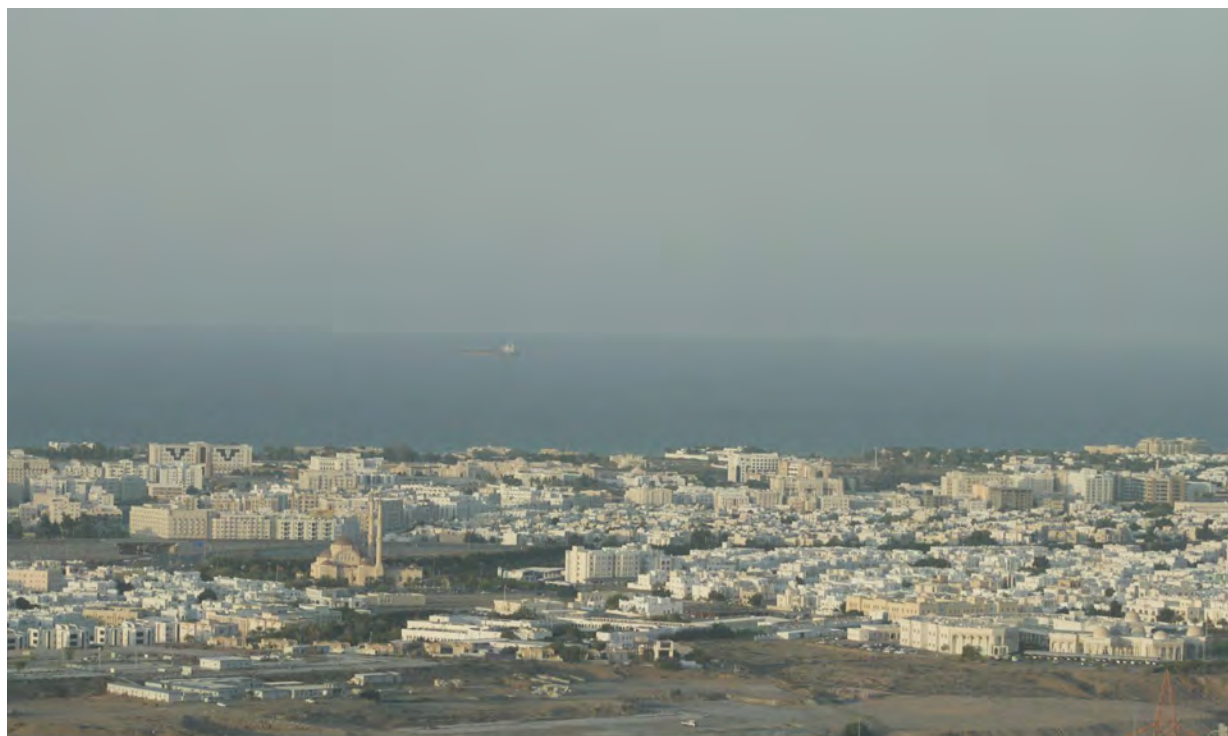
Animated Foreigners

Muscat - Share of the Omani and expatriate population



Age Structure

The total fertility rate in 2011 was at 3.70 children per woman. 43% of the population is under the age of 15. But changing lifestyle is leading to the eurosociety-similar onion shape structure. Life expectancy at birth in Oman is estimated to be 76.1 years in 2010. The right age structure graph includes the non-national population. The peak on the men's side at the age between 25-40 indicates the large number of male expats mainly bachelors from the Indian subcontinent. The workers are in the strongest lifeyears, the specialists in their most creative.



Muscat: Oman’s City State

Oman has a population of 2.8 million, an area of 310.000km² and a density of 9 p/km². The degree of urbanisation amounts to 71 %. About 60% of Oman’s population lives in Muscat and the Batinah coastal plain northwest of the capital. 600,000 expatriates live in Oman, most of whom are guest workers from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Philippines. Al Batinah is between 15 km and 80 km wide and over 300 km long. The plain extends northwards from Muscat up to the borders of the United Arab Emirates and is the sultanate’s most populous region.



Density: p/km²

- 0
- 1-4
- 5-24
- 25-249
- 250-999
- >1000
- Urban agglomeration

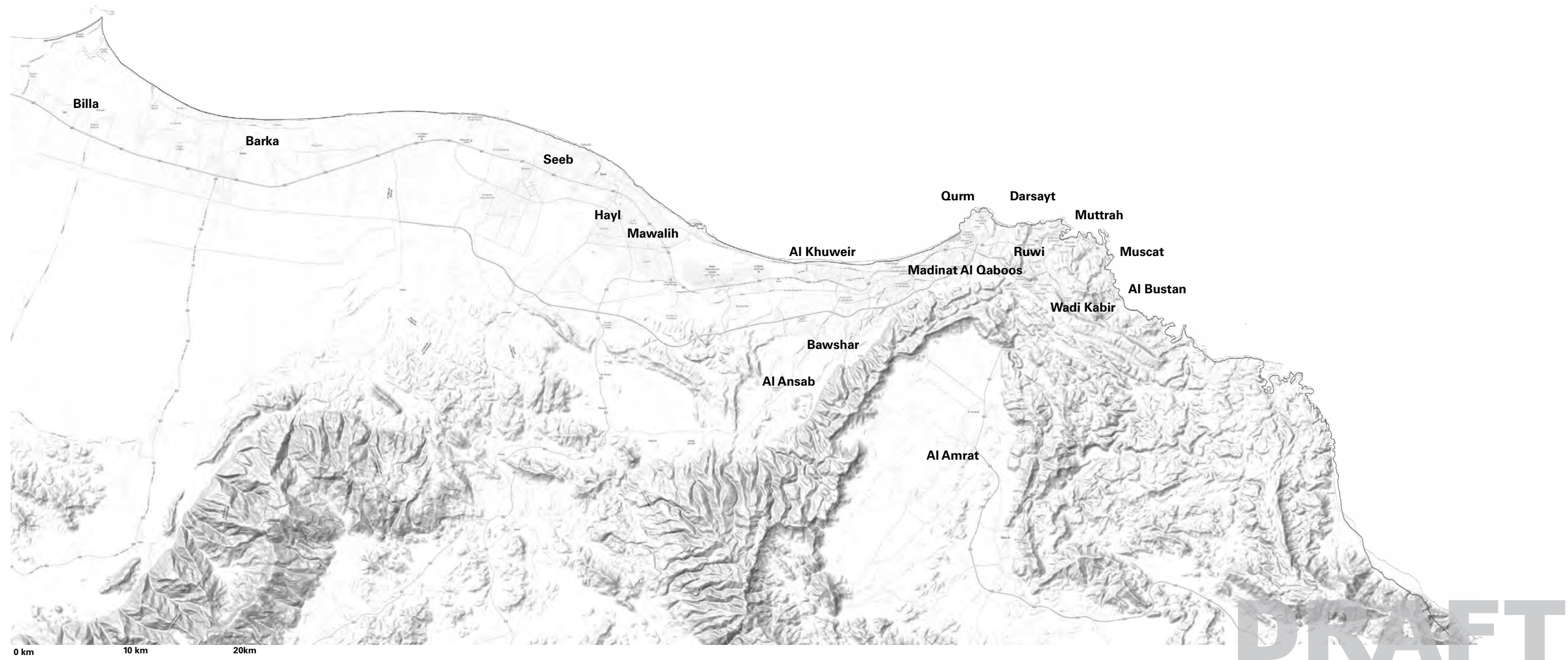
100 km

Population Density

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APPROPRIATION OF THE TOPOGRAPHY

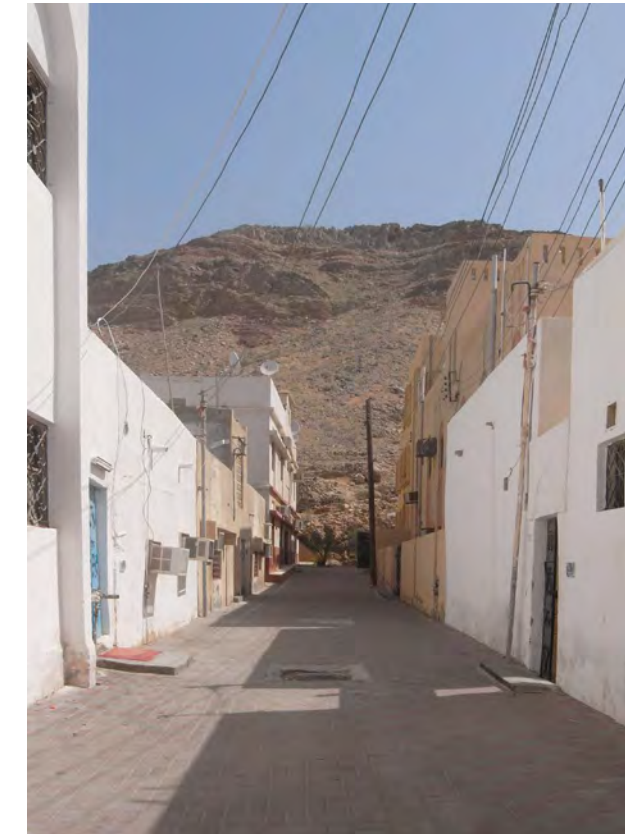
Considering its double identity as a city state region in a large country, Muscat is unique. Adding the factor topography into the discours is indispensible, because it had a large impact on the city's history and it's growth. Mainly three types of developing are to be pointed out that repeat over the territory: The historic fishervillages, the city build into the space between the mountains from the 1970's on and the city expanding in the Batinah plain since the 1980's.





Urban Nucleus - The Coastal City

Oman's economy relied on agriculture and on the fishing sector before becoming a petroleum economy in the 1970's. Today, remaining traditional fisher villages are found at the coasts outside of Muscat, especially in the east where the rough topography does not permit large building projects. During the 1980's, the villages in the central parts of Muscat have been replaced by high income housing, while the fishermen were relocated.



Sikkah-The Arabic Alley

Narrow alleys mark the historic center of Mattrah with its highly dense residential constructions.



Map of Muscat in 1600

The unique topography formed the largest natural harbour in the ancient world and was considerably important for the city's development as the center of a trading empire.

Coastal Cores

Muttrah was for thousands of years the economic heart of Oman. It has one of the largest natural ports in the Arab world. Modernity brought major changes in business and technology, that Muttrah was not able to cope with. After 1970 the city received a modern container port that worked for the first decades of growth, but today is located on a totally inefficient position, creating traffic jams in delicate areas. In the past ten years Muttrah is experiencing the transformation towards a tourist center. The Souq was traditionally the place of shopping. Today people see it more like a backwarded relict from past days, left to Indian shop-

keepers that sell souvenirs to the tourists. The old houses are mostly in a bad condition and often not older than 100 years, because houses from the far past were replaced without hesitation. Nevertheless visitors fall to Muttrahs charme, created by the Souq, the old Portuguese fort, the corniche and the fishmarket. Here Omani still come to buy local species, among the best quality in the GCC. Fishing is a very important economic sector for the population of these villages. The Omani authorities are investing funds in the building of a new, modern fishmarket, planned by the Norwegian office Snohetta.



Hard Hitting Modernity

Modern infrastructures, like the port and the highway, do not consider Muttrah's scale at all.



Living from the Sea

Talib, 36, lives in Darsayt and sells the fish at the Muttrah fishmarket, of course arriving by his boat.



Questionable Scale

After getting a new corniche in the 70's, Muttrah was tied with a six-lane highway with the Al-Seeb Airport.



History becoming Ornament

The fort built by the Portuguese in the 16th century marks the eastern end of Muttrah and is now being transformed into a museum.



Inscribing into the Hills - Wadi Kabir

Wadi Al Kabir is the southernmost part of Ruwi. This part shows how the city grows and how it deals with the environment. Muscat’s old business district became too small for the Omani capital. More and more enterprises left the district in direction of the airport, giving space to the middle- and low income class residents. This suburb was restrained in the Wadi Valley between to mountain chains. At many points at the bottom of Wadi Kabir large parts of the mountains are being excavated in order to gain more building plots, creating huge health problems to the nearby inhabitants. The Al Bustan Highway marks the moving direction of the city and is exaggeratedly ornamented with vintage street-lights and plants. The eastern mountain chain divides it from the sea, the political center of Muscat and from small fisher villages and luxury resorts. Wadi Kabir in our present day reached the southern end point of the hills and is growing around them.



Wadi Kabir as seen from above



One of the larger spaces wrung off the mountains



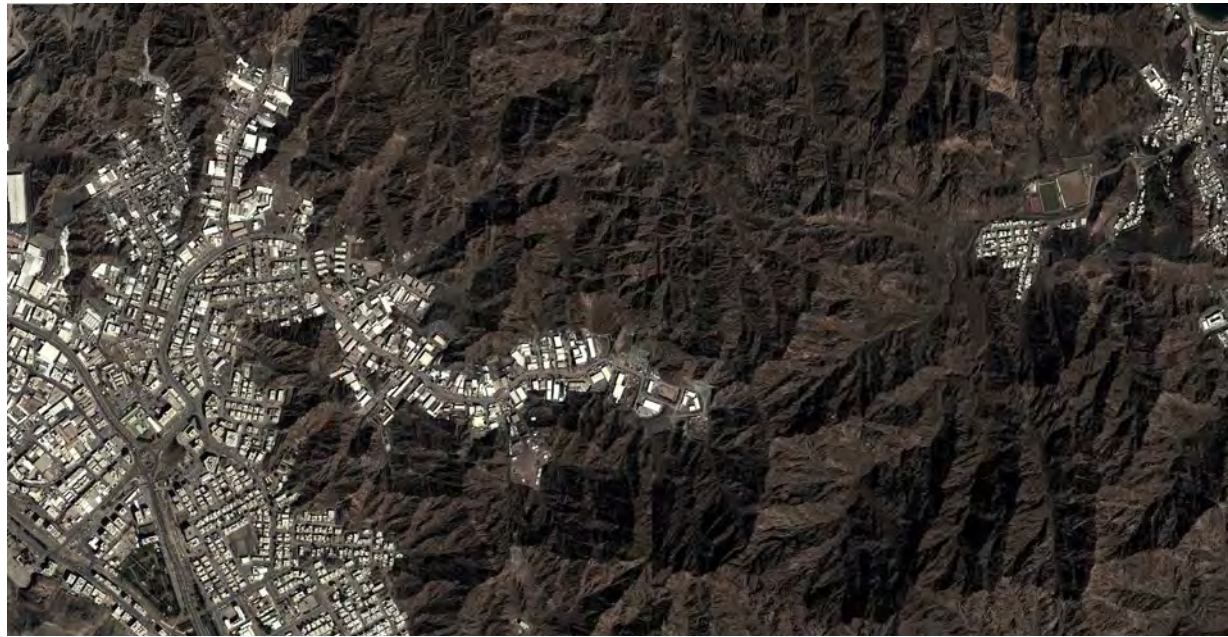
Dealing with the Foreign Middle-Class

It seems to be the most unplanned part of the city as its projects aim to satisfy the substantial demand of the continuously arriving middle class expats in search for housing.



On Top of the Peak

The houses are built in the mountains occupying every suitable area.



Money beats Rocks

Wadi Kabir grows with the logic of profit, into areas that are most easy to convert into plain constructible ground.



Construction site of the mudflowdam



Uncontrolled Floods

Dangerous Hills

At the end of the mountainchain, a gigantic infrastructure building lot evidences two major environmental problems: Subsidence and landslide. A mudflowdam is being built in order to canalize the destructive running waters into basins. Rain is such infrequent in this country to the point that it is considered nearly a natural wonder. People go out-

side when it happens. But the precipitation is massive and creates natural disasters on the sandy hills by causing mudflows. These are threatening the city, because of the lack of a sewage system. Most people are aware that actions are undertaken by the government, but they do not believe that those measures have any protective effect for them.



Dusty Routine

There is no end of Wadi Kabir, there seems to be the will to just remove the mountains. Dry climate and wind absorb huge amounts of dust up to the highest unhealthy degrees.

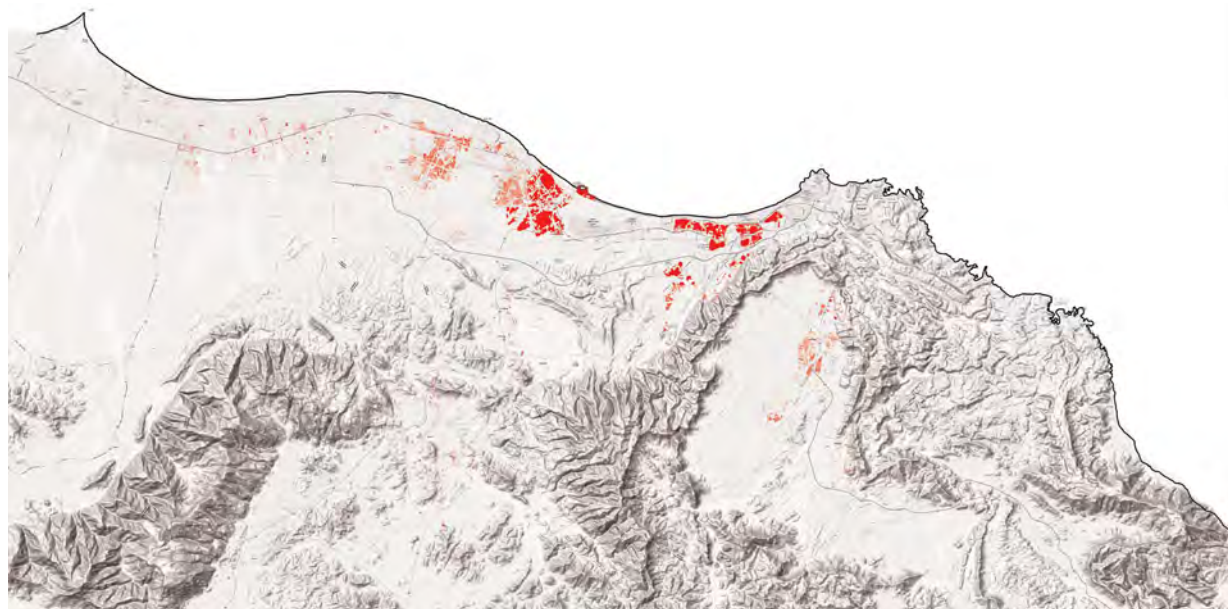
Harsh Life in the Hills

Rathgu, a 40 years old planner from Kerala, India, lives with his family for 7 years now in Wadi Kabir. He works at an engineering company, only a short walk away from the office. His spouse is a housewife. Their children go to the Indian school in Wadi Kabir. Renting a house costs around 200-350 O.R. per month, but it `s worth: Every workaday needed service is close by and traffic jams are uncommon. A lot of nationalities live here, mostly Indians and Sri Lankese. Everybody seems to know the neighbours, mostly colleagues. But the dust from the destruction of the mountains is a severe health hazard, and is noisy. Rathgu`s wife suffers a lot and caught a chronical pulmon disease.



New Lifestyle in the Plains - Al Ansab

A new suburb is being developed in the south of Al Gubrah and the Southern Express highway: This area from Bashwar to the recently built Al Ansab is emblematic for the development in the Greater Muscat Area. The beautiful countryside being home of the traditional Omani way of life, the “right” lifestyle, should be protected from the sprawling city, described as a ferocious animal. But nobody thought about the decay of the urban environment. Isn’t this tentative of conservation of the countryside actually a threat to the city?



Omani Suburbanism

In fact, its result, like the social collapse, drives the people to the urban areas. There is no harmony between the rural and the city area. Industries planted without being properly planned like in the nearby Ghala that affected the surrounding countryside in a destructive way. The skyrocketing price for every square meter and the great hunger for housing units within the city. People from outside Muscat flee from their villages and move to the city. The result is a sprawling Muscat, consuming its hinterlands. A proof for this can be found at the line between the City of Muscat and the Governorate of Barka that has vanished. Barka was a village, pure rural area, that in only one decade was plastered and saw itself stolen its identity.



Unfinished Environments

At the west end of the city in Hail and Barka and in the plain of Al Amrat a new type of residential area emerged due to the social housing policy, started in the 1980's. This type of place can be characterised as cheap, exaggeratedly spacious residential area. There are many more problems, as the painful lack of a sewage system, to be found in many other suburbs, too. Streets are flanked by sidewalks that are unpaved, covered by what was left by the shops and restaurants in their despair for someone to pick it up.



Taking Three Steps Home

The growth at first occurs along the main streets, then on the secondary streets. The "Sikkah", the tertiary streets are frequently random creations of how the houses are positioned on the plot.



Wasting Water

Golf courses are considered important and are common parts of the new settlements in the plain, raising considerably the prices for the square meter. They are an ecological disaster, consuming huge amounts of Oman's rare water reserve.



Unfinished Living Space

Streets often end in the nowhere with new, already inhabited houses and building plots along them.



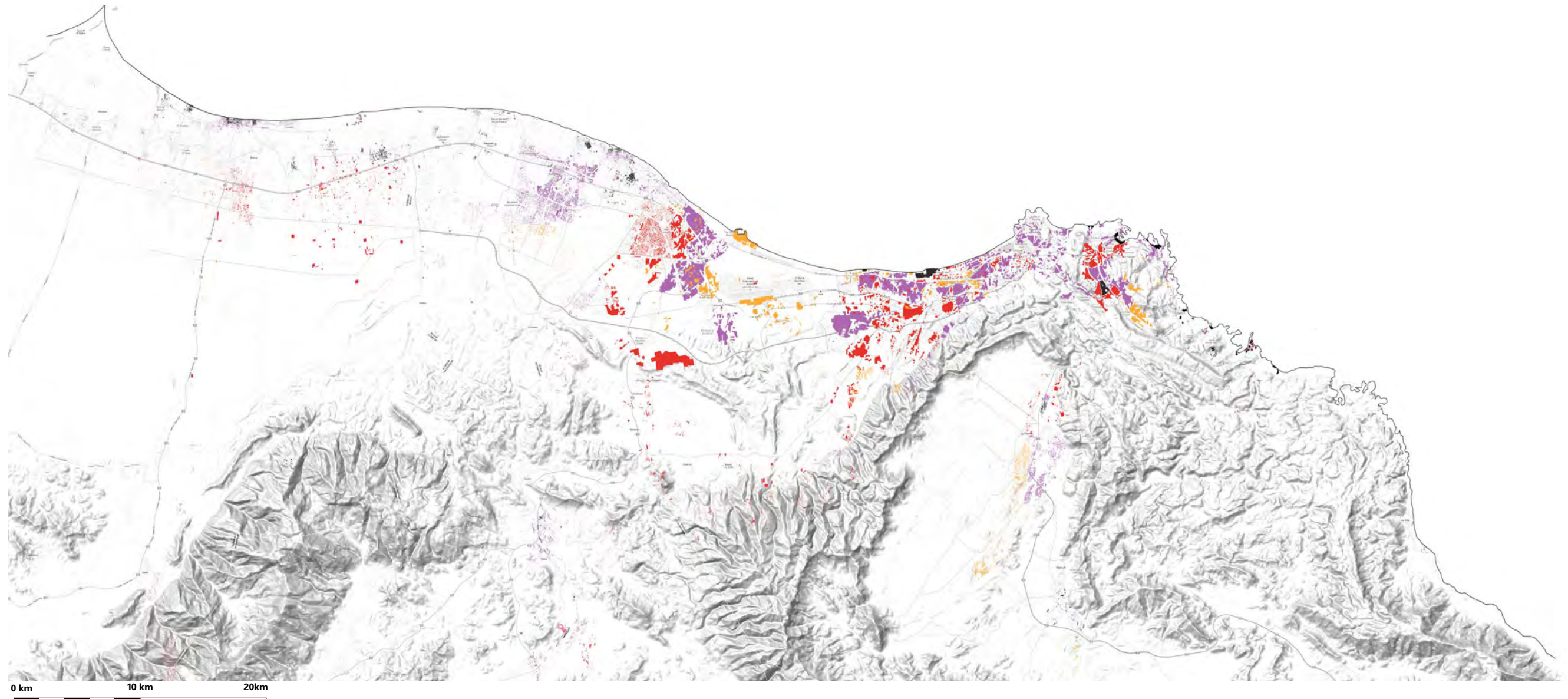
Growing Distances

Nevertheless the Omani try hardly to keep their traditional lifestyle, their houses in the plain have their roots in the western way of life: Single villas with huge spaces between without courts. The Sikkah is dying.



Reminiscence Kitsch

This is not how Omanis used to live in the past. A reminiscence to that time are Arabising prefab windows, columns and other ornaments, without any function.



- 2010's - Present
- 1990's - 2000's
- 1970's - 1980's
- Historic Centers / Before 1970

Urban Body

As we have seen, Muscat developed different types of settlements within its borders that are not fully recognizable. This settlement typologies are so different to the point of being independent. Muscat is something like many cities put together, connected via highways. Finding an answer to that question a proper research on the urban hardware/functions was required. The main question was about what is exactly happening in the built area and how it is happening.

STRUCTURE THROUGH MOBILITY

As we have seen so far, Muscat is a polycentric city. We assume that the citygovernment put importance on the geographic center in the latest development. Services are situated along the essential highways of this car friendly city. An important example is the second Sultan Qaboos Mosque. What are the implications, both in the physical and psychological way?





Pearls on a Chain

The highway seems to work like a magnet for governmental departments, office buildings, shopping malls, hotel complexes, education buildings and highrise apartment buildings. The concentration of this constructed fabric appears in the skyline of the city. Its building mass emerges along the highway.



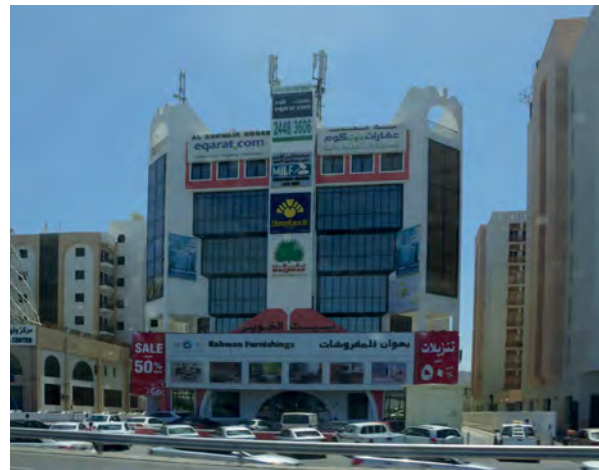
Business Office

Powerful companies have office buildings that manifest their importance. This projection of might is done with fort-elements. Applying a useful facade would be more suitable in such a harsh climate.



Administration

Administration buildings represent the government's power, made present with a fort character.



Shops

The houses along the highways are conglomerates of different little shops and offices. The facade is a patchwork of the advertising bills. Every shop struggles for the biggest panel, without any regard to hierarchy or organisation.



Shopping Mall

A lot of western chains and food stores are placed in shopping malls. Like the american role model the parking lots are enormous and the outside facade are totally closed.



Tourism

Oman is aware of the potential of tourism. Many hotels are being build, giving room for business tourists who visit conferences and fairs, that often take part in the hotels themselves.



Education

Oman has emphasized the importance of schools for the country. The specialised schools are well presented along the main roads and follow the seen patterns.



Apartment Houses

The apartments give the residents the advantage of living in the geographical center for a low rent. But life quality is diminished by the proximity to the noisy highway.



The Highway Space

The highways serve as large axes through the whole urban body. Those four to six lane large motorways permit the movement directly to the destination without greater interruption. They are a mirror of how the government wants to be seen by its inhabitants: Tidy, immaculate, modern spaces where everybody acts under the given rules, controlled by the omnipresent cameras and reminding of the Sultan's presence through large posters alongside the road.



Business Embracing the Highway

The services are arranged alongside the highways, giving Muscat the shape of a semi-unplanned linear city.

The allowed speed on the highway is 120km/h, which is constantly exceeded. The speed is brought back to a slower velocity by secondary streets on the highway sides. After decelerating the cars, these exit-streets lead to the services and tertiary street giving way into the districts.



Surveillance

Muscat has an impressive system of highways. This large axis, form the "Arteries" of the city. Quite everybody living in Muscat frequents daily the highway. The possibility and the need to survey this space is obvious. Cameras are observing the traffic for reasons of speed limitation and security, since the Omani streets are statistically dangerous.



The Highway as a Barrier

For Pedestrians the highway is nearly impassable. There are no bridges or underways along the whole city. The focus of planning was put only on the motorized traffic. People trying to pass the 6 lanes are common. Unfortunately, accidents with pedestrians are an everyday image in Muscat. The country performs worst in the lethal accidents statistic of the whole GCC.



Acceleration - Deceleration

Building shops near a highway with such a large number of potential clients would be useless if this group can not slow down and rest. Secondary streets permits this deceleration, while parking lots invite to stay and enter the area.



Importance of the Street Corner

The street corners are highly demanded positions for shops. They not only provide a higher possibility to be seen by potential customers on two street fronts in the same time: Often corners are places where people linger. House-owners do everything in order to possess these corners no matter what, while rents are considerably higher.



Mix of Little Shops

Small shops still find their space along the main roads. The highway is the right place where these specialised shops can compete with the malls. The proximity to the traffic lanes gives potential customers the chance to see them from the car, unless the small size of the fronts.



Sultan Qaabos Mosque

The Street as a Political Instrument

Before the year 1970 many Sultans had to fight constantly for their supremacy against local lords. Once, walls and gates marked the city borders. According to this mentality, the inner city was understood as the shelter from the wilderness outside. In the early 1990's streets took over this role, often vanishing this clear boundaries. When Sultan Qaboos came to power in 1970, he unlocked his country with the

use of infrastructure. The large scale served as the projection of his power. These built ornaments have a representative task, being proof of religious faith and the attempt of creating an image of Oman. The Royal Opera House is the try of bringing culture to the country. All the big prestigious buildings of his Majesty are situated along the highway, proof of his undoubted power.



The only Royal Opera House in the middle east



Gate to Mutrah



Roundabout monuments work as orientation points.



Ministry of Higher Education

Company Bus

The companies provide free and direct transport from the labour camp or the apartment to the workplace. They do not permit the workers to reach other destinations, outside of the companies' interest.



Group Taxi-Bus

Minibusses drive only along the highway because of the higher passenger rate and stop at predefined spots. The fare is very cheap, but the destination never lead inside the districts.



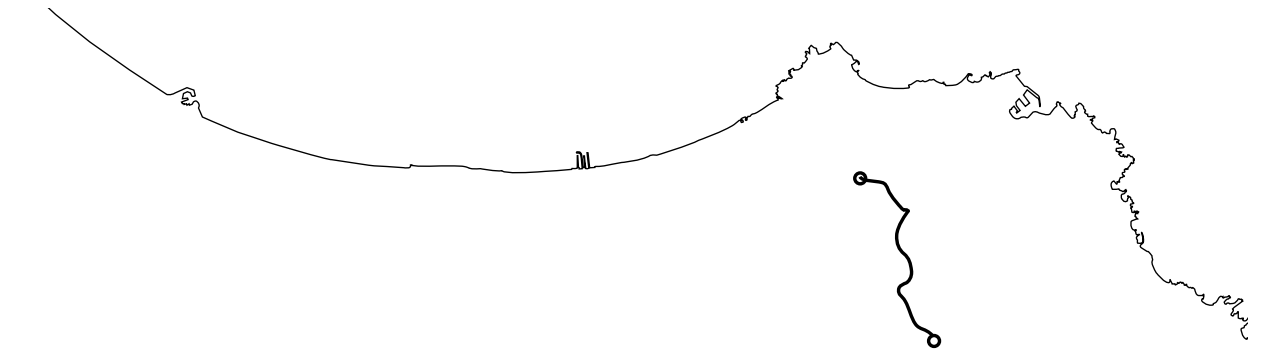
Private Car

Everyone, who can afford it, owns a personal car. In the people's minds, it stands for the highest degree of individual freedom. Omani families have up to 8 cars.

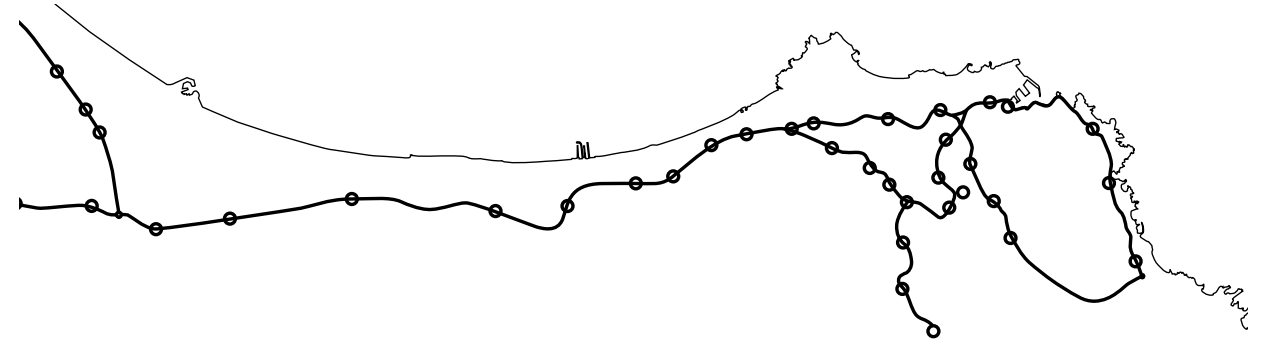


Types of Mobility

As Oman's capital lacks a public transportation system and functions are spread all over the city, the inhabitants strongly rely on moving on the highways. This is done by private cars, informal minibuses with stops along the highways and company buses that bring their employees directly to the place of production, may it be the airport, a building lot or a catering service. The only public bus company is said to be unreliable and brings passengers only to other cities in Oman. A railway is being planned but still a future project, while a metrosystem is being realized not before 2030.



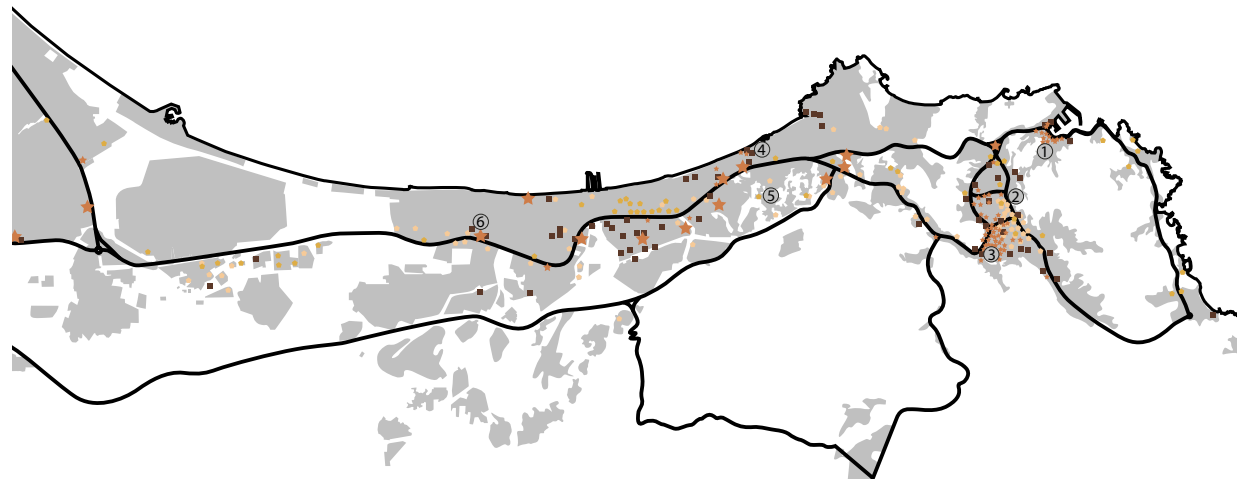
Company Car



Group Taxi-Bus



Private Car



- ★ Shopping
- Political Center
- Office
- Hotel
- ☾ Mosque

Centralities

Muscat is a polycentric and carfriendly city. Roads and their infrastructure invite literally people using a car and by this form somekind of linear centralities. The combination and location of this attractions is influenced by the type of people, that are reciprocal being attracted by the respectively central-ity. Important factors are the offered services and the financial possibilities of the customers and on the culture of the people. By this, every center is specialized on the different customer. In function mixed spots, like Ruwi (3), Shatti al Qurum (4) and Al Khuwair (6), the customers are attracted by the large commercial offer. While the Ruwi CBD (2) only offers services to office employees, that are frequenting it during the week. On weekend and holidays, this area is totally abandoned. Medinat Qaboos (5) is a very diversified commercial center. Mostly western expats and rich Omani are going to this spot, located in the center of a residential area.



5) Medinat Qaboos - Al Fair commercial center



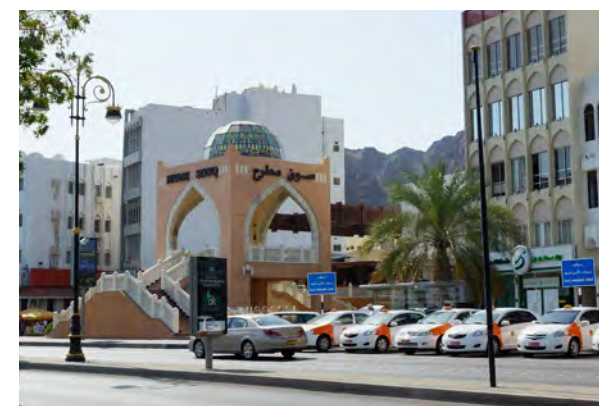
6) Al Khuwair - Residential zone



3) Ruwi - Commercial center



4) Shatti al Qurum - Beach



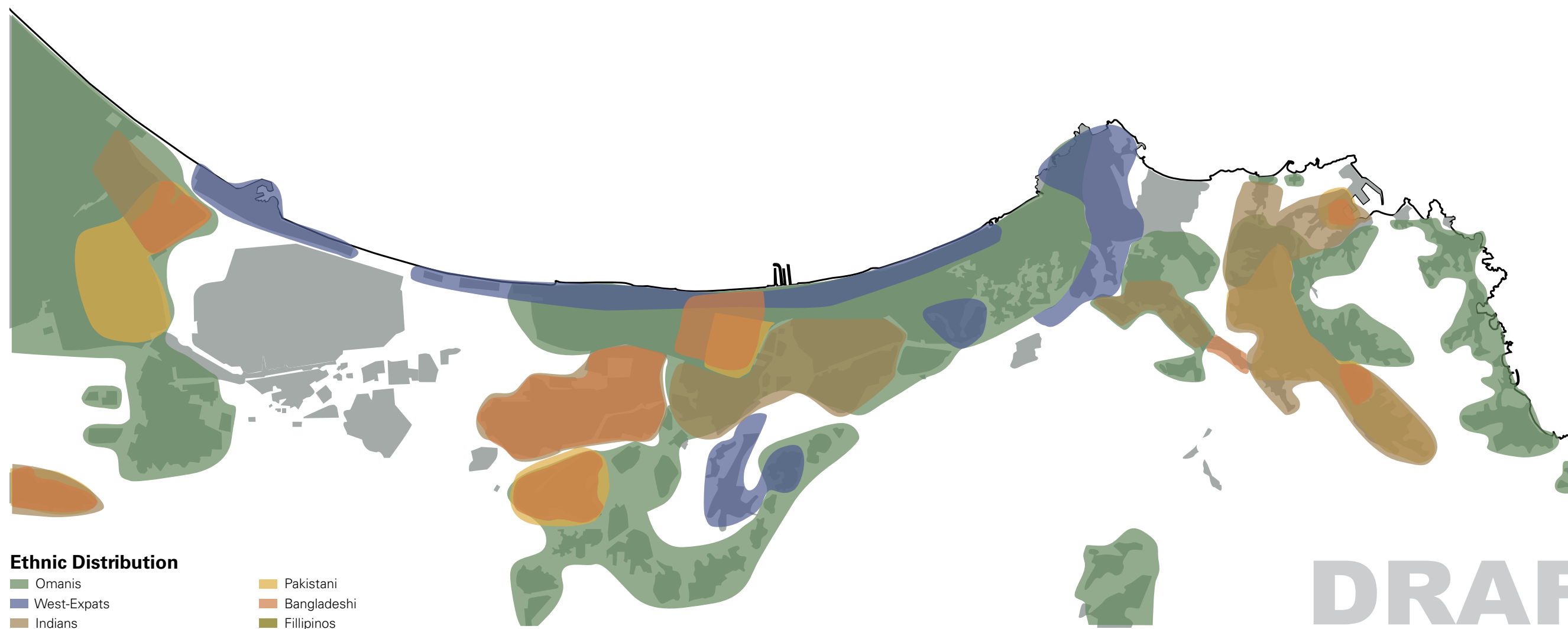
1) Souq in Muttrah - Touristic center

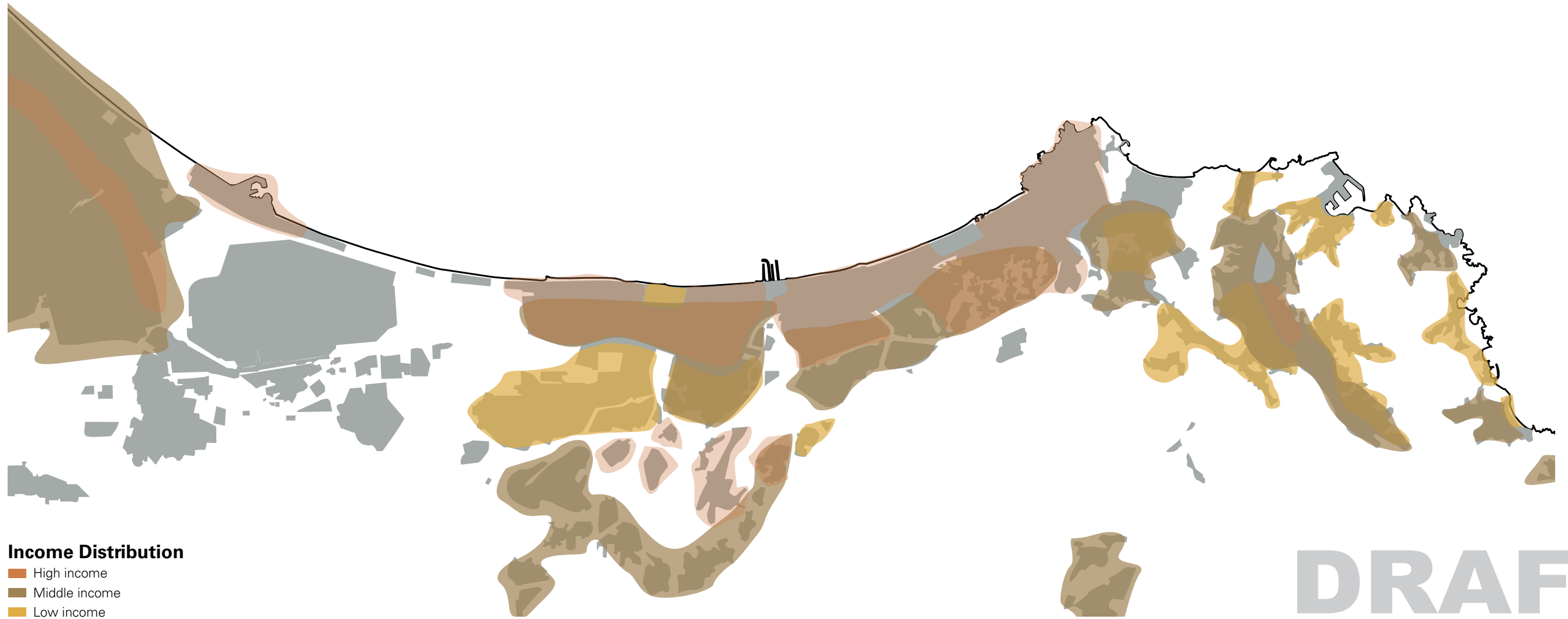


2) Ruwi Central Business District

PARALLEL LIFE

The development of Muscat is closely linked to the flows of people from over 40 years. International migration augmented Omans workforce, permitting the country's incredible economic growth. Its internal migration processes are very important, but only poorly paid attention to. In 2003, the number of foreigners in Muscat reached 630.000, nearly half the city's population. Globalization increased and improved transport, communication and information exchange. The most important result is the international migration that in Oman is systemically regulated by the government. Generally, migration is the result of so-called push and pull factors that make people move. Oman's relatively high salaries and promising career opportunities are the main pull factor for foreign work force. In Oman's society, the position of each member in the hierarchy of the labour market varies totally with the social standing. The society in Oman has developed strong mechanisms of exclusion towards non-Omani nationals, in form of strict civic and property rights.





Income Distribution

- High income
- Middle income
- Low income



Nufu and Nudjada, Omani students, live with their families in Al Ansab.



Mazin Al Raisi - Omani, works as the facility manager at the Bank of Muscat Headquarter.



Al Aremi - Omani, lives in Sur, works in the CBD in Ruwi where he stays in a company appartement during the week.

Civic Rights: Omani



allowed to own real estate



allowed to register a company in the commercial register



get a free training if unemployed
get a high pension.



the company pays for health care if unemployed get 150,- OR/month



325,- OR minimum wage
no taxes on salary



all Omani students get scholarships



Members of the Royal family are highly subsidized, with a high salary

All are Equal but...

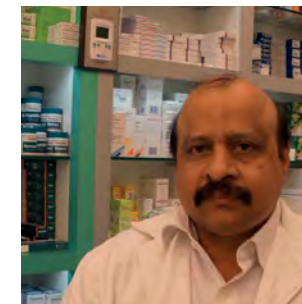
The Sultanate fosters its population with education and boosts wealth with low taxes and subsidies. With a stable government, safe social politics and financial support, Omanis can base on a secure future. Foreigners are welcome in Oman, but their rights are limited.



Mennuz, Indian, is working as a construction worker and lives on the construction site.



Mr Marwan, Italian, for 3 years manager of Kargeen, a famous, international restaurant in Medinat Qaboos.



Sri Navasan - Indian Pharmacist, working at Muscat City Center.

Civic Right: Foreigner



can own only movable property



can only manage a company



in case of unemployment or after retirement have to leave Oman. no work, no visa.



they have to pay for health themselves
big companies sometimes provide health care



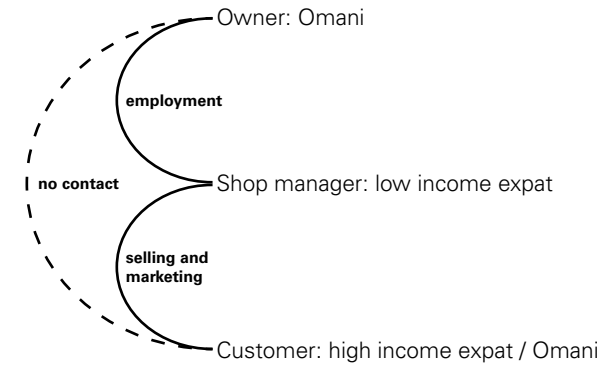
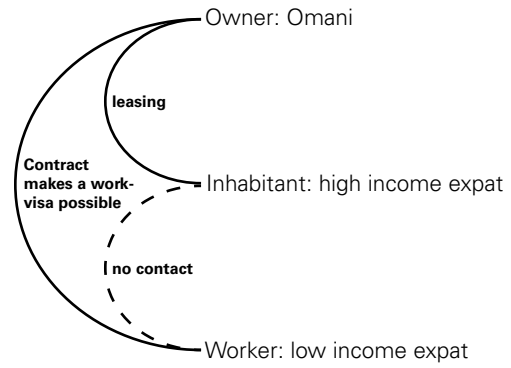
minimum salary:15,- OR / month.,
income-taxes, if salary is larger than 30'000.-



no scholarship by the government



no special rights



Professional Relation: Construction Site

Only Omanis are allowed to possess build property and land.
 Every expat lives in a rented house or apartment. The
 Omanis gain financially of these property rights.

Professional Relations: Shops

Because of the property rights foreign investors have to
 get in relation with Omanis in order to be indirectly entre-
 preneurs.



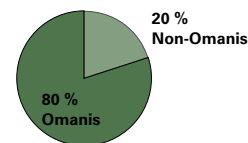
- living area of high income
- living area of low income
- ☾ Mosque
- Omani school

Daily routine of 13 interviewed persons:

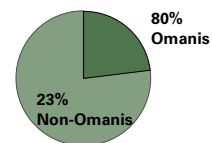
- 🏠 Home
- 🏢 Work place
- ★ Leisure place



1'500'000 Omanis are living in Muscat



Public Sector



Private Sector

The Omani City

Omanis have a traditional mentality and at the same time adapted to the modern facilities. Islam is the central factor in their life. In the opposite of this awareness for tradition, cars are seen as the prolonged feet, while mobilephone and internet are the primary communication means.



Omani Dress

The majority of the women wear the Abaya, a headscarf covering their hair. Men wear the Dishdasha, a simple, ankle-length, collarless gown with long sleeves, mostly white, rarely grey colored. Omanis have to wear this dress- es by law, while by the same law foreigners are forbidden to. By this, it is clearly visible, who is an Omani or not.



Exclusive Omani Jobs

Certain jobs like Fisherman, Taxi driver and in the Ministries are exclusively reserved for Omanis. This exclusive rights are set by law.



Sex-Division

Omani men are spending their time outside of their home mostly in company of other men, while women are rarely seen in the public space.



Free Time

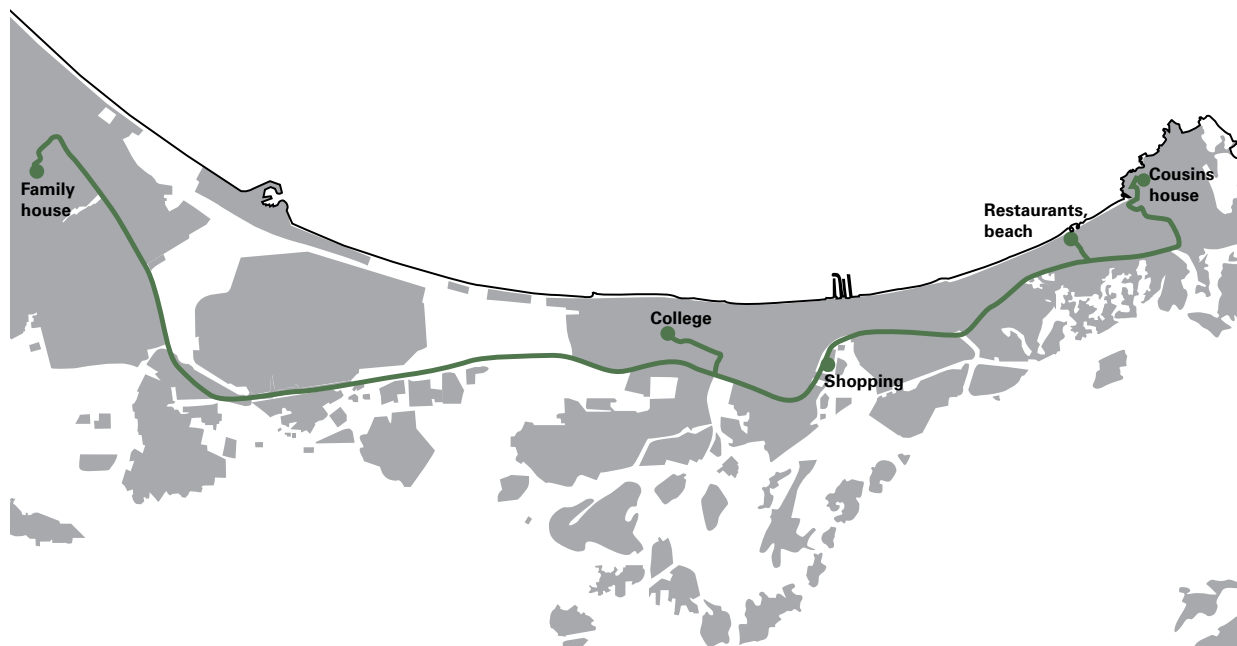
Leisure for Omanis means spending time with the family and go shopping in the american-style Malls.



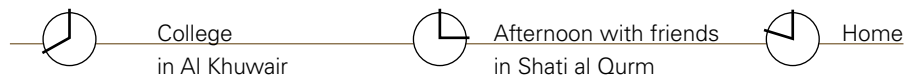
Identity

His Majesty - Sultan Qaboos - is present everywhere. Omanis are very grateful and proud of him.

DRAFT
© ETH Studio Basel



Daily schedule of Saleh



Case Study: Daily life of Saleh

Saleh is a 28 years old Omani student. He lives with his family in a house in Seeb, where he grew up. The maids and the gardener live with the family in the same house. He owns a personal car and moves from Seeb to Qurm. He uses mainly the highway in order to reach several different destinations.



Omani College in Al Khuwair

Only Omanis who attend the medical college receive scholarships from the Sultanate. The college is located in Al Khuwair. Saleh reaches it with his personal car.



Shopping Malls

In his freetime, Saleh spends his time in shopping malls where western products are available.



Family House in Seeb

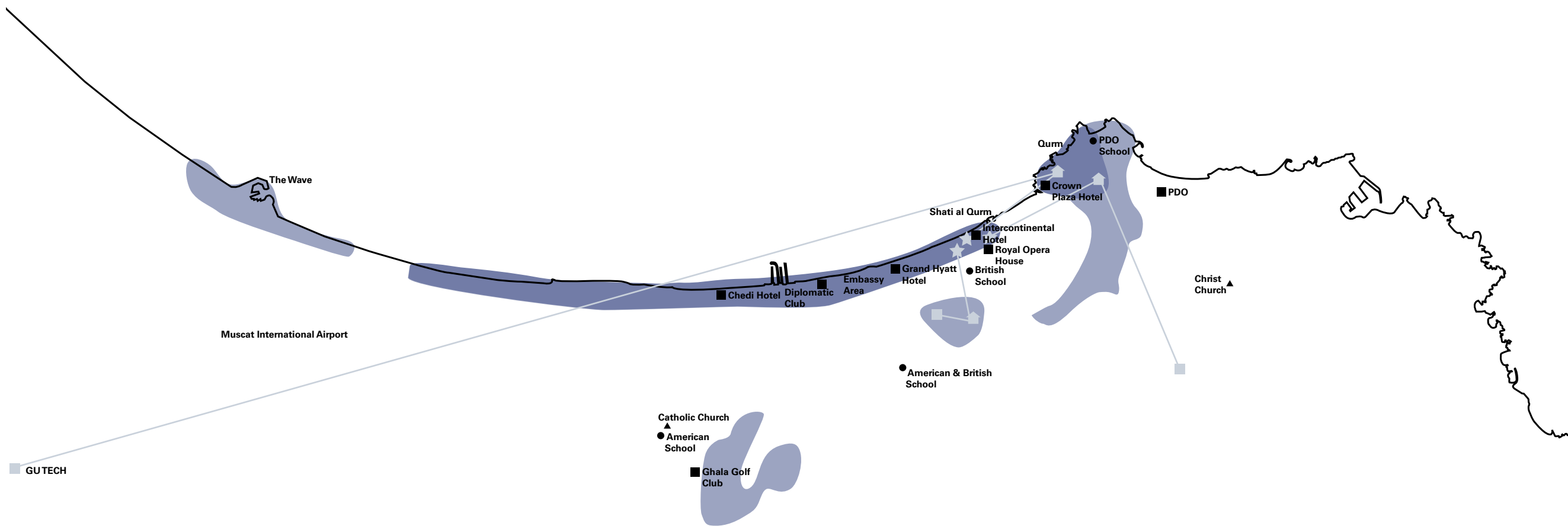
His family owns a villa in Seeb, where his father received a plot. For him, its not a problem to commute long distances to Qurm and Al Khuwair. The family owns totally 5 cars.



Cousins House in Qurm

Saleh's cousin lives in a huge villa, surrounded by rich Omani families or western expats. They spend a lot of time at his cousins house, but they don't have a tight contact to neighbours.

DRAFT
© ETH Studio Basel



- living area of low income people
- living area of high income people
- School
- Church

Daily routine of 3 interviewed persons:

- Home
- Work place
- Leisure place



EU- / US-Companies placed in Muscat

The Western Expat City

Western expats are mostly highly educated specialists and mainly invited by companies to come to Oman. They have a job assignment which permits them to stay in the country for a limited time fixed in the contract.



Western Expat Life

The immigrants from the EU and USA created their own “social islands” where the western lifestyle is allowed. Non-Islamic clothes can be worn at these places. Alcohol is strictly prohibited in Oman, except in the tourist hotels and some western bars. Informally, also drug dealing and prostitution take place there.



Welcomed with open Arms

Fabio, 35, Cook, Napoli. “I just arrived with my family here in Oman. My house is large, my salary has tripled while living costs are lower than in Italy: For sure we will rest some years in Oman!”



Social Isolation

Most of the western expats live in the district Qurm. The houses are built in western architecture styles. Most of them are big, modern and surrounded by fences.



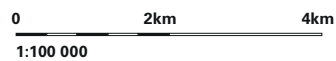
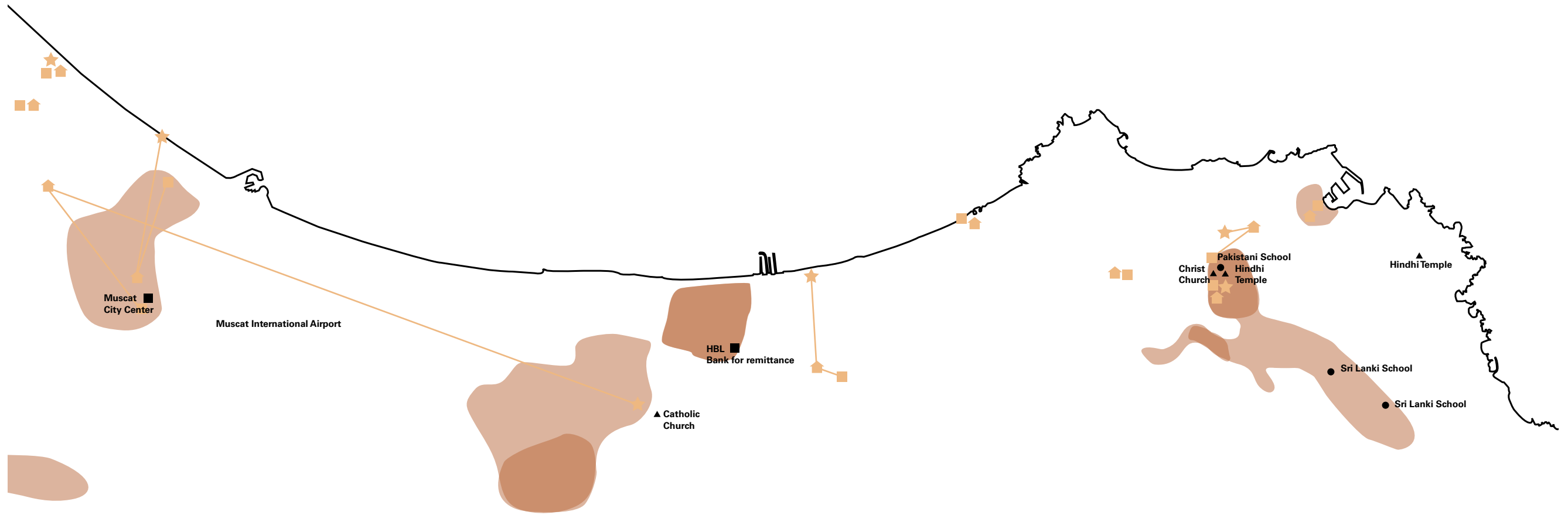
Social Island

The beach area and the clubs are the most significant social islands. On special zoned beaches westerners can wear swimsuits, forbidden in the rest of the country.



Western Femininity

Western women receive much larger social space than Omani, but still have to follow strict rules in public spaces. Therefore, parties are organized in touristic spots, where loosened rules can prevail.



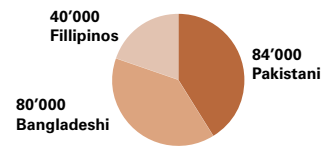
- living area of low income
- living area of high income
- School
- Church

Daily routine of 10 interviewed persons:

- Home
- Work place
- Leisure place



200'000 eastern expats of total population in Muscat



Nationalities

The Eastern Expat City

The migrants are often male bachelors with a strict work permission and limited funds. They are seen as an anonymous mass of cheap workers. Most of them receive their education at home only, around 10% are trained in Oman.



Eastern Expat Life

The shops at the souk are managed by eastern expats, but the owners are always Omani nationals. The opening hours don't allow any free time. The social interaction to other groups is very limited.



Labour Camps

The worker camps are fenced and do not allow visitors. They are situated in the nowhere, where social and spatial interaction is not possible.



Social Differences

The social range is clearly visible. The workers wear blue suits with the company name on it. The Omani managers in contrast wear the traditional Dishdasha.



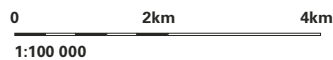
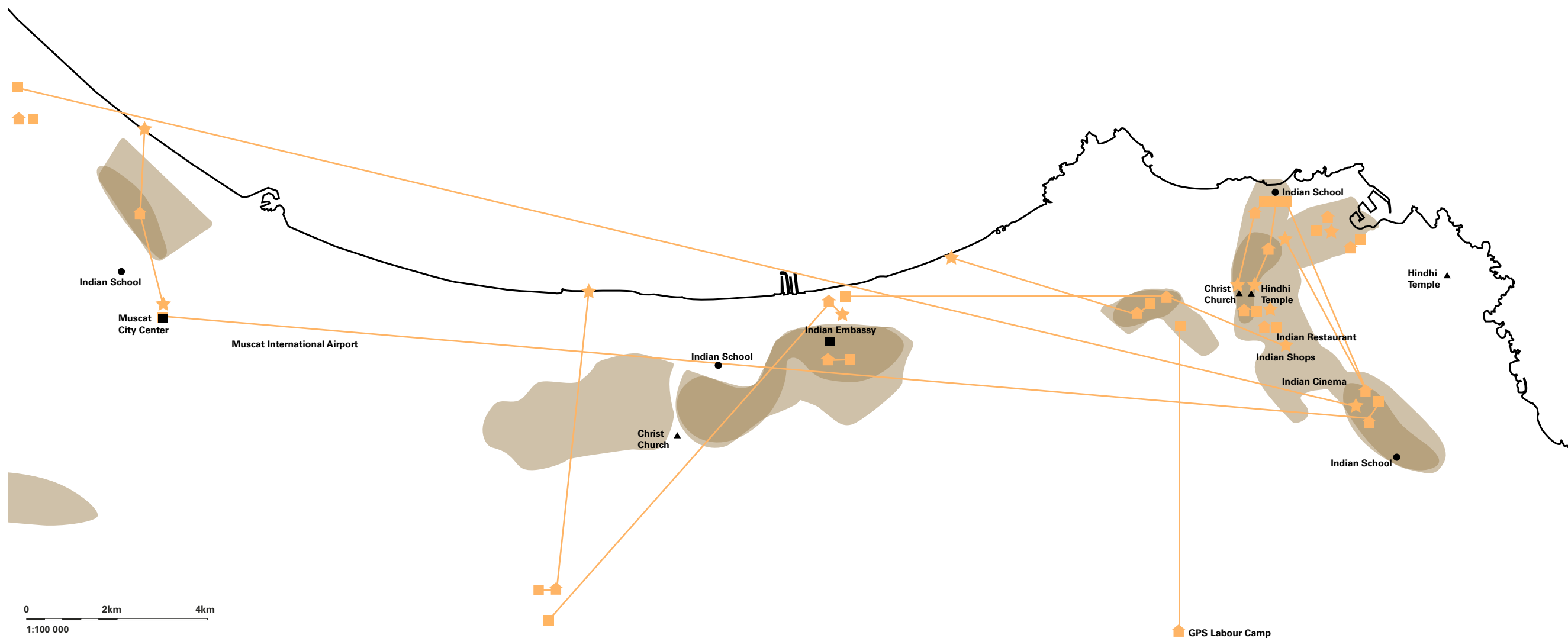
"Send money to your family in Pakistan for free, instantly..."

Their families are staying in the home country. The goal of the workers is to cover the living expenses and send the money home. Banks are advertising directly to the expats as potential customers.



Identity

This students feel at home in Oman, but live only within the Bangladeshi community. Their relations are limited to other Bangladeshi and they follow the traditions of their parents' home country.



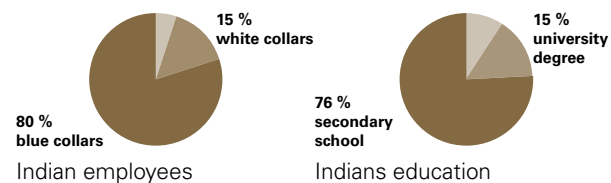
- living area of low income
- living area of high income
- School
- Church

Daily routine of 17 interviewed persons:

- Home
- Work place
- Leisure place



450'000 Indians of total population in Muscat



The Indian City

Indian expats are distributed through every income levels. The mass of workers are low paid, with the goal of sending money to their families back home. India established the Ministry of Oversea Affairs, that deals with recruitment policies and practices and supports low skilled workers in finding employment abroad. The high skilled Indians are mostly engineers who are recruited from Omani companies.



Indian Life

The district Ruwi offers everything to the need of the Indian community. Indian migrants can maintain a certain Indian lifestyle with a broad offer of food, clothes, beauty products and household products.



Low Income Indians

The construction workers are living on the construction sites often without basic facilities. The social interaction is only among their group, because they don't have the possibility to leave the site.



High Income Indians

The highly educated engineers live in rented houses, and every family owns at least one car. They enjoy highest degrees of mobility and possess sufficient funds.



Free Time

Indian bachelors spend their free time with other bachelors at inofficial meeting points on the street. Their social and financial situation does not permit other activities.



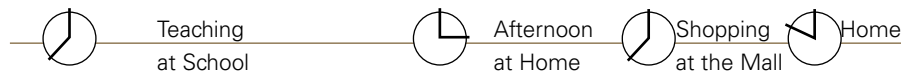
Qualified Professionals

Indians are experts in the IT-sector and are running most shops and services in Ruwi.

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Daily schedule of Beena Gorind



Case Study: Daily Life of Beena Gorind

She immigrated from India to Oman in 1997, when her husband accepted a job offer from Toyota. Their children are going to the Indian school. After their graduation, they go to India for their studies - 80% of Indians do likewise. As for shopping, Beena prefers the close LuLu-Market in Ruwi. During free-time, the family spends time in the Indian district Ruwi, where for example the Indian Cinema is located, showing the latest Bollywood films.



Faith: Christian Church

Every Friday, the large Indian Christian community meets at the church. The rites are held in different Indian dialects. It is accepted to believe in Christ, but the execution of religion in Oman is limited to the Church perimeter.



Working Place: Indian School

Beena Gorind works as an English teacher. Only Indians are working here, except in the administration, where some Omanis work too.



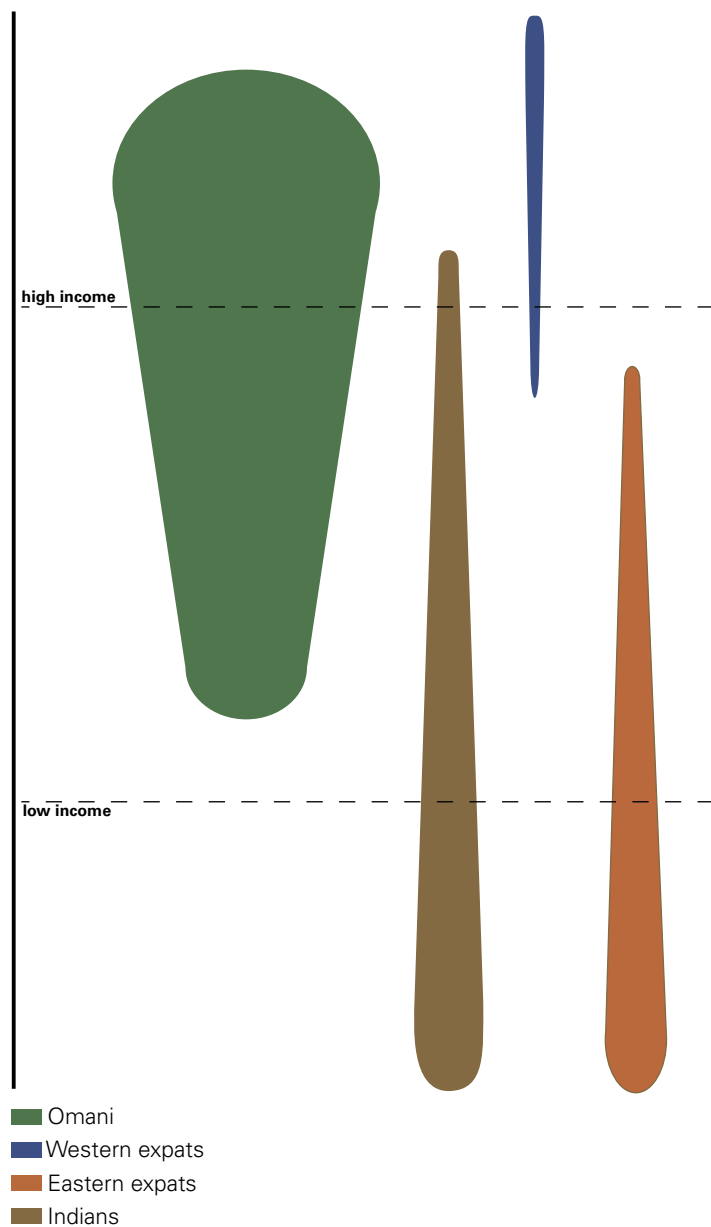
Working Place of her Husband: Toyota

Her husband is working at the car company as a technician. This job offer was the families reason to come to Oman.



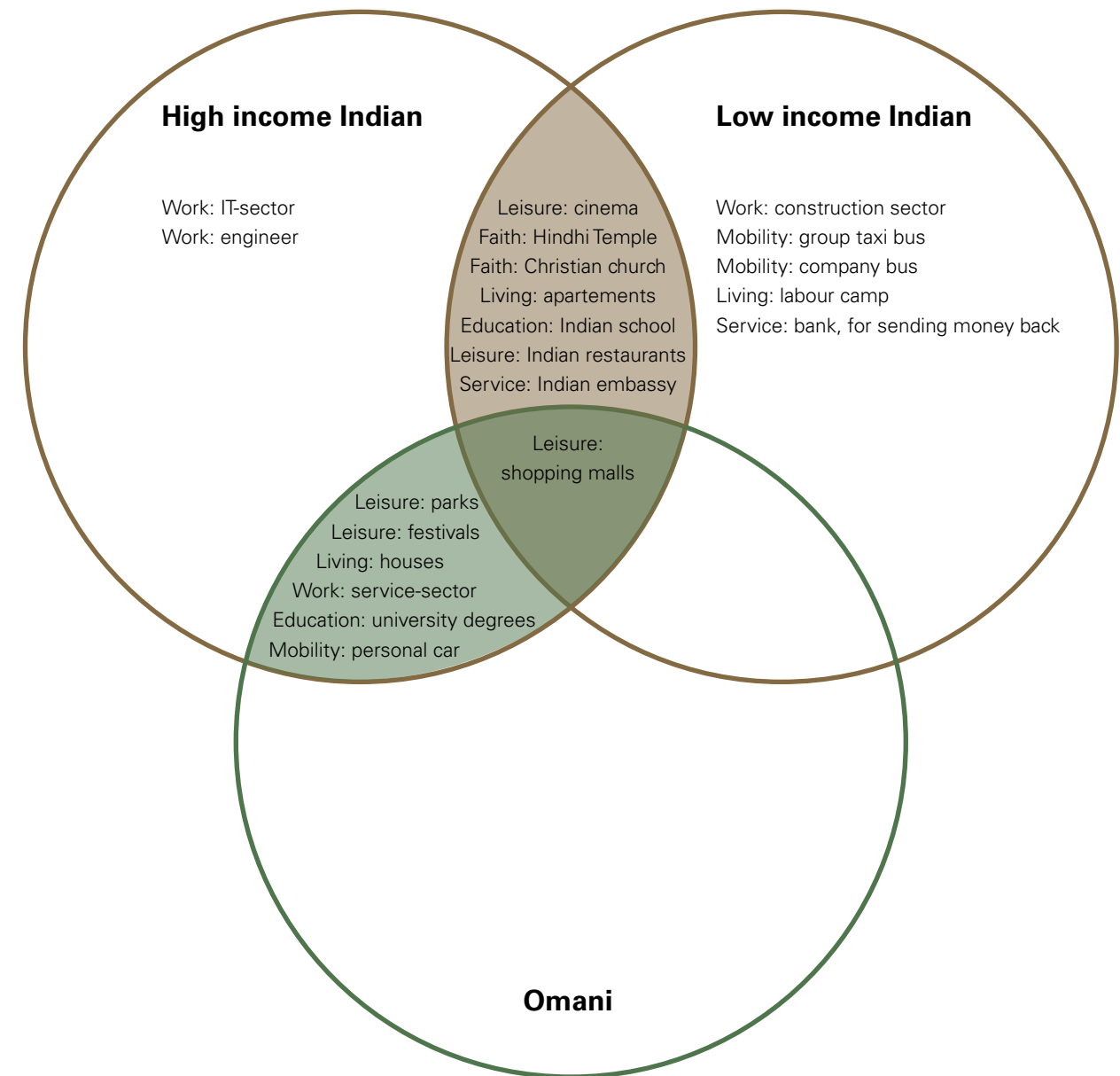
Home: Company Apartment

The family is living in a rented apartment in Wadi Kabir, provided by Toyota. The apartment houses are mostly inhabited by Indians and eastern expats.



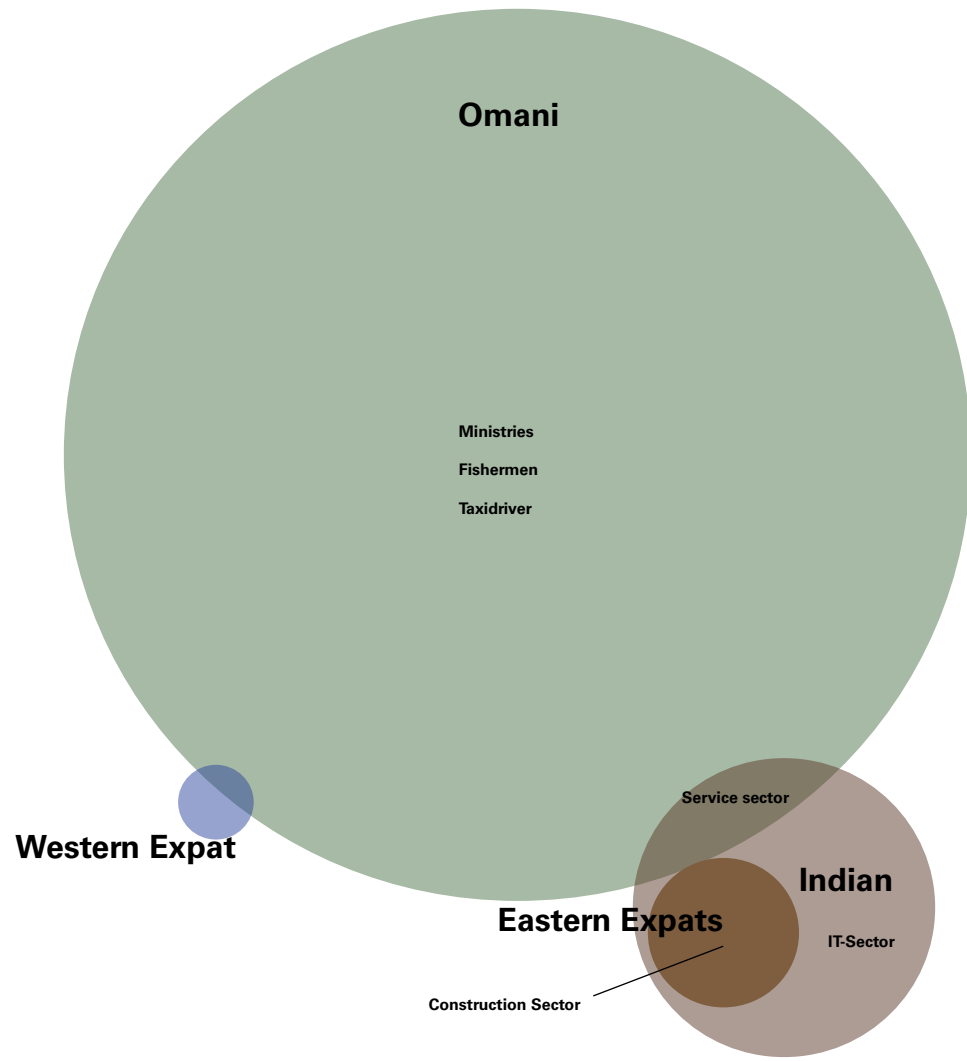
Muscat’s many Cities

Income disparities lead to extreme differences in lifestyle and opportunities, larger than known in western countries. The income determines strongly the typology of housing and how a person moves within this highly motorized city. For the middle and high income class it is common to own one or more cars. These groups can also afford to live in single houses, appartments or even villas. While for the business relations, the different ethnics are really collaborating, private relations are far more separated. As for the commercial affairs, today all the ethnics are strongly depending on each other.



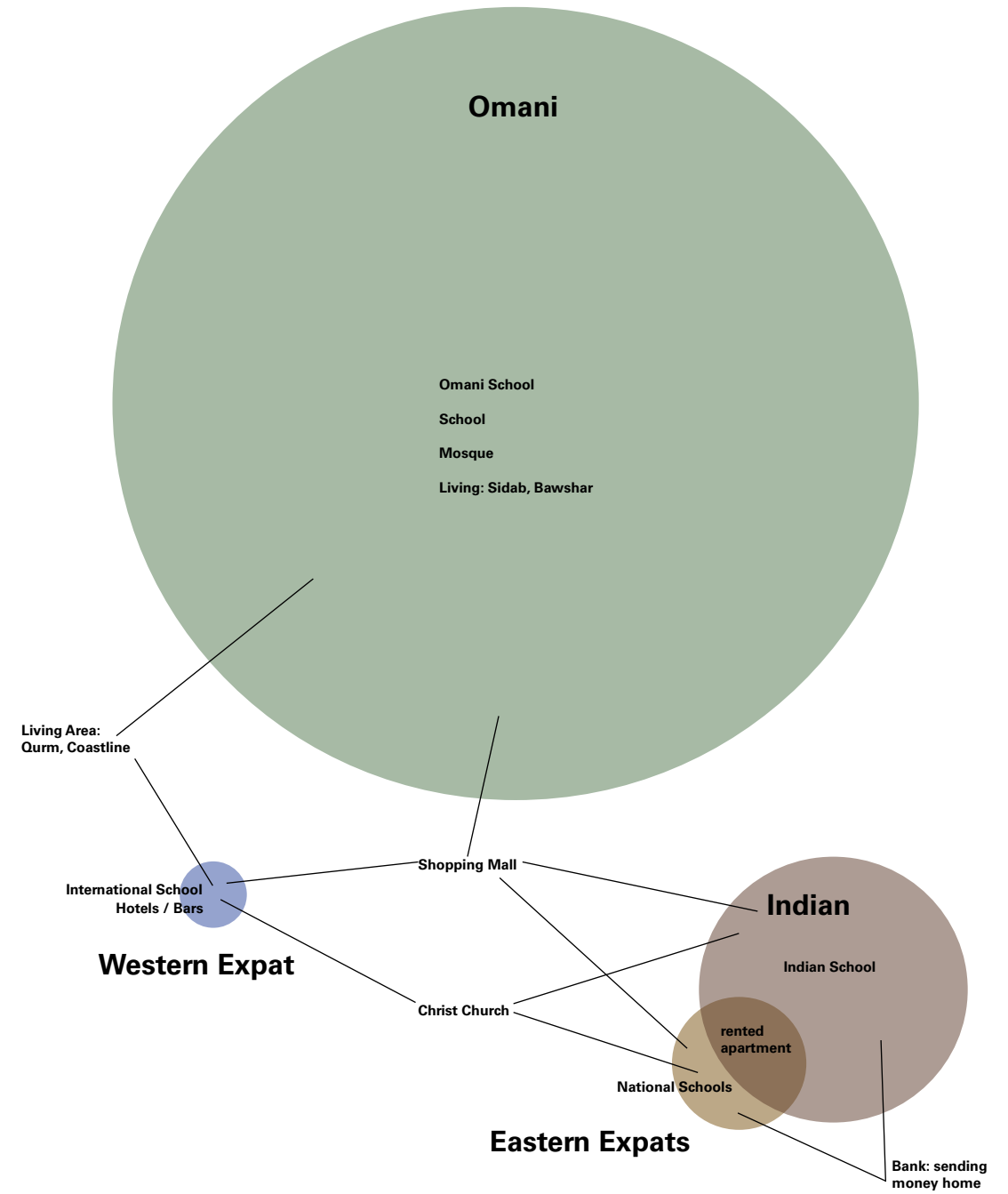
Relation of high and low income Indians and Omanis

Private social interactions seem strongly depended on income levels. The high-income indians have more contact with the Omanis. While the low-income Indians are really separated from both other groups. They only share some faith and recreational activities strongly based on ethnic factors.



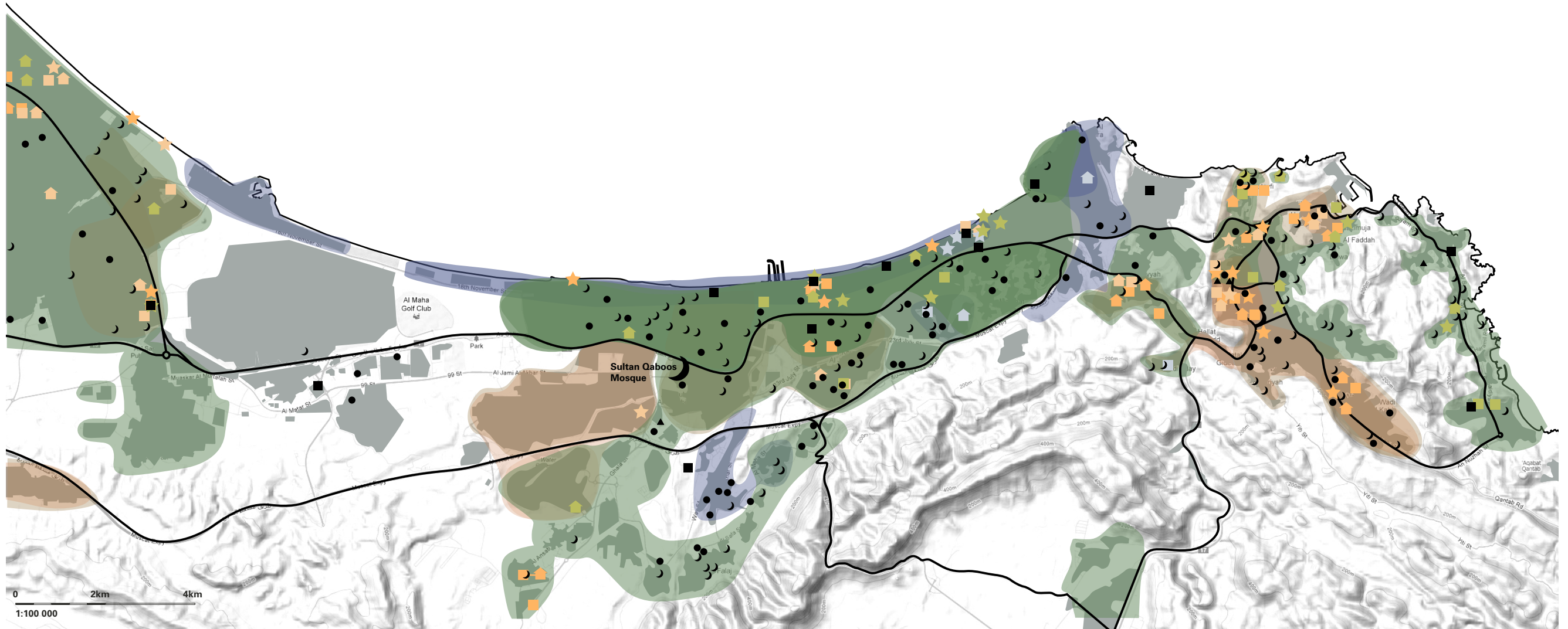
Business Connections

In business-dependencies the ethnic origin does not play a role. The Omani economy needs the immigrants' workforce and works closely with them. Relations are tight but reserved.



Social Separation

As for the social life, all ethnics groups are frequenting the same spots, but they do not go there together or meet in between the different communities. Private life is highly considered as something to protect and shared, if ever, within the community.



- Omani
- Western expats
- Eastern expats
- Indians

- Home
- Work place
- Leisure place
- Mosque
- School

Overlapping Parallel Cities

Muscat in its past developed under the condition of its versatile topography, a considerable factor in planning. With the start of immigration the social factor became more and more decisive. The different ethnic groups of the society lived like in an archipelago on self contained islands in their respective centrality. In the 1990s the highway network was

introduced and augmented significantly the communities' mobility. As a result, mixed suburbs evolved, not defined by the residents' ethnic origin but by income levels. Although that the former islands now overlap, the communities still live parallel lives. The mental barriers still exist and prevent an integral social intermix of Muscat's diverse inhabitants.

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