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Muscat Capital Area - Urbanism at the intersection of politics and space.

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Abstract

Politics and space collide in the Middle East like in no other region of the world. They have immediate impact on the lives of millions of people. Potential conflicts arise wherever political interests and spatial ambitions diverge. These conflicts manifest violently like in Palestine/Israel, Bahrain or Syria and quietly in “stable” countries like Oman through a growing socio-economic divide. Any conflict holds the potential for resolution. Architecture - in practice and in theory - is at the intersection of space and politics. The recent development of Muscat Capital Area manifests such a resolution on a massive scale. The capital of the Sultanate at the eastern tip the Arabian peninsula developed within the last 40 years from a sleepy port town with 20.000 inhabitants to an urban conglomeration stretching 60 km with a population of one million.

The vector towards the present urban expansion was set in the 1970s. At the time, Oman adopted novel techniques of regulating the process in the form of Royal Decrees, specific instruments of the Ministry of Land Affairs, land allocation by lottery and the a financial institution issuing credits bound to building codes. These mechanisms remained unchanged to the present day, making Muscat Capital Area the ideal object to study the underlying urban genetics and the resulting phenotype.

The motors of this development can be described as a series of frameworks: The legal framework in form of Royal Decrees, the institutional framework in the form of the Ministry of Housing and the Ministry of Land Use, the financial framework in the guise of the Oman Housing Bank and the political framework in the form of stimuli such as the plot allocation by lottery. Semi-private and private economic sectors emerged from these frameworks ranging from the middle-class Omani aspirations to build a house to large scale real estate speculation. In 2009 as many as 136000 plots were set aside in Oman with a current plot size of 600m² which corresponds to 82 square kilometers of land prone to development in a single year.

The rapid urbanization induced dramatic, irreversible environmental and cultural changes in Oman. These lead to the creation of a new urban form, a departure from tradition and a denial of the climatic conditions. Moreover, the mechanisms of urbanization spread, isolate and captivate the population in a suburban reality, rejecting the notion of public and political space. Urbanization – as an active process of social and spatial determination – became the instrument of choice of the government for the renewal of the country and the creation of a modern un-politicized Omani society. Yet, as the recent uprisings in Sohar in January 2011 have shown, the process of de-politization of space has failed. In Muscat Capital Area, architecture is politics.

I. Preamble

The vector towards the present urban expansion was set in the 1970s. At the time, Oman adopted novel techniques of regulating the process in the form of Royal Decrees, specific instruments of the Ministry of Land Affairs, land allocation by lottery and the a financial institution issuing credits bound to building codes. These mechanisms remained unchanged to the present day, making Muscat Capital Area the ideal object to study the underlying urban genetics and the resulting phenotype. The capital of the Sultanate at the eastern tip the Arabian peninsula developed within the last 40 years from a sleepy port town with 20.000 inhabitants to an urban conglomeration stretching 60 km with a population of one million. Urbanization – as an active process of social and spatial determination – became the instrument of choice for the renewal of the country and the creation of a modern Omani society. In Muscat Capital Area, architecture *is* politics.

Using the concepts of political and public

space, spatialization and territorialization we can describe the motors of this development as a series of frameworks: The legal framework in form of Royal Decrees, the institutional framework in the form of the Ministry of Housing and the Ministry of Land Use, the financial framework in the guise of the Oman Housing Bank and the political framework in the form of stimuli such as the plot allocation by lottery. The amplitude of this mechanism, is surprisingly large for a country that maintained a deliberate low international profile. In 2009 as many as 136000 plots were set aside in Oman with a current plot size of 600m² which corresponds to 82 square kilometers of land prone to development in a single year. Semi-private and private economic sectors emerge from these frameworks ranging from the middle-class Omani aspirations to build a house to large scale real estate speculation. In comparison to the recent, violent events of the Arab spring, this country-wide transformation process can be seen as a non-violent counterpart, with equally revolutionary impetus.



Figure1: The “palace on the plot”, a recent example of urbanization in Muscat Capital Area

II. Political and public space, spatialization and territorialization in the context of Oman

Politics and space collide in the Middle East like in no other region of the world. They have immediate impact on the lives of millions of people. Potential conflicts arise wherever political interests and spatial ambitions diverge. Spaces are controlled and devised by authorities and claimed and re-programmed at the same time by the demonstrators. This year such conflicts manifested violently in countries like in Libya, Egypt, Palestine/Israel, Bahrain or Syria, but we could easily read former conflicts in the Middle East in the same manner. Breathtaking revolutions and desperate struggles might have a variety of underlying motives, ranging from the fight against the violations of human rights, call for democracy, equal access to education, distribution of wealth, etc. Strikingly, these recent conflicts reach global attention, when they catalyze around an emblematic public space. In the following, I want to read two emblematic spaces of the Arab Spring in architectural terms: Tahir Square in Egypt and Pearl Square in Bahrain.

We can read Tahir square as an architectural space. The square was large enough to accommodate demonstrators from all parties. It's horizontal expansion and the radial organization created an equal and unifying ground for the divergent oppositional streams. The mediated picture of Tahir square in Cairo offered the perfect stage-set for an informal opposition against the regime. The re-interpretation of a street intersection (a space of transition) to an alternative center of the opposition (a

destination) created the projection foil for democratic aspirations for a time after the fall of the Mubarak regime. The constant surveillance of the square by international news stations controlled the military power. To prove that the space was indeed architectural shows the emergence of improvised infrastructures, such as sanitary equipment, hospital tents, media walls and even stalls of street vendors. These element constitute a typical transformation process from temporal to permanent. The architectural configuration of the space created an equilibrium of forces enabling a space of discussion, opinion and exchange, similar to the antique Greek forum. Ultimately, it was impossible for the Mubarak-regime to reverse the re-programming of Tahir square. Its proto-democratic space emanated throughout Egypt, the Arab world and beyond.



Figure 2: Tahir Square 2011

Pearl Square in Bahrain held a central sculpture in the center – a gigantic pearl balancing on arches or swords – sym-

bolizing the rise of the nation from a pearl divers and sea-farers to a modern state. During the spring uprising, Pearl Square was similarly high-jacked by demonstrators. The strategy of the opposition was modeled directly after the success of Tahir Square. A central space in the city was supposed to be re-interpreted as the nucleus of resistance. International media attention was seen by the opposition as a warrant for peaceful negotiations with the government. Within a very short amount of time, the square was equipped with basic sanitary needs, but also fortified against nocturnal raids by police and the military. A traffic roundabout was re-organized and programmed to enable resistance. The Pearl-sculpture was re-interpreted as the symbol of that resistance. As we know, the ruler of Bahrain, called for allied GCC military support and violently crushed the uprising. Within less than 24h demonstrators were removed from the square and the debris cleaned from the site. The site was returned to a pre-uprising normality. Yet, the sculptural Pearl structure posed a larger problem to the authorities. Due to its symbolic re-programming by the oppositional movement, it could no longer serve as monument of national unity. A few days after the defeat of the demonstrators, the monument was literally executed: The sword-like legs of the sculpture were cut, releasing the lateral forces with the balanced structure and the pearl imploded in a central cloud of dust.



Figure 3: Demolition of Pearl Square

These two dramatic events have changed the Arab world: They unearthed inherent conflicts in feudal and pseudo-democratic societies that manifest in the relationship of politics and space. The increase of control and power of absolute rulers stand diametrically opposed to the finite resource land. Similar processes of spatio-political struggle manifest in “stable” countries like Oman.

III. Territorialization processes in Oman

Before we look at the specifics of this transformation, we need to define key terms of political and spatial understanding with respect to the specific Arab context: Spatiality, Political, Public Space, Territorialization. These concepts will help us investigate the spatial manifestations and architectural repercussions in Oman. Most theories on space, power and politics were developed in the West and cannot be applied directly to modern, yet feudal Arab states, such as Oman. I will use a definition of political space by Carlo Galli.¹ It describes the 'apparatus' of power and their “spatial representations” underlying any concepts of power. Taking Galli's definition as a

starting point, one can amend a series of concepts, in particular, expand them by tribal and nomadic elements. Space, in Omani culture, like in many parts of the Arab world, is traditionally controlled and administered on a tribal level. The tribe will defend their territory against outside claims and organize it for the common good of all tribe members. While the space belongs to all members of the tribe, the ruler of the tribe controls it. This understanding of space ripples across scales from tribal communities, to willayats, to the national level, where the Sultan is the absolute ruler. In the traditional feudal society, space is owned by all subjects, yet controlled by the Sultan. Moreover the administration of power over space in Oman finds urban and architectural repercussions in a series of regulating frameworks that we will discuss later. To underline the similarity of the concepts of political spaces in the Orient and Occident, I would like to mention Carl Schmitt's theory of the "Nomos of the Earth". The Greek Nomos means both "order" and "distribution".² The distribution and delimitation of space and its (political) association creates spatiality. According to French philosopher Etienne Balibar spatiality is implicit in every territorial construction: "It defines citizenship as collective identity: A system of rights, duties, normative principles and capabilities."³ The feudal contract of subject and ruler in Oman describes this spatiality in a particular, unidirectional way. The aforementioned definition of space is political. In our project it becomes operational only when we investigate the public dimension of space as well. To use another definition by the Balibar, this feudal concept of space is political, yet

not public:

*"The 'political space' has a necessary relation to the 'public space', but is not synonymous with it. A political space becomes a public space (or sphere) when (and inasmuch as) it is not only 'mapped' by sovereign powers, or imposed by economic forces, but 'instituted' by civic practices, debates, forms of representations and social conflicts, hence ideological antagonisms over culture, religion and secularism, etc."*⁴

This definition is defense of democratic public space and a sharp critique of any form of political interference may it be authoritarian or economic. In this general sense, it can hardly be applied to a country like Oman, which fails to address basic human rights needs. Yet, the country offers a model of enlightened rulership that is open for a cultural debate. On the tribal level Arab culture knows forms of discussion and exchange that are indeed similar to political processes in direct democracies. The discussion amongst the tribal leader inside a semi-public room in a private house – the majlis - inform delegates of the Sultan about current opinions. This informal and non-institutional aspect of politics can, indeed, be read as a modest form of 'civic practice' that Balibar calls for. To speak with Balibar again, a public space is by definition a political space, but not every political space is (already) a public space or the majlis is a public space in the making. This is an optimistic outlook, as any political space is a latent public space that can be transformed. The necessary process of negotiation is facilitated by architecture and in return finds its formal expression in it. Latent

public space in Muscat was triggered by the architecture of the city. A vestige of “old” public space can be found in the district of Mutrah. The main port of old Muscat features a dense urban fabric. 3-4 story houses attached to one another leave little space but a network of small shaded roads. The street-scape and the buildings offer an urban typology referred to as traditional Arab city. This city is, of course, the expression of a continuous dialogue throughout Omani history and within the Omani society. While not necessarily democratic in the Western sense, it does reflect changes in use and function as result of negotiations and has witnessed several re-interpretations. The commercial space of the streets filled with vendors and curious visitors doubles up as platform for exchange and dialogue. The mosques are gathering points for the believers regardless of their social status. Madrassas form places of intellectual exchange. Coffee shops in the corniche allow for a leisurely contemplation over the bustling urban life. In this “old” form political and public space are inseparable. Many Omanis regard it in a nostalgic way, as a window into mythical Oman before the process of territorialization.



Figure 4: Mutrah Corniche and Souk

As commerce is an important (but not exclusive) feature of this first form of latent public space, a second form arises out of larger, planned commercial spaces, e.g. shopping complexes and malls. Despite the fact that the commercial interests might be “*imposed by economic forces*” (Balibar), these spaces offer a modest amount of self-determination in return for shopping specially to young people and women who use these spaces as gathering venues.



Figure 5: Omani Shopping Mall, called 'city centre'

A third form of latent public spaces are residual spaces like the interstitial spaces in between highways intersections, larger streets and neighborhoods and on the edge of the city. As residual spaces, they have no primary function whatsoever and get re-appropriated by different social groups for sport, picnics and spontaneous gatherings. Their informality is underscored by that fact that they lack proper access in general.



Figure 6: re-appropriated residual urban spaces

The Omani artist Radhika Kimjy situates her art in the context of the latent public spaces. Radhika is an Omani born 3rd generation Indian with British passport. She easily navigates cultures, interestingly, her art relates to topics such as feminine identity in the social context of Oman. In 2010 she installed parachutes in the Barka castle (close to Muscat). The work related to old Omani monuments – the fort – yet concealed and augmented the space at the same

time. In a reversal of the necessity to cover and hide one's opinion in public, she explicitly engaged the spectator and the monument in a dialogue. Radhika's work literally territorialized the space of the fort and rendered it public to those willing to read her art work.

IV. Waves and Frameworks of Territorialization

1st wave of territorialization: The implementation of the legal framework.

The process of territorialization - a territory being a confined spatial entity, subject to the control of authority - was initiated immediately after the Sultan Qabous ascended to the throne. Due to the scale of the operation and the urgency of the situation, Oman adopted a Five-Year Development Plan in 1976. Key to this plan were measures to secure economic well-fare in all regions of Oman with a strong emphasis on investments in infrastructure. According to Fred Scholz, the nation-wide concept was intended to distribute prosperity to all of Oman, prevent exodus from rural areas and the creation of slums in Muscat Capital Area (MCA) and to preserve the traditional resources of the country.⁵ To prevent such negative development and to counter-act illegal land claims, the government set out active measures to develop land for housing purposes.⁶ The aim of this land use plan was to strengthen the construction industry, thereby securing jobs for large parts of the population, to expand cities in yet under-used areas, but also to decentralize the existing cities, home of potential un-rest against the ruler. The first Five-Year Development Plan was backed by a multi-polar urban strategy

concept for Oman, wherein MCA would have central a role as mediator between the interior provinces and abroad.⁷ The process of territorialization played out in a complex three dimensional terrain, since MCA is located between the Bathina coastal plains in the North and the Hajar mountains in the West. Due to these morphological specificities it becomes clear that MCA developed in more than just 2 planar dimensions. It is the result of a planning modular process applied to a 3-dimensional territory- an architectural as much as an administrative process. This territory is roughly 60kms long and up to 20kms deep. In the old days the settlements that now comprise MCA remained small and relatively isolated due to the fact that water was scarce and heat was intolerable. This changed with the advent of electric power stations (air conditioning) and desalination plants (fresh water). In fact, the pace of power stations and desalination plants and the range these plants serve, determined directly the area available for settlement and construction. Because of the complexity of the terrain, the diversity of interests (and population) and the impossibility to assess the speed and the extent of urbanization, the planners of MCA had to invent novel techniques of planning the vague terrain. The first conceptualization of MCA dates back to the “Coastal Policy Study” and the “Capital Area – Seeb Local Plan” both 1977 drafted by the consultancy of Llewelyn-Davies Weeks Forestier – Walker and Bor. Their estimates of a population growth to 226.000 by 1980, 443.000 by 1990 and 686.000 by the year 2000 have proven accurate.⁸ The extents of MCA along the coast of Gulf of Oman was framed deliberately by the 2 palaces

of the Sultan (Muscat as the governments seat and Seeb as the residence), an act of absolute territorialization. Next to decisions regarding the location of the airport, industrial and commercial zones, the plan does not explicitly state any segregation of ethnicities nor social differentiation within the residential zones. The instrument for realization of the Capital Area Plan of 1977 was Royal Decree No. 26 / 1975 describing the functions of the Ministry of Land Affairs.⁹ This degree determines residential, commercial and industrial uses and the subdivision, preparation, development, co-ordination and allocation of land. The question of allocation was governed by yet another Royal Decree, as most of the land prone to development was outside traditional city boundaries and therefor property of HM. This legal framework is still in place today. The resulting homogenization can be read as a first territorialization of space.

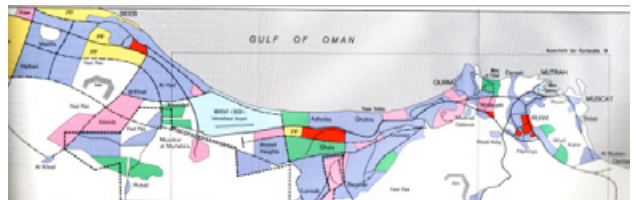


Figure 7: Zoning of MCA in 1977, in Scholz 1990

2nd wave of territorialization: The implementation of the institutional framework. The MCA zoning plan & Royal decree 81/84

The zoning of MCA, can be read as a continuation of the 1st wave of territorialization on a different level. Following the ancient principle of “*divide et impera*” (latin: divide and rule) it regulated the distribution of functions within the city. Pre-conceived in the 1977

design for MCA, the zoning plan was the first tangible product of the ministry of Ministry of Land Affairs. The zoning predetermined space and prevented dialogue or “*Verkehr*” (German: exchange, traffic) in any sense. The modernist separation of functions marginalizing the traditional mix of uses that characterizes the traditional Omani city.¹⁰ The central power controls and structures a previously heterogenous 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. As a further refinement of the institutional framework and its expansive, overarching, regulating strategy, a special decree served to allocate particular lots to the population. The Royal decree 81/84 from 1981 regulates governmental land allocation. According to the Decree, every Omani Citizen of age 23 or above has the right to a plot of land.¹¹ In a 2008 amendment the Decree was extended to male and female applicants alike, if he or she is the sole breadwinner of the family.¹² The land is surveyed and prepared by governmental agencies, subdivided into equal plot sizes, serviced by roads and infrastructure and generally speaking ready for construction. The lots are then put in a lottery. Applicants register for the draw and finally pick their plot from the lucky pot. In the logic of homogeneity, these given plots are all equal in size and shape. Throughout the years the size of the plots increased dramatically, leading to an alarming development of MCA :

1970:	150m ²
1970-80:	320m ² (18x18m)
1990:	600m ² (20x30m)

Currently, the plot has a layout of 20x30m (600m²), while the shorter side (20m) is usually facing the service road. The plots are governed by setback rules, of 5m from the road and 3 m from the side and back. At the same time the plots are usually allowed to have a building with a footprint of 30% of the plot size and up to 2 stories. This allows for up to 308m² inhabitable surface, meaning a generous amount of space for even an extended family. The uniform plot sizes, equal regulations lead to a uniform architectural typology: The “palace on the plot” that maximize allowed floor area ratio , differing only externally by means of variation of the style-guide imposed by the Oman Housing Bank. Besides the

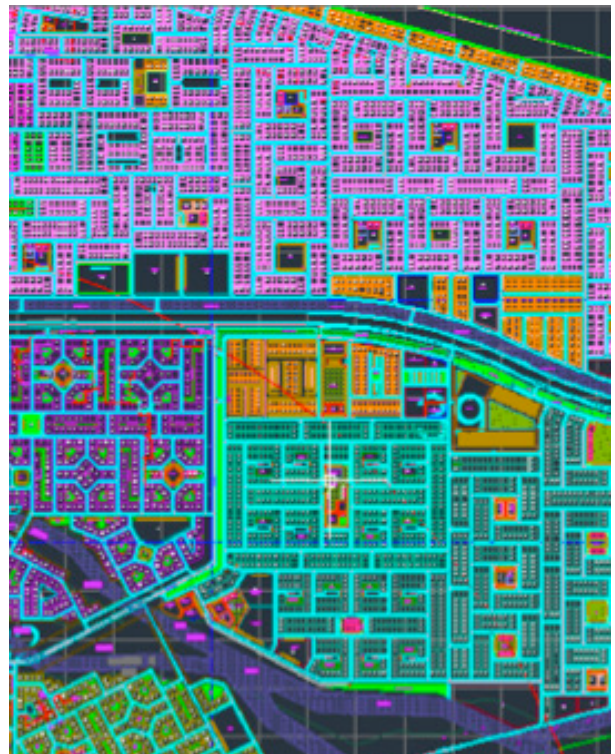


Figure 8: AutoCad screenshot on file by the Ministry of Land Use, 2010

energetic and environmental drawbacks, the villa type houses lead to social isolation, car-dependency and urban sprawl.



Figure 9: Typical villa on a 600m2 plot in MCA, 2011

3rd wave of territorialization: The implementation of the economic framework.

The lottery system is the backbone of an extensive social well fare system ranging from free education, free medical care to no income taxes. The government backs loans for construction through its Oman Housing Bank. The Oman Housing Bank was founded in September 1974 as “Oman National Housing Development Association”. Its shareholders were the Omani government to 51%, the Kuwaiti government to 39% and the British Bank of Middle East to 10%. The association was renamed into “Oman Housing Bank” in 1977. The British Bank of Middle East returned its shares to the Omani government in 1979. Until 1977 the “Ministry of the Diwan” and other commercial banks loaned credits for

construction and development purposes, since then the Oman Housing Bank and with it the Omani government has a monopoly on it.¹⁴ Every Omani is entitled to a once in a life time credit towards the construction of a house. If the house is sold any further entitlement is forfeit. This credit is awarded to every Omani above the age of 21. The credit of the Oman Housing Bank is directly linked to a plot allocated by the Ministry of Land Affairs. The credit and the interest rate is linked in reverse proportion to the income level of the applicant.¹⁵ Upon inception in 1977, the Oman Housing Bank distinguished between 3 classes of dwellings out of which 2 were eligible for the loans. The first one was a small 12x12m plot built up to full extent with courtyard house and financed to 100%. The second was a 20x20 m plot built up to 60% with a two bedroom house financed up to 15.000 OR (1979). All other dwellings belonged to the third category and had to be financed with non subsidized loans through the Oman Housing Bank. Building codes and building regulations by the Oman Housing Bank contain clear guide lines on the appearance and the typology of the houses. Color schemes, Facade elements and shape of the roof are dictated by the bank and subsequently controlled by the Ministry of Housing.¹⁶ Next to the optical guide lines, traditional elements were encouraged inside the houses such as: inner court yards, roof top verandas, shaded exterior sitting areas, Majlis.

V. Agents of resistance

Legal, institutional and economic frameworks as politics of determination. The legal, institutional and economic

frameworks describe the larger politics of urbanization in MCA. The seamless system of the first Five-Year Development Plan, the creation of the Ministry of Land Affairs, the land allocation by lottery prescribed within the Royal Decree 81/84 and the financial framework of the Oman Housing Bank redirected the demographic pressure of Oman into what is now known as MCA. In their scale, duration and authority, they constitute an act of social and spatial determination. As we have seen so far, the amplitude of the project were much larger than Muscat as a city alone. According to Balibar, *“to territorialize means to assign 'identities' to a collective subject, to categorize and individualize human beings. Some subjects are violently or peacefully removed, coercively or voluntarily destroyed. (The 'outsider', the nomad)”*¹⁷. The frequency of its implementation ferocious: This determination is violent. A theoretical escape route from this situation is highlighted in Deleuze and Guattari's book *“A Thousand Plateaux”*. Deleuze and Guattari expand the concept of territorialization as they postulate that every process of territorialization implies a multitude of reverse processes of *“de-territorialization”* that take place before, after or simultaneously.¹⁸ These processes necessitate latent or active agents to perform them. As architecture – as a provocative and questioning practice - is at the intersection of space and politics and architects can invent the agents of de-territorialization. In the following and to conclude, I want to portray 3 possible agents:

The voluntary nomad

The amateur engineer

The curator of latent space

The voluntary nomad is not to be confused with the traditional nomad in Bedouin society. This modern nomad refuses the gifts of sedentary life-style in principle. He is financially independent and goes where life's circumstances bring him. He rents rather than owns. He is indifferent to social status or class and does not care about representation of the latter. His 'outsider' position gives him flexibility to move across the strata and topographies of society. He does not belong to political parties or movements. Despite his apolitical behavior, he is a constant threat to the sedentary society. His non-conformity breaks with traditional patterns. His illusive appearance within social life, makes it hard to grasp and control him in administrative or political ways. The voluntary nomad constantly challenges the legal framework.

The amateur engineer is an expert for everything. He does not have more than a vocational training and does not need more. He is constantly looking to improve circumstances in technical aspects. He will make recommendations in a news paper article, he will participate in a parents reunion, he will start to separate and recycle trash without being asked to do so. His pre-emptive actions are diametrically opposed to the state functionaries' steady pace in writing Royal Decrees. While not deliberately, the amateur engineer challenges the institutional framework even more profoundly.

Finally the curator of latent space is impersonated by anybody that utilizes public spaces in an unintended way. This can range from the appropriation of a

lawn next to the highway for an improvised soccer game, to an un-called for chat on the street sides with passers by, to the redefinition of a beach promenade to a meeting place. The curator of latent spaces creates an informal economy. The invention of non-commercial activities on residual urban spaces is subverting the securing mechanisms of consumerism. The curator of latent space challenges the economic framework.

All these possible agents (and many more, in the Deleuzean sense) unfold an activity to re-programme latent urban space into public space. These agents can set up a social complexity beyond the pre-described patterns of state controlled territorialization. They will produce antagonistic encounter in urban space, ideally engaging in a critical content exchange. In contrast to professionals they operate informally and are not stuck to codes of conduct. In a term that I borrow from Markus Miessen, they are '*curating content*' and '*staging conflict*' creating socio- spatial frameworks that can be tested against reality. Their agency takes control of the processes of social and spatial determination. This self-determination starts to have first signs of architectural repercussions. Informal uses, spark temporary structures. A modification of the architectural premises triggers and accommodates new forms of public space. As we can see in Muscat Capital Area, architecture *is* politics.

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- 1 Galli, Carlo: "Spaci politici. L'età moderna e l'età globale", Il Mulino, Bologna 2001
 - 2 Schmitt, Carl: "Nomos of the Earth", in Carl Schmid, Schriften, Berlin 1970.
 - 3 Balibar, Etienne: Spatiality, in: Europe as a Borderland, lecture delivered University of Nijmegen, November 10, 2004
 - 4 Balibar, Etienne: Political Space vs Public Space, in: Europe as a Borderland, lecture delivered University of Nijmegen, November 10, 2004
 - 5 Scholz, Fred: Muscat Sultanat Oman – Geographische Skizze einer einmaligen Arabischen Stadt, Band I, Berlin 1990 p.10
 - 6 Chapter II, Targets of the first Five-Year Development Plan, 1976, pp.13: "[...] to effect a wider geographical distribution of investment in order that the benefits may be shared by different regions of the country, and to narrow the gap in the standards of living in different regions with special emphasis on the least developed regions;
 - to maintain and develop the existing areas of population and to protect them against the dangers of mass immigration to these already densely populated areas and to protect the environment."
 - 7 Scholz: "Modell des räumlichen Entwicklungskonzeptes Omans 1970", p.10
 - 8 Scholz, "Capital Area Structure Plan" p.125
 - 9 Royal Decree No. 26 / 1975:
 - 1 Physical planning of land in the Sultanate of residential, commercial and industrial use, also subdivision of land parcels into quadrants and plots having specific areas and numbers.
 - 2 Preparation of development: plans and location plans showing roads and public services e.g. shops, mosques, schools, hospitals... etc.
 - 3 Co-ordination with other ministries and government departments before final approval and implementation of planning projects.
 - 4 Allocation of land for residential, commercial and industrial uses as stipulated in the Land Law.
 - 5 Ensuring the fair allocation of land and the speeding up of the process as necessary.
 - 6 Demarcation of government land for planning purposes and the issue of final drawings for further action.
 - 7 Demarcation of land sanctioned for the allocation in the Willayat for development according to plan.
 - 8 Demarcation of agricultural land
 - 9 Maintenance of a record of Mulkyias for various land uses and a file for each plot showing transactions such as sale, mortgage, etc.
 - 10 Settlement of land disputes through investigation, interviews, the checking of documents and site visits to ensure that the information in the title deed is the same as on actual site.
 - 11 investigation into complaints on technical matters such as planning and buildings affection neighbors.
 - 12 Provision of service training for local staff.
 - 10 Ministry of Land Allocation: Capital Area: Structural plan, road layout and area use. 1977
 - 11 Royal decree 81/84
 - 12 2008 Amendment to the Royal decree 81/84
 - 14 Oman Housing Bank website, accessed April, 10th 2011
 - 15 Royal Decree 7/79 states:

"[...] and to help all Omanis with low and medium income who have taken loans from the Oman Housing Bank by implementing the provision of Royal Decree 51/77, especially Article (6) ... The following has been decided: ... affective the day this decision causes into force, the Government shall pay a percentage of interest charges on loans granted to all Omanis with low and medium incomes ... [schedule stating reduces interest rates according to income]"
 - 16 Regarding the building regulations a Ministerial Decision No. 40/81 issued by the ministry of Land Affairs and Municipality, Muscat states:
 1. To incorporate the rounded edges and fleeting towers originating in traditional adobe construction.
 2. To decorate the flat roofs with balustrades reminiscent of old forts.
 3. To structure the facade in such way that windows and openings are covered with wooden blinds, arches or grids, event though these windows are no longer need for ventilation.
 4. Set back glass windows to the inside of the dwelling to keep the appearance of a traditional house.
 5. Use a changing pastel colored wash on the outside that emanates traditional adobe or stone dwellings."
 - 17 Balibar, Etienne: identity and nomad, in: Europe as a Borderland, lecture delivered University of Nijmegen, November 10, 2004
 - 18 Deleuze and Guattari: "A Thousand Plateaux", Paris, Gallimard, 1984