Sharjah[1]: Seascape Urbanism in a Khaliji[2] Port City

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INTRODUCTION

Land and its physical attributes have been central to discourse on architecture and urbanism. Grounded constructs used to examine and explain urban history are utilized to consequently shape cities. Though there is vast literature on the centrality of an oceanic perspective to our understanding of cultures, it remains abstract and related to the idea of the ocean.[3] This paper examines the Emirate of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates as an exemplary port settlement located on the eastern shore *Al Khalij*. It illustrates Sharjah's urban continuities (nodes[4]) shaped by transient commerce and transforming navigational conditions of the ocean. It thus subverts the grounded constructs of "placemaking" and "landscape urbanism" by presenting the case of Sharjah as an example of "seascape"[5] urbanism facilitating interactions between the desert and the ocean.

Located on the shore of an important oceanic corridor[6], Sharjah developed from a small fishing village to an urban settlement in the early nineteenth century through dialectic of urbanism triggered by the British intervention in *Al Khalij*.

The development of *Khaliji* port settlements in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century was mostly due to the fact that the South Arabian coasts were, like the Red Sea, littered with reefs and shoals which made navigation very difficult. While *Khaliji* ports benefitted from the lucrative Indian Ocean trade, they facilitated exchange of material, human and capital flows. The Persian

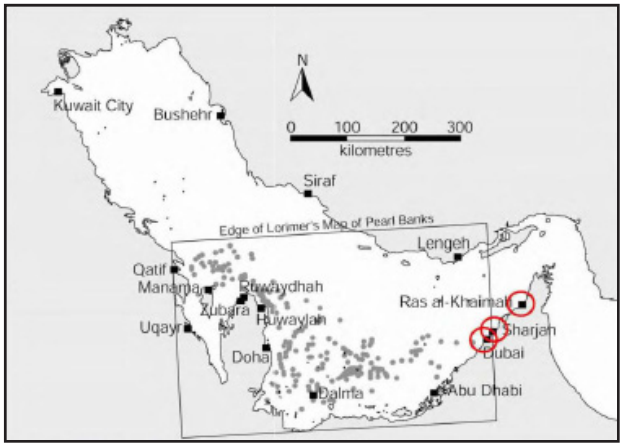

Figure 1: Map of *Al Khalij*, showing Lorimer's pearl banks in 1915, with major towns and sites. (Source: Carter, R. 2005)

component and the Arab component coexisted in *Al Khalij*, though not without conflicts. Merchants, lenders, divers, and labor force from all across the region inhabited these settlements. While the Safavid Empire ruled over mainland Persia, it did not form a capable naval power and relied on the *shayukhs* (leaders of seafaring families of Arab lineage), who acted as the guarantor of the political unity of the kingdom[7] and maintained linkages between the port settlements on both sides of *Al Khalij*. During the 13th and 17th centuries, their fluid mobility transformed the Indian Ocean into an "Arab-Islamic Lake"[8], followed by persistent and eventually successful European attempts to break the Muslim hold on the maritime commerce. Post-European interventions in *Al Khalij* transformed its multi-cultural, global and oceanic orientation, in-

troducing the notion of defined nation-states and rapid modernization.

Cities like Dubai, Sharjah, Abu Dhabi, Ras al Khaima, Kuwait, Doha and Bahrain are now exhibiting a desire to modernize by facilitating the emergence of massive urban projects. Architecture and urbanism are being directed by the official construction of a national-religious (Arab-Muslim) identity. While historians may consider the notion of "Islamic urbanism" part of the Orientalist cliché, urban designers and architects still utilize this outdated framework to analyze and regenerate cities in the eastern edge of the Arabian Peninsula, affirming an essentialist Arab-Muslim cultural identity, pursuing "Orientalism in reverse".[9] As cities grow and evolve at an unprecedented pace in the Arabian Peninsula, it is important to investigate local histories of cities to realign development processes with important historical continuities between modern and pre-modern urbanisms.[10] New frameworks are needed that understand the evolution, and guide the development, of these port cities, revealing and enhancing their role in linking local, regional, national, and global networks of space, economy and society.[11]

Studying urban continuities and evolving local identities necessitates documenting the histories of pre-modern urbanisms in a regional setting. This line of inquiry counters the generally held perception that the modern (westernizing) state has introduced urban development in traditional or "Islamic cities".[12] It requires revealing and comparing distinct phases of urbanisms within their regional and historical settings, as opposed to underscoring their role in "colonial"[13] or "post-colonial" worlds.[14]

Since the notion of "modern urbanism" is usually contrasted with the concept of "Islamic urbanism,"[15] change in urban forms of cities in the Islamic world is seen as detrimental to their traditional built environment. While the former is conceptualized as an outcome of shift in the mode of economy (industrialization), the later is seen to be guided mainly by religious doctrines, *Sharia* law, environmental or privacy concerns. There is a fundamental problem in imposing the existing frameworks of "urbanism" (modern, Islamic, colonial, post-colonial, or global) to study or to conserve cities in *Al Khalij.* "Islamic urbanism" has been introduced as a relevant category within urban geography because "the concept of the 'Islamic city' was fundamental in theorizing urbanization and urbanism in the Middle East, the Arab World, and possibly the rest of the Muslim World."[16] Cities located on both sides of *Al Khalij* are quite distinct from traditional "madinas" of the Arab-Islamic world[17], but many scholars use the framework of "Arab-Islamic city" while studying new emerging "modernities" in eastern Arabia.[18]

While most "madinas" that formed the basis for theories of Islamic urbanism were typically developed as, and actively participated in, trading activities across land, port cities were established by merchants whose lives primarily relied on crossing and travelling between the shores of *Al Khalij*. While inhabitants of most "madinas", even when they were situated on a river, considered the water as a vulnerable edge of the settlement requiring forts and towers for protection, most port cities in eastern Arabia considered *Al Khalij* as a "friendly" zone and, in contrast, heavily protected the desert edge. As the case of Sharjah reveals, the European presence in *Al Khalij* from 1400-1800 reinforced this aspect of urban form as the British agents posted in the region allowed the construction of defences looking onto the desert but not the sea.[19]

The traditional "madina" in the Islamic world that have inspired large corpus of academic literature (Fez, Damascus, Allepo, etc.) originated as "Polis"[20] and their growth continued some aspects of pre-Islamic conceptions of "Islamic urbanism".[21] In contrast, most *Khaliji* port cities were urbanized due to mercantile activities along the water edge and in most cases had their "backs" to the desert. The eastern Arabian port cities historically do not have the origination, configuration or management system of the traditional "madina". Since port settlements in eastern Arabia were settled by migrant communities escaping droughts, poverty or tyrannical rule, ownership rights, and control of space were very fluid.

The process of land demarcation and subdivision in the early formation of "madinas"[22] is quite distinct from the process undertaken for allocating land to public and private uses in port cities of eastern Arabia. The allocation of public land to private individuals preceded the consideration for the layout of public right-of-ways. Moreover, merchant patrons financed and developed their own and their son's houses, mosques, and provided "public" services for the population.[23]

The courtyard house form, though fairly consistent with typical house forms across the Arabian Peninsula, is distinguishable in its context and placement. While in the dry desert environment the courtyard houses are usually built tight up to each other with shared walls and fewer exposed facades to the street, the pre-modern urban structure of *Khaliji* port cities responds to the extremely hot and mostly humid climatic conditions, which dictated the necessity of mostly free standing houses with lanes around all four sides. The narrow, high walled alleyways between houses are particularly appropriate in the hot and humid coastal desert climate, through funnelling of cooling breezes from the sea. [24]

Though it has been recognized that existing models on spatial and functional evolution of port cities are mainly derived from European and American cases, attempts thus far have introduced evidence from an Asian perspective, focusing on the particular case of global hub port cities such as Hong Kong and Singapore.[25] The unique historical development of pre-modern urbanism in *Al Khalij* is in the 'blind spot' of academic literature.[26] By examining a port settlement on the eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula (the Emirate of Sharjah), this paper attempts to develop a working typology of *Khaliji* port cities based on its interrelationships with other port cities and evolving polities. Making use of archival sources, field work, and urban mapping as a tool, this paper identifies and explains four urban continuities that have persisted through the transformation of Sharjah from a small fishing village, to a trading port, to a sovereign town, and finally to a modern city. It develops a framework of urban analysis that transcends the usual division of *Khaliji* cities into *sheikhdoms* or nation-states. It assesses both the 1970s modern urban development process resulting in demolition of parts of the historic core and the official efforts since 1990s to rebuild and reconstruct Sharjah's "heritage area". The paper concludes with outlining parameters for developing an adaptable nodal urbanism to rejuvenate the historic core of Sharjah.

PRE-MODERN URBANISM IN SHARJAH

Sharjah is the third largest emirate in the United Arab Emirates, and is the only one with ports on *Al Khalij* and the Indian Ocean, thus occupying a crucial access to global trade routes, and ensuring its place as a centre of international commerce. The name of the city in Arabic is *Al Sharqah*, meaning "to the east". As early as the second - century AD its location appears in a map drawn by the Greek geographer Ptolemy, which indicates the settlement of Sarcoa, where Sharjah can now be found.[27] In 1490 AD, the famous Arab navigator, Ahmad Ibn Majid, mentioned Sharjah as he navigated *Al Khalij* waters.[28] At the time, the sheltered creek along Sharjah's shore provided a safe anchorage for a fishing settlement that harvested pearl in the summer months.[29]

The oldest modern map reference to Sharjah is on a nautical chart in the first edition of Thornton's "*English Pilot*" in 1703, where it appears as "Sharedje"[30]. Since then, the settlement continued to grow close to the edge of the water with the outer limits defined by a wall, the mid-length of which provided the site for a fort. By early 19th century, Sharjah had evolved from a small fishing village to a permanent settlement. The continuous port activity generated a linear pattern in the initial urban form, with the internal market district (*souqs*) spread along the creek through almost the entire length of the settlement. A gated protective wall comprised the defined outer limit of the settlement distinguishing it from the hinterland. The imposing Sharjah Fort (*Al Hisn*) marked a central entry point on the wall and immediately outside it was the space of an external market (*saht Al Hisn*[31]) where the settled community came in contact with nomadic families of the hinterland desert, and where the ruler held his open air assembly *(majlis)* with his *Bedouin* subjects.

The residential quarters (*fareej*) between the *souq* and the wall were generally divided into at least four main (uneven) sectors located to the east and west of the Hisn Fort. The house form and urban structure responded to the especially aggressive climatic condition of *Al Khalij.* Comprising of mostly free-standing courtyard houses with thick walls, the urban structure and traditional architecture contributed to the comfort of the residents.[32] The distinct wind-towers (*baadgir* in Persian and *barjeel* in *Khaliji* Arabic), were probably introduced in the early twentieth century, since earlier photographs of Sharjah do not indicate their presence.

A Dutch report of 1756 indicates Sharjah's status as a small but growing trading centre located along the eastern edge of the Arabian Peninsula:

> *"Between Kateef (Al Qatif, Saudi Arabia) and Seer (Ras Al-Khaymah) there are three places on the coast, Aseer, Qatar and Sharjah, each of which only had a few houses, where from Basrah dates and rice were brought to sell to the Arabs of the desert or to pearl-divers."*[33]

The listing of goods traded in some of these ports indicates that the bulk of the trade facilitated by these port settlements was transit trade connecting each to the Indian Trading route involving the products of South and South-east Asia, the Middle East and Europe.[34] While some merchandise would move into the Arabian interior, majority of the trade was changing hands as opposed to being consumed by the inhabitants of *khaliji* port settlements. The presence of the prevalent empires (Persian-Safavid, Turkish-Ottoman, and European-Venetian, Portuguese, Dutch, French, British) provided ample consumers to be able to thrive as port settlements. By the eighteenth century, the *Qawassim* family formed the largest fleet in the region building the crucial maritime power in *Al Khalij*. Though they had their strongholds in Ras Al Khaimah and Sharjah, they belonged to the *Khaliji* migratory culture *(havaleh[35])* who felt at home on both sides of *Al Khalij* and often went to wherever they thought would offer them a better life. Sleepy towns on the Persian side of *Al Khalij*, such as Bandar-e-Lengeh and Hormuz, were transformed to trading port cities by the *Qawassim* Arabs, and they operated as Arab ports until the twentieth century.[36]

The shift of domination of trade from indigenous population to Europeans is well recorded in recent publications, but the impact of this shift on urban form has not yet been explored in the context of Sharjah or other *Khaliji* port cities. The British East India Company reports reveal that towards the end of the eighteenth century, the power struggles in the region had led to the decline of Company revenues.[37] In the first two decades of the nineteenth century, claiming threats from piracy[38] and corruption, the British abandoned their "policy of strict neutrality" in political aspects of *Al Khlaij* and started active campaigns to gain primacy over the Indian Ocean trading route, since it provided vital ports on the Indian Ocean trading routes that were in control of indigenous merchants. As illustrated by James Onley, the development of extensive network of political residencies surrounded and protected British India.[39] The power of Sheikh Sultan bin Saqr Al Qasimi at this stage greatly exceeded that of any other ruling sheikh on the *Khaliji* coast.[40]

In December 1819, the British launched a powerful naval expedition destroying Ras al Khaima (the principal Qasimi port),[41] and burnt down the *Qawassim* fleets. The subsequent move to Sharjah of the ruler of Ras al Khaima, Sheikh Sultan bin Saqr Al Qasimi, along with several supporting families, facilitated Sharjah's rapid growth from a trading settlement to an emerging town.

Between 1820 and 1853, the Royal British Navy signed a General Treaty for the Cessation of Plunder and Piracy and a Perpetual Maritime Truce making Sharjah one of the Trucial States. One of the most significant developments during the years was urban surveys and recording of Sharjah also revealing a fortified wall delineating the desert edge of the settlement. Most of the fortified houses and towers were destroyed during the British attack in December 1819 but later reconstructed, as suggested in the 1820 survey conducted by Lt. Cogan. The graphic analyses of the surveys and records of Sharjah since the 1820s reveals that within the urban fabric of Sharjah, four types of distinct but inter-connected spaces had emerged to support the internal dynamics of urban life until the early 20th century:

a) the linear port (*sahil*) along the Gulf waters
b) the linear internal market (*souq*) paralleling the port
c) the open external market (*saht Al Hisn*[42]) immediately outside the Sharjah Fort (*Al Hisn*)
d) residential districts (*fareej*) between the *souq* and the protective wall

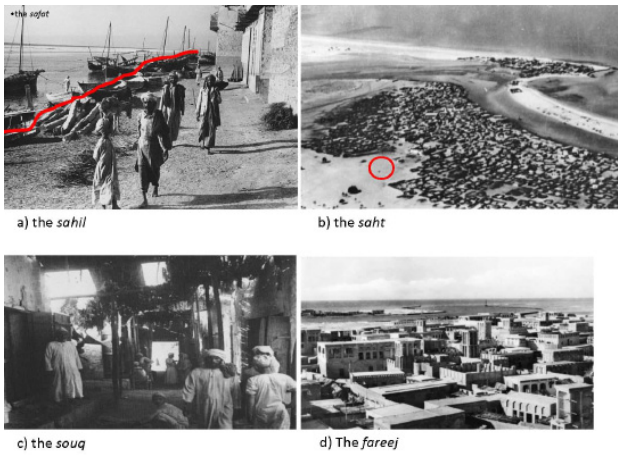

Figure 2: Four spaces identified by the author as "urban continuities" (*sahil, saht, souq* and *fareej*) in archival images of Sharjah (Archival Image Courtesy: HH The Sharjah Ruler's Office)

MODERN URBAN FABRIC OF SHARJAH

In 1903, Dubai proclaimed the status of free port attracting much of the merchant trade of the region.[43] In addition, the invention in 1930s of cultured pearls in Japan had led to the decline of the pearling industry in general, affecting the economic life of Sharjah and other *Khaliji* port cities. Sharjah also suffered a geographic set back due to the buildup of silt that reduced the depth of its creek, limiting ships and even small *dhows* from anchoring along the shore. These political, economic, and geographic factors did not entirely diminish the status of Sharjah as between 1823 and 1954 it served as the base for Britain's only political representative on the Trucial Coast. In 1932, the British Government in Sharjah established a staging post for the Imperial Airways flights in en route from England to India. At the time of its establishment, the airport was located two miles across the desert from the town and was the first airport in the Emirates; its memory is still preserved in one of the main roads in central Sharjah.

The importance of the airport as a regional hub compensated for the emergence of Dubai as the main trading port, the collapse of the pearl trade, and the silting up of the creek. In 1953, the first formerly organized school in the UAE was established in Sharjah attracting students throughout the country. The cultural and political advancement of Sharjah expedited continuously as it remained the regional base for the British RAF and Trucial Oman Scouts until British presence officially ended in 1971 with independence. Sharjah joined the United Arab Emirates as a founder member on 2nd December, 1971. In 1970s, oil revenue shared across the UAE initiated modern urban planning activities during which physical traces of the city's historic development started being eradicated. The construction of major roads connected Sharjah to Dubai and Ras al Khaimah and contributed to accelerated and seamless urban growth across the three Emirates. Modern interventions inside the older parts of Sharjah not only disrupted and disconnected the traditional spaces, their planners imagined a new city with its back to *Al Khalij.* For the first time in its history, Sharjah ventured towards the desert and the waterfront became an industrial backdrop for the larger metropolis.

The process of modernization began in the late 1960s and introduced vehicular transportation system, grid-iron plan independent of the natural site features and the historic urban form, formal and macadam-finished parking areas, and modern construction techniques and materials. The *Burj* Avenue, popularly called the Bank Street, introduced perpendicular to the creek in the 1970s divided the traditional souk into two distinct types of commercial activities: the reconstructed *Souk Al Arsah* with largely staged traditional handicrafts commodities that attracts tourists and the evolving old souk that is maintained by individual shop owners bringing the city's inhabitants along the cornice to search for objects of daily life. The lack of a conservation framework has resulted in four distinct and disjointed historic layers that comprise the existing urban fabric in the study area:

Figure 3: Graphic analysis of Sharjah's urban development (Courtesy: Mais Kanan, BArch, AUS)

a) Pre-1970s Traditional
b) Post 1970s Modern
c) Post 1990s Restored Historic
d) Post 1990s Post Modern

Figure 4: Examples of four distinct layers in Sharjah's existing urban form (photographed by author)

Sharjah's historic area provides visible traces of traditional pattern of life, modern urban interventions, heritage neglect and restoration. While traditional buildings in historic Sharjah provide covered area for recreational facilities, office spaces, and are marginal in generating mixed used activities and economic vitality, the modern buildings in the heart of Sharjah provide prime real estate for mixed use activities. Collectively, the 17 buildings along the Bank Street define a unique and contrasting framework for the Al Hisn Fort. The simultaneous existence of historic architecture set against the background of modern buildings is a prime example of struggle between progressive spirit and reverence for heritage, which has generated international discourse and cannot be found elsewhere in the region. The plain architecture of the modern buildings highlights the intricate details of the Al Hisn Fort. In a way, this particular setting rivals the significance of the urban setting in Boston downtown where the Trinity Church is enhanced and glorified against the glass tower of the Hancock Building. It is also similar to, though in reverse form, to the Louvre in Paris, where the historic buildings provide a rich background for the modern intervention by I. M. Pei. The urban juxtaposition of modern buildings framing the Al Hisn Fort in Sharjah is truly unique in the region and enhances the historic significance of the Emirate as a progressive state that respects its heritage.

In the early 1990s, the loss of place identity and the ad hoc conversion of several historic private properties into worker's housing resulted in the Government of Sharjah's intervention in old Sharjah. Governmental procurement of property rights was followed by documentation and restoration of the historic buildings, demarcation of the Heritage Area, and the reconstruction of select lost structures, including the *Al Hisn* and the old city wall. The creation of a traditional image for the city's oldest neighborhood, *Al Mureijah*, resulted in its designation as the city's "Heritage Area", and facilitated UNESCO's nomination of Sharjah as the cultural capital of the Arab World. The initial restoration of two historic buildings, *Beit-al-Naboodah* and the *Souk al Arsah*, attempted to create an urban space that matched the collective memory of the local community.[44] While visitors to the city get a glimpse of recreated history, the local population related the physical shape of the open space between restored buildings as their heritage place. The annually held Sharjah Heritage Days reinforce their mental image by activating the space with traditional games, music, dance, and crafts and food stalls.

Collectively, the efforts at conserving *Al Mureijah* memorialize life as it existed in a transformed historic district. By not allowing the district to evolve over time, these efforts underscore "authenticity" as one of the most complex stewardship dilemmas that custodian of heritage sites in the region face today. The piecemeal restoration of individual buildings to create a memorializing space and the reconstruction of the old wall sever the link between Heritage Area and the central business activities of the city. The formation in 2007 of the Historic Buildings Planning Unit in the Sharjah's Directorate of Heritage, under the direction of the Sharjah Ruler's Office, is a positive step as an inter-disciplinary team of experts is needed to formulate a compre-

hensive strategy to rehabilitate the central historic area, and to develop conservation plans for each historic building prior to its restoration.

Rapid development through modernization, intellectual advancement through education, and social change through the influx of a large foreign population has certainly transformed the traditional way of life, but the political system has remained largely unaltered. As in other emirates of the UAE, the Ruler of Sharjah (H.H. Dr. Sulṭān ibn Muḥammad. Al-Qāsimī III) holds power on the basis of his dynastic position and legitimacy in a system of tribal consensus. Moreover, with doctorates in political geography and history, and a keen interest in formulating the legacy of Sharjah's heritage, the restoration, recompilation, and reconstruction of key monuments represents his will to develop "the people's attachment to special landmarks like Sharjah Fort… (which) … has given Sharjah a unique cultural identity."[45]

Al Hisn (Sharjah Fort) is trapped in the middle of heavy traffic and tall modern buildings framing Bank Street, which was introduced in the 1970s urban renewal efforts. During the time, *Al Hisn* was almost completely demolished but later "recompiled" under the supervision of the Ruler. Though the original date of *Al Hisn's* construction remains unclear, there are records of its reconstruction after the British invasion of Ras al Khaimah and Sharjah in 1820. T. P. Thompson was a naval officer and Arabic translator during 1819 -20 and for a short time became the British agent for the region. His personal archive includes his observations of the landscape and people of the region, alongside official letters relating to the British involvement with the *Qawasim* family. In 1821, the Ruler of Sharjah, Sheikh Sultan bin Saqr, informed the British Navy of his will to 'rebuild' his defences in Sharjah and Ras al Khaima, to which Thompson responded positively allowing him to build a fort, (as long as it looks onto the desert and not the sea) as it would increase his standing amongst the other Sheikhs. (DTH/2/12).[46]

Though the introduction of vehicular road and loading/unloading activities have disrupted the former relationships with and access to the creek, the lost spaces along the *sahil* have persistently been used as places for interaction by Sharjah's diverse inhabitants. The *souq* too continues to exist, along the *sahil*, and despite its disjointed state due to the introduction of a main thoroughfare. The *saht Al Hisn* has persisted as an extension in the form of the Rolla square.

Figure 5: Al Hisn Fort, set within the identified elements of "urban continuity" that emerged in relation to *Al Khalij*. (Base Aerial Views: HH The Sharjah Ruler's Office)

One hopes that these three persistent elements of urban continuity in Sharjah are retained in the recently approved and "the most ambitious redevelopment plan in Sharjah's history".[47] The Heart of Sharjah urban development plan is "the biggest heritage project in Arabian Gulf region— with the aim to promote tourism and trade in the emirate". It intends to revive the historic and heritage area, linking them with "the way Sharjah was during 1950s and transforming it into a tourist and

trade destination with a modern artistic touch." [48] Unfortunately, the project fails to recognize that despite large scale modern interventions, Sharjah's heritage area retains memories of every layer of its past. Since memories are formed at the expense of forgetting, it is vital to develop a sound strategy of what to remember and pursuit of authenticity in how to remember.

CONCLUSION

By examining the specific context of Sharjah, we can attempt to develop a working typology of *khaliji* port cities. This analysis of the historical development and mapping of urban continuities across three centuries is a starting point for such a framework of urban analysis. The continuous development of Sharjah between the desert and the sea generated a linear pattern in the initial urban form. Though modern urban and architectural interventions of the past 40 years have eroded traces of Sharjah's rich, varied and unique historic development, contemporary official architecture of government buildings blends regional influences with local traditions.

While the heritage area of Sharjah is valued for its historic significance, the modern interventions in this area form an important layer revealing the city's continued growth and development. One can visually identify distinct layers of time, reciprocal to graduating sense of scale and evolution of building traditions. While the construction of modern buildings erased a significant part of the historic fabric, regeneration efforts are now threatening the demolition of an important layer of modernity.

The *souqs* (both reconstructed and the evolving one) need reinforcement to develop and encourage continuous, integrated and diverse commercial retail spaces offering amenities for residents, traders, workers and visitors. The large segments of open and vacant plots need densification to restore life and vitality and encourage commercial, social and tourist amenity and activity. This will also facilitate the lacking need for safe, comfortable and attractive public open urban spaces that are shaded and suitable for daily and festival activities. The strategies for building restoration need to be interconnected with a cohesive urban conservation strategy to revitalize the historic Sharjah and celebrate its urban continuities that have persisted throughout the last three centuries.

This paper has tangentially explored a fundamental question in the minds of many development authorities in the region as well as elsewhere in the globalizing world: Can urban heritage be meaningfully conserved while pursuing modernization? This paper has argued that the answer is, yes, provided we are aware of, and retain, elements of persistent urban continuities across 'time', and we are willing to decompress our notion of 'time' to insert conservation ethics into the development processes. Architectural conservation is a tangible act of historical judgment, attempts to recreate an imagined notion of the past usually result in environments that are inauthentic.

This paper has primarily questioned the predominance of land and its physical attributes in discourse on architecture and urbanism. It has examined the urban construction of Sharjah along the Persian Gulf (called *Al Khalij* in this paper). It illustrates the shaping forces of human mobility across the oceans and identifies three elements of urban continuity (sahil, saht, and souq). These elements relate, respectively, to the oceanic ecology, the politics of linking the desert to the port, and the physical manifestation of links to a global economy. Subverting the grounded constructs of "placemaking" and "landscape urbanism", this paper has presented the case of Sharjah as an example of "seascape" urbanism facilitating and administering interactions between the desert and the ocean.

ENDNOTES

1 Archival research for this paper was conducted between June 13-July 3, 2010, at the University of Maryland (UMD) Library and the Library of Congress in Washington DC, supported by the NEH Summer Seminar (Remapping the Renaissance: Exchange between Early Modern Europe and Islam), held at the UMD Center for Renaissance and Baroque Studies. Field research for this paper was conducted between 2005-2009 while instructing architectural design studios at the author's academic institution, and between the 2008-2009 when the author worked as Heritage Consultant for H.H. The Ruler's Office, Government of Sharjah.

2 *Al Khalij* in Arabic and *Farsi* (Persian) means "the Gulf" and refers to the body of water that lies between the eastern edge of the Arabian Peninsula and contemporary Iran. I refrain from engaging in the naming dispute ("Persian Gulf" versus "Arabian Gulf") due to the inadequacy of both the contested terms in fulfilling the larger aim of my research.

3 For review of literature on the theory and history of world's oceans, see Buschmann, R. F. "Oceans of World History: Delineating Aquacentric Notions in the Global Past," *History Compass*, 2 (2004).

4 A "node" in urban theory is identified by overlapping a series of mapping exercises. Nodes are already in place and persist through time. Each node varies in function and will present its unique problems, which can be addressed to "add" to the long-evolving, existing strengths, instead of replacing them with new and imported ones. L. Hilberseimer, *The New City. Principles of Planning*, (Paul Theobald, Chicago, 1944).
5 J. H. Bentley, R. Bridenthal, and K. Wigen, eds. *Seascapes: Maritime Histories, Littoral Cultures, and Transoceanic Exchanges*, 2007.
6 R. Carter, "The History and Prehistory of Pearling in the Persian Gulf," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, (2005).
7 Qa'immaqami, *The problem of Bander Lingeh*, 1985.
8 K.N. Chaudhuri. *Trade and Civilization in the Indian Ocean: an Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750, (*Cambridge University Press, 1985).
9 Y. Elsheshtawy, ed., "Introduction", *Planning Middle Eastern Cities: An Urban Kaleidoscope,* (2004).
10 For an ethnographic study of the city of Manama in Bahrain, see FUCCARO, N., *Histories of City and State in the Persian Gulf*, (Cambridge, 2009).
11 For alternative conceptual frameworks that situate cities within the Indian Ocean trade, see: Patricia Risso, *Merchants and faith: Muslim commerce and culture in the Indian Ocean, (*Westview Press, 1995); Lakshmi Subramanian, *Ports, towns, cities: a historical tour of the Indian Littoral, (*Marg Publications, 2008).
12 For a critique of the notion of "Islamic City" model as an alternative to modern urban planning, see J. Abu-Lughod, "The Islamic City-Historic Myth, Islamic Essence, and Contemporary Relevance," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 19, (1987): 155. Academic literature on urban development of "Islamic cities" has also focused on theories of "oil urbanization" facilitated by "rentier economy."
13 For discussion on the role of the Gulf in making of the British colonial empire, see J. Onley, *The Arabian Frontier of the British Raj: Merchants, Rulers, and the British in the Nineteenth-Century Gulf*, (Oxford University Press, 2007).
14 For discussion on "colonial" and "post-colonial urbanism" see: A. King, *Architecture and identity*, (Berlin : Lit, c2008); A. King, *Spaces of global cultures: architecture, urbanism, identity*, (Routledge, 2004); A. King, *Culture, globalization, and the world-system: contemporary conditions for the representation of identity*, (University of Minnesota Press, c1997); A. King, *The bungalow: the production of a global culture, (*Oxford University Press, 1995); A. King, *Urbanism, colonialism, and the world-economy: cultural and spatial foundations of the world urban systems*, (Routledge, 1990).
15 Stefano Bianca, *Urban form in the Arab world: Past and Present, (*Thames & Hudson, 2000); S. Tsugitaka, *Islamic urbanism in human history: political power and social networks*, (Kegan Paul International-Columbia University Press, 1997); M. Haneda and T. Miura, eds., *Islamic urban studies: historical review and perspectives*, (Kegan Paul International, 1994).
16 N. Al Sayyada and I. Türelib, "Islamic Urbanism," R. Kitchin and N. Thrift, eds., *International Encyclopaedia of Human Geography*, (2009).
17 While scholars (Western and Muslim) have sought the characteristic physical forms of Arabic Islamic City (madina) since the 1920s, for more recent characterizations, see: A. Bennison and A. Gascoigne, eds., *Cities in the Pre-Modern Islamic World: The Urban Impact of Religion, State and Society*, SOAS, (Routledge Studies on the Middle East, 2007); Stefano Bianca, *Urban form in the Arab world: Past and Present, (*Thames & Hudson, 2000); SatoTsugitaka, *Islamic urbanism in human history: political power and social networks*, (Kegan Paul International-Columbia University Press, 1997); M. Haneda, and T. Miura, eds., *Islamic urban studies: historical review and perspectives*, (Kegan Paul International, 1994). For a critique of the constructed concept of "Islamic City" model as an alternative to modern urban planning, see J. Abu-Lughod, "The Islamic City-Historic Myth, Islamic Essence, and Contemporary Relevance," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 19 (1987): 155.
18 Y. Elsheshtawy, ed., *Planning Middle Eastern Cities: An Urban Kaleidoscope* (2004).
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