

## **8. SEASCAPE URBANISM IN THE GULF (*AL KHALIJ*)**

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Land and its physical attributes have been central to discourse on architecture and urbanism. Grounded constructs used to explain urban form are consequently used to generate urban design. 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.

My paper analyzes the historic urban development of Ras al Khaima on the eastern edge of Arabia. While this Khaliji port settlement benefitted from the lucrative Indian Ocean trade, it facilitated exchange of material, human and capital flows. As one of the ports along the Gulf, it witnessed the coexistence of the Persian and the Arab components. Merchants, lenders, divers, and labour force from all across the region inhabited and participated in the making of this settlements.

My paper reveals Khaliji urbanism as a unique typology based on secure tenure over the connecting ocean, linking diverse people with landscape and seascape ecologies. I will conclude with introducing "seascape" urbanism as a visual complement to the existing domains of "port" and "coastal" urbanism.

Through the case of Ras al Khaima, I argue that consideration of "identity" in Gulf cities necessitates the revival of centrality of the ocean as a unifying geographic entity. The maritime orientation of my paper transcends the contemporary discourse on Khaliji identity from its present insularity. Future considerations of "identity" in Al Khaliji will thus necessitate the revival of centrality of the ocean as a unifying geographic entity.