

## **Regionalizing Oman - Political, Economic and Social Dynamics**

*International Workshop*

Department of Economics and Social Geography of the Middle East and North Africa,  
Institute of Oriental Studies, University of Leipzig

*25 & 26 March 2010*

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The international workshop addresses historical structures and current dynamics of Oman's regionalization processes. Oman, often automatically classified as part of the "Arab world" or the MENA region, is rather conceptualized as being constructed via its articulations with several "regions" which – at the macro level –, for example, include large parts of the Indian Ocean rim, its adjacent seas and its wider hinterland. At the local level, societies experience ambivalent processes of disembedding, the detachment of social relations from local contexts of interaction, and reembedding, reflecting the ongoing negotiation of social and territorial boundaries.

Relational forms of regionalization in Oman may be established by nomads moving and circulating seasonally or over extended periods, by fluctuating flows of "foreign" migrants transforming transnational and urban scapes, by translocal and regional economic trade and investment links, by the developing tourism industry, or by the national or local insertion into global trade flows. At the same time, as a young nation state, Oman has long been struggling to define its territorial borders. On the sub-national level reterritorialization occurred until recently, while internationally the Sultanate started to implement regional agreements which also include forms of territorial regulation and control. Concomitantly space-related identities developed referring to historical, reinvented or current regional articulations, and Omani actors are trying to establish local and national brands which are regionally contextualized and intended for marketing trade hubs, production zones or tourist destinations.

The conference wants to encourage an interdisciplinary and transregional dialogue between scholars from different social sciences and area studies and develops four axes of research:

- Oman's integration in global and regional flows of goods, capital, people and ideas;
- the multi-scaled political negotiation of such integration (or disintegration) processes;
- consequences of suchlike processes and forms of regionalization for (trans)local actors;
- ideas and strategic communication of regional belonging and the constitution of regions.

Conceptually, studies often start from established meta-geographies, relating either to continentally or culturally defined world regions or to the territorial state and its administrative sub-divisions as a basis of analysis. A conceptually-contrasted discourse has developed on large-scale cultural, social and economic flows that concentrate and intersect in heavily globalized and globally radiating centers. The discourse also highlights the predominance of network societies and flow economies in a globalizing world. Other theoretical debates focus on space and region as social constructs that are continuously constituted and reconstituted by public discourse and/or social action. Hence, regional contexts are viewed as fluid and fragile, shifting and overlapping phenomena. A comprehensive understanding thus must include macro-, meso- and micro-perspectives on several intrinsically-linked and interpenetrating spatial scales.

However, long-established and more recent theoretical approaches are not necessarily irreconcilable alternatives; rather they open a wide spectrum of spatial perspectives on countries such as Oman. Albeit territories are still important as special formations of regions, they are subject to regular reconstructions, are objects of conflicts and exist on diverse scales. Other regionalization

processes refer more to the perspective of flows, movements and communication. The emerging specific (trans)local, (trans)national and (trans)regional linkages and their spatial contexts can be reconstructed through the movement of people, goods or capital. Additionally, regionalization refers to mental and discursive constructions of regions.

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Venue:

Orientalisches Institut, Universität Leipzig  
Schillerstr. 6, 04109 Leipzig, Germany  
Conference hall: Room # S 202, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor

Convener:

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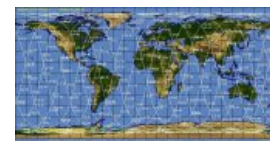


Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft



Research Project „Between the Arab World and the Indian Ocean: Oman's Regional Economic Orientations“

Research Academy Leipzig



Graduate Centre Humanities and Social Sciences: Post-graduate Programme „Critical Junctures of Globalization“

Sultan Qaboos University  
Muscat, Sultanate of Oman



## *Workshop Program*

**Thursday, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2010**

**8.45-9.15 Registration & Reimbursement**

**9.15 Welcome and Introduction** (Steffen Wippel, Leipzig/Berlin)

**9.30-10.40 Panel I: Oman's Regionalism Policy and (New?) Economic Spaces**  
(Chair: Ulrike Lorenz, Leipzig/Berlin)

9.30 **Abdulla Baabood** (Cambridge): Oman as a Member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

9.55 **Anja Zorob** (Berlin): Reconciling the Oman-US Free Trade Agreement with Membership in the GCC Common Market: A difficult Task Ahead?

10.20 Joint Discussion of Baabood/Zorob

10.40-11.00 Coffee Break

**11.00-12.45**

11.00 **Nasser Al Badri** (Manchester): Regional Employment: Omani Labour Force in the Gulf - Past, Present and Future Trend

11.35 **Steffen Wippel** (Leipzig/Berlin): Oman and the Indian Ocean Rim - Economic Integration Across Conventional Meta-Regions

12.10 ~~**Gulshan Dietl** (New Delhi/Odense): Musandam: Creating a New Region across the Water~~

12.45-14.15 Lunch

**14.15-16.00 Panel II: Oman's Territorial and Regional (Re)Configuration**  
(Chair: Christian Steiner, Mainz)

14.15 **Marc Valeri** (La Rochelle/Exeter): Domesticating the Local Elite. Sheikhs, Walis and State-Building under Sultan Qaboos

14.50 **Mokhtar Belgacem** (Muscat): The Reconfiguration of Omani Territory: The Phenomenon of Littoralization as a Driver

15.25 **Montasser I. M. Abdelghani** (Muscat): The Impact of Shopping Centers on Traditional Retail Stores and on Urban and Regional Development in the Capital Region. Case study "As-Seeb Wilayat"

16.00-16.30 Coffee Break

**16.30-17.40 Panel III: Historical Perspectives on Oman and its Regional Context**  
(Chair: Abdulla Baabood, Cambridge)

16.30 **Beatrice Nicolini** (Milano): Re-reading the Role of Oman within its International Trade Relations, 16th through the 19th Centuries

17.05 **Michaela Hoffmann-Ruf** (Tübingen): Private Documents as Source for Regional History – The Archive of the 'Abriyin of al-Hamra'

17.40-18.15 Coffee Break

*Together with* **Frauke Borchers** (Lübeck): Bilder aus dem Oman ... sagen (wirklich) mehr als 1000 Worte / Pictures from Oman - Impressions and Interpretations

19.30 Dinner

## Friday, 26<sup>th</sup> March 2010

### 9.00-9.30 Reimbursement

### 9.30-11.50 *Panel IV: Oman's Transnational Social, Economic and Cultural Dynamics* (Chair: Christian Steiner, Mainz)

- 9.30 **Detlef Müller-Mahn & Julia Pfaff** (Bayreuth): Living in Two Places: Translocal Practices and Imaginative Geographies of "Omani Zanzibaris/Zanzibari Omanis"
- 10.05 **Samir Pradhan** (Dubai): Oman-India Ties: Exploring the Migration Dynamics
- 10.40 **Claire Beaudevin** (Aix-Marseille): The Blood of "Sinbad's descendants": Political and Social Stakes of Inherited Blood Disorders in Oman, Revealing Transnational Dynamics
- 11.15 **Monika Fatima Mühlböck** (Wien): The History of Tribes in Dhofar: Transnational Dimensions

11.50-12.15 Coffee Break

### 12.15-13.25 *Panel V: Oman between the Local and the Global* (Chair: Birgit Krawietz, Berlin)

- 12.15 **Katja Brinkmann** (Berlin): The Omani Museum Landscape: Institutions of Domestic and Incoming Tourism as an Instrument for Shaping Local Identities?
- 12.50 **Torsten Brandenburg** (Mainz): Privatization and Internationalization of Higher Education in the Sultanate of Oman

13.25-15.00 Lunch

### 15.00-16.10

- 15.00 **Victoria Tuzlukova** (Muscat): Bringing the Global and the Local together through English in Oman (paper with Rahma Al-Mahrooqi, Muscat)
- 15.35 **Saleh Alblushi** (Muscat): Names and Changes in Naming Trends in Oman from 1986 to 2008: Local Traditions vs. Regional and Global Influences

16.10-16.30 Coffee Break

### 16.30-18.15 *Panel VI: Concepts of Regionalisation and General Debate* (Chair: Anja Zorob, Berlin)

- 16.30 **Ulrike Lorenz** (Leipzig/Berlin): Theorizing Regionalism(s). New Regionalism(s) Reloaded
- 16.55 **Frank Mattheis** (Leipzig/Paris): When Regions Interact – Concepts and Cases of Interregionalism
- 17.20 **Katrin Bromber** (Berlin): Working with "Translocality": Conceptual Implications and Analytical Consequences
- 17.45 General Debate

### 18.15 **Concluding Remarks and Farewell** (Steffen Wippel, Leipzig/Berlin)

20.15 Dinner

Please note that minor changes of the program itinerary are still possible.