**The Rise of the Global Suburb
by Laura Secorun Palet, published in OZY, September 16, 2014**

1. Concept Connections: how can you connect the following concepts to this article?

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| * Migration
* Suburbs
* Globalization
* Infrastructure
* Westernization
* National identity
* Citizenship
* Core/Periphery/Semi-Periphery
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1. What is an expat?
2. Why would someone relocate to the “global suburbs”? In terms of standard of living and quality of life, what advantages and disadvantages would someone experience?
3. Why would the UAE want to become the “ultimate global suburb”? What unique issues might the UAE encounter due to the large percentage of its population who are expats?
4. What characteristics are important for countries that aspire to attract expats?
5. How might being an expat affect your sense of identity?

# The rise of the global suburb

Tue, 09/16/2014 - 09:48 -- [Alan Mwendwa](http://www.ww.gwopa.org/users/alan-mwendwa)

By [Laura Secorun Palet](http://www.ozy.com/ozy-tribe/our-team/day-to-day-team/laura-secorun-palet/)

When Isla de Haldevang first arrived in Singapore with her family, she felt slightly foolish.

“I had spent the months leading up to the move force-feeding my children rice. I thought that they would need it to survive,” explains the 46-year-old expat who left Edinburgh, Scotland, for Singapore when her husband was offered a business consultancy job on the island nation. “When we got here, it turned out we lived in an apartment with a supermarket downstairs selling Waitrose goods and a Marks & Spencer. I lost all credibility with my kids!”

She didn’t know what many millions have discovered. It’s possible to move halfway around the world to find a globalized expat culture, often with familiar U.K. brands like Waitrose or Marks & Spencer, making it ever easier to relocate. The trend has created something like a global suburbs: easy life outside of traditional centers of world power.

So it’s no wonder that the number of expats worldwide is growing. Last year there were around [50.5 million](http://www.finaccord.com/press-release_2014_global-expatriates_-size-segmentation-and-forecast-for-the-worldwide-market.htm), and by 2017, the number is expected to grow to around [56.8 million](http://www.finaccord.com/press-release_2014_global-expatriates_-size-segmentation-and-forecast-for-the-worldwide-market.htm). It’s a trade: Nations offer a nice way to live in exchange for skills and money, made possible by the globalization of middle-class goods and services, easy transportation and communication, and perhaps by a decline in the sense of belonging at home as the world becomes more homogenized.

From Canada to Dubai, the new global suburbs offer what middle-class families have always yearned for and, until now, hoped to find close at hand: financial stability, a laid-back lifestyle and safety for the little ones. “In Singapore, I don’t need to lock my car or windows, and I let my kids go out on the bus with no phone knowing that someone would bring them home if they got really lost,” says de Haldevang.

Countries are now able to cherry-pick immigrants based on the size of their portfolios. The epitome of this is Switzerland, which has attracted well-off foreigners for centuries with famed stability, no-questions-asked banking, a flat personal [tax rate](http://www.expatbriefing.com/expat-news/Switzerland-To-Retain-Flat-Tax-For-Wealthy-Expats-64626.htmlhttp%3A/www.expatbriefing.com/expat-news/Switzerland-To-Retain-Flat-Tax-For-Wealthy-Expats-64626.html) and stunning Alpine scenery.

“My favorite thing about Switzerland is the access to the breathtaking natural beauty. My dog seconds that vote. Life for her is grand now, as we are spoiled for choice of mountain hikes!” says Anne Murray, a 49-year-old expatriate from New Jersey who moved to Basel eight years ago.

Seeking a better life abroad doesn’t necessarily mean that things will be easier or cheaper.

For city lovers, the world’s best expat hot spot might be Singapore. The urban jungle attracts a growing number of young professionals looking to fast-track careers in a “westernized” environment, with low taxes, access to cheap domestic help from Indonesia and easy getaway flights to Bali and Malaysia.

But “seeking a better life abroad doesn’t necessarily mean that things will be easier or cheaper,” warns George Eves, CEO of [Expat Info Desk](http://www.expatinfodesk.com/), an online resource for expats. “Leaving your friends and family can, on the one hand, be exhilarating. But it’s not always easy. Learning that you can’t make it back for every event and navigating new laws and customs, let alone a new language, can be hard.”

The high cost of living can also be a deal breaker. No tax cut will make it less painful to pay rent in Singapore, at roughly $3,795 a month for a two-bedroom apartment.

Life is not cheap either in the Gulf countries, where renting a home can require a 12-month deposit.

Still, the UAE has embarked on a race to become the ultimate global suburb, offering a luxurious lifestyle and a zero rate of income tax to newcomers. “The number of expats has grown tremendously in recent years. Running into someone you know now is getting rarer,” says British 27-year-old Amanda Rushforth, who moved there with her family three years ago. She says she loves the always nice weekend weather, the energetic city life and the lack of overwhelming job competition. “This is now home. I’d miss the lifestyle if we left and the friendliness of the people.”

Expatriates actually represent [87 percent](http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/united-arab-emirates-population/) of the population and, while the majority is south Asian workers, the small, rich nation needs highly trained expats for the growing construction, tourism and financial services sectors, as the country tries to kill its oil dependency.

Other countries have entered the game.

“Australia looks to compete … for high-wealth and high-skilled migrants and the capital that comes with them,” [said](http://www.qropsinvestor.com/australia-offers-golden-ticket-to-lure-wealthy-expats/) Chris Bowen, the Australian immigration minister, when presenting the country’s new “golden ticket” visa, which promises a fast track to permanent residency for applicants who have at least AU$5 million.

Canada is also fishing for skilled expats with two similar [schemes](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/expat/10537270/Canada-plans-to-lure-more-expats-in-2014.html). “Canada is in a global competition for the best and brightest immigrants, and this plan is crafted with attracting the people we need for Canada to succeed,” [said](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/expat/10537270/Canada-plans-to-lure-more-expats-in-2014.html) Chris Alexander, minister of citizenship and immigration.

Canada and Australia both have [stable banking systems](http://www.expatexplorer.hsbc.com/findings#/finding/65/expats-look-for-financial-security-in-established-markets-for-retirement) and the great outdoors. “Both countries have a very clear brand identification as great places for new beginnings, which is not yet the case with Middle East destinations,” says Dan Prescher, special projects editor at [International Living](http://internationalliving.com/).

But are middle-class expats worth fighting over? Canada has been accused of selling nationalities, and locals often resent wealthy newcomers. The Swiss have complained about Germans taking away [jobs](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/mar/25/germany.kateconnolly), and Singapore citizens say property prices have skyrocketed because of expats.

Still, other nations are trying to join the gravy train.

Russia is [relaxing](http://www.businessinsider.com.au/russia-relaxes-rules-on-expats-2013-2) immigration laws and offering an investment visitor visa valid for five years. [Vietnam](http://www.expatexplorer.hsbc.com/finding/96/high-taxes-and-expensive-public-transport-drive-up-the-cost-of-living-in-european-countries#/finding/62/business-boom-and-expansion-in-vietnam-indonesia-turkey-and-mexico-with-expats-more-than-twice-as-likely-to-be-sent-by-their-companies) is looking for foreign skilled [labor](http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=2013040414214828), and Mexico’s marketing itself as a retirement destination. Brazil has simplified its visa [requirements](http://www.propertyshowrooms.com/brazil/property/news/brazil-visa-change-attract-foreign-workers_312758.html) to lure foreign talent, and its expat community has been growing at 12 percent annually for the past five years.

It’s a small world, provided you can afford the price of admission.

Source: <http://www.ww.gwopa.org/node/40271/devel>