



Gulf Research Centre Cambridge
Knowledge for All

Workshop 6

Transnational Knowledge Relations and Researcher Mobility for Building Knowledge-Based Societies and Economies in the Gulf

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Abstract

Gulf nations are working on transforming their societies and economies from oil and gas-based economies to knowledge-based societies. Ultimately, their goal is to equip their nationals to be in charge of these knowledge-based societies. This effort is clear from the great strides Gulf nations have taken in recent decades to strengthen their capacities in education and research. This workshop will explore the role of transnational knowledge relations through universities, think tanks, international experts, and corporations with an emphasis on promoting the mobility of human capital between the Gulf and the West for developing knowledge-based societies and economies in the region. The workshop will result in an edited book, which will focus on the centrality of transnational networks for

intellectual exchange and talent mobility in the Gulf and of the importance of transnational knowledge exchange networks for socio-economic development.

Description and Rationale

Objectives and scope of the panel

The objectives and scope of the panel are to examine the role and potential of transnational knowledge relations and talent mobility for developing knowledge-based societies and economies in the Gulf. Gulf societies are working consciously to develop and diversify from oil and gas natural resource-based economies towards more innovative, knowledge-based economies. At the same time, Gulf societies are striving to equip their nationals to participate in this post-industrial economy and take up positions at all levels, especially knowledge-intensive leadership positions in diverse economic spheres.

To achieve these aims, Gulf societies have either imported branch campuses from the West or created institutions of higher education that exhibit strong transnational tendencies, many of which have cultivated partnerships with American, Western European, Australian or Canadian universities. These new private, transnational institutions in the Gulf are of widely varying composition and quality. Among their characteristics, which is of central concern for the building of knowledge-based societies and economies, are the transnational relations of these institutions. Recent research on universities in international politics suggest that some of the most interesting aspects of universities are their capacities to act as conduits that mediate the transfer of economic, intellectual, artistic, and political ties across global societies.

Joseph Nye and Robert Keohane in 1971 suggested that transnational relations were “global interactions” of non-state actors moving information, money, people and goods across borders. We subscribe to this definition of transnational relations in our work. It is clear that transnational universities are deeply engaged in such “global interactions” of moving information, ideas, talent and financial resources between societies. As such, the organizers of this workshop similarly define transnational knowledge relations as a set of networks mobilizing knowledge workers, academic institutions, business organizations, and ideational frameworks spanning national boundaries. In other words, we view transnational knowledge relations as constituting not only organizations and knowledge workers, but also the various theoretical frameworks and ideological categories that are integral to these transnational flows. Research on universities as transnational actors also demonstrates that such universities may develop very strong relations with a wide range

of actors across borders, such as the academics, business elites, civil society, philanthropic organizations, and political elites. The private, transnational universities in the Gulf and the wider Middle East are to a varying extent “information and resource bridges” that facilitate heavy traffic of knowledge, talent, and financial resources in both directions.

The political economy undergirding the establishment of a knowledge society will also serve as an important component of this workshop. Nationalization programs with the stated aim of reducing dependence on expatriate workers are at times in conflict with initiatives to internationalize higher education as are Emiratization in the UAE and Qatarization in Qatar. To illustrate this point, very few of the full time faculty at universities such as Zayed University in Dubai, the American University of Sharjah, or the American University of Kuwait are Gulf citizens. Therefore, existing labor laws designed to both facilitate the importation of foreign workers while maintaining control of the terms of their stay, create suboptimal outcomes for two principle reasons. First, imported academics very often stay for a short period of time (3-5 years), which prevents the establishment of institutional memory. Second, by relying mostly on imported academics, the development of national experts is undermined.

Contributions to Gulf and Middle East education, research, development and innovation studies

This workshop will contribute to the scholarship on Gulf and Middle East education, research development, and innovation within a global literature on the role of mobility, brain circulation, human capital and knowledge for innovation, entrepreneurship and socio-economic development. Higher education and research is global in nature and has a strong transnational element, which is clearly reflected in current efforts to develop tertiary education in the Gulf as a whole. Many of the new higher education and research institutions created in Gulf societies are based on transnational pacts with higher education institutions in North America, Western Europe, or Australia for purposes of quickly assuring quality in education and research. Education City in Qatar stands out as one clear example of a transnational strategy for building quality higher education and research in a Gulf society quickly.

This project will focus on the transnational relations of higher education and research institutions in the Gulf, both foreign affiliated and national institutions. It will focus on how these transnational relations contribute to engineering a knowledge-based society in the Gulf.

Higher education and research institutions have historically played key roles as “information and resource bridges” between societies. As such, the recent proliferation of joint ventures and the influx of Western institutions in the region is not altogether a new phenomenon. The Middle East has a strong history of transnational higher education institutions stretching back to, e.g., Robert College in Istanbul (1863), Syrian Protestant College (1866)/American University of Beirut (1920), Lebanese American University (1924), Université Saint Joseph de Beyrouth (1875) and American University in Cairo (1919). Since the mid-1990s, the Gulf has been at the forefront of efforts to expand transnational educational linkages with Western institutions.

Both sets of cases, the contemporary and the historic, demonstrate how universities can connect with a range of private, public and civil society actors from both the Middle East and the West. These universities facilitate the circulation of leading academics in the West enabling the transfer of information, ideas and talent back and forth between regions. They connect with leading international companies contributing to the development of the business sector in the Middle East and creating job opportunities for Middle Eastern youth. They link with overseas political and governmental networks, which in turn inform policy debates. These universities have long standing partnerships with leading civil society organizations and large philanthropic foundations.

Higher education and research institutions in the Gulf contribute significantly to the development of knowledge-based societies through building strong transnational relations with a range of private, public and civil society actors.

Anticipated Participants

This workshop will explore the intellectual relations and researcher mobility between the Gulf and the outside world with a specific focus on Gulf universities and other relevant actors such as think tanks, professional organizations, government organizations, and business communities. And, importantly, we are also interested in knowledge networks that connect the Gulf to non-Western organizations, both public and private, in Asia and beyond.

In particular, this panel seeks papers that explore the following sets of questions:

- What are the actors, universities, government institutions, think tanks, corporations, etc. in the Gulf who contribute to developing local knowledge-based societies and economies?
- What transnational knowledge networks do these Gulf knowledge actors maintain between themselves and others in Gulf societies?

- What transnational knowledge networks exist between organizations and individuals in the Gulf and those in Europe, North America, and Asia?
- How can transnational knowledge networks between Gulf societies and external actors be measured?
- What forms of knowledge (cultural, natural, social, or technological) flow between these actors in the Gulf and elsewhere?
- How is knowledge transmitted between the Gulf and external regions in the shape of people, publications, intellectual property rights, capacity building, and investment?
- What is the role of highly skilled individuals within transnational knowledge networks spanning the Gulf and other regions? Who are these individuals; what is their background; where do they come from; what roles do they play in the Gulf; and, where do they go after they leave the region? Do they maintain relations with the Gulf?
- How do the various labor regimes governing worker mobility affect intellectual exchange?
- How do GCC policies to develop local talent vary on a case by case basis? Under what conditions do they advance or undermine the development of knowledge-based societies?

The purpose of this workshop is to publish an edited book based on the individual papers presented. To that end the panel directors will send a template that defines how each paper should be structured to the selected participants.

Workshop Director Profiles

Dr. Jean-Marc Rickli is assistant professor at the Department of Defence Studies of King's College, London but based at the Qatar Joint Command and Staff College in Doha. He is also a researcher at the Near East Center for Security and Strategy of King's College. He holds a Ph.D. and an M.Phil in International Relations from Oxford University, UK, where he was also a Berrow scholar at Lincoln College. Prior to his current position, Dr. Rickli was assistant professor at the Institute for International and Civil Security at Khalifa University in Abu Dhabi. He is the former President of the Geneva University Strategic Studies Group and was program coordinator of the Urban Security program at the University of Geneva. He is also a former Vice-President of the Oxford University Strategic Studies Group. Dr. Rickli taught and conducted research at several institutions in nine different countries including China and the United States. His research interests are on the use of force in international relations, small states' foreign and security policies, risk analysis, and non-traditional security issues such as energy,

financial, and cyber security. He has published several book chapters, journal articles in the *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, the *Oxford Journal on Good Governance*, the *Encyclopedia of Political Science*, as well as a book titled “The Coercive Use of Air Power in the Balkans.” His latest articles are on energy security in the Gulf, cyber security as well as on small states’ survival and strategy.

Rasmus Gjedssø Bertelsen is the inaugural Barents Chair in Politics at the Department of Sociology, Political Science, and Community Planning at University of Tromsø-The Arctic University of Norway. He is also a senior researcher at the Department of Culture and Global Studies at Aalborg University in Denmark. He is affiliated with the Public Diplomacy Collaborative at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, a member of the University of the Arctic’s thematic network on geopolitics and security, and the innovation and entrepreneurship research group at the Sino Danish Center at the University of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. He is a Non-Resident Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Security & Development Policy in Stockholm. Rasmus studied political science at the Universities of Copenhagen, Iceland, Lausanne, Geneva and Amsterdam. He holds a Ph.D. in International Relations from the University of Cambridge, during which time he was also a visiting Ph.D. candidate at Sciences Po. He was a research fellow at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at the Harvard Kennedy School working on the soft power of American and French universities in the Middle East funded by the Danish Social Science Research Council, the Kuwait Program at Harvard (Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences), and the Dubai Initiative at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. Subsequently, he was a Japan Society for the Promotion of Science postdoctoral fellow at Tokyo Institute of Technology and United Nations University-Institute of Advanced Studies working on transnational higher education in the Middle East and East Asia. He taught European Studies and International Relations at Aalborg University before his current appointment. Rasmus’ fields of research include transnational flows of knowledge, ideas, talent and capital, historically and today, between academia, business, civil society and government in the USA, Europe, the Middle East, and East Asia. His research is published from the Dubai Initiative, in *Strategic Insights*, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée*, *Journal of China* and *International Relations*, *International Journal of Business and Globalisation*, *Global Society*, *PS: Political Science & Politics* and *Arctic Yearbook* and in edited volumes from the University of Calgary Press, Yale University Press, Communication University of China Press, Edward Elgar Publishing, Palgrave Macmillan, Norden, Korea Maritime Institute, Sense Publisher.

Dr. Neema Noori is an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of West Georgia. He received his Ph.D. in Sociology from Columbia

University in 2006, where he also taught at the School of International and Public Affairs from 2000 through 2005. He joined the Department of International Studies at the American University of Sharjah (AUS) in the United Arab Emirates in 2005. Since 2008, he has been at the Department of Sociology at the University of West Georgia. Dr. Noori's areas of interest include the politics of international higher education, political sociology, globalization, and development – primarily in the context of the Middle East and Central Asia. To date, his research has followed three trajectories. The first expands his regional specialization to include the Arabian Gulf. Partly in response to witnessing the proliferation of American-style universities in the Gulf, he has written several articles on higher education governance and the diffusion of the American model of higher education in the Middle East. The second builds on his dissertation and is focused primarily on NGO and government development policy in Post-Soviet Central Asia. The third trajectory concerns the political and social legacies of the Iran-Iraq war with a particular focus on Iranian veterans. His publications have appeared in the following journals: *PS: Political Science and Politics*, *International Journal of Culture, Politics and Society*, *Annual Review of Political and Military Sociology*, and *Central Asia Survey*.

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