



Gulf Research Centre Cambridge

Knowledge for All

Workshop 7

Sustainable Development Challenges in the GCC

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Abstract

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are increasingly being faced by the same challenges that western countries have faced in terms of how to balance the need to develop their economies while at the same time taking into account the impact of such developments on the environment and on communities and individuals; the classic concepts of “profit” vs. “planet” vs. “people” or balancing the Triple Bottom Line of “environmental”, “economic” and “social” sustainability.

As the GCC countries develop their built environments – including commercial and non-commercial properties and their infrastructure; their industrial capacities – often through large-scale industrialization programs; and their agricultural capacities, there are sustainability issues to consider. The Triple Bottom Line elements to be considered are: environmental-sustainability issues such as waste, recycling, water usage, energy – including the use of renewables, and pollution – to name but a few; economic-sustainability issues including employment opportunities for local people, education and training and engagement of business and individuals that make up the supply chains and finally, social-sustainability issues such as safety at work, working hours, equality and

diversity, noise dust and pollution, traffic congestion, stakeholder engagement and community involvement in decision-making.

Many of these issues are increasing in importance for the GCC. For example, in respect of environmental sustainability, some GCC countries are facing energy deficits and will be net importers of energy in the near future and hence are considering the use of more sustainable sources of energy such as renewables. In relation to economic sustainability, the Middle East region has one of the highest youth unemployment rates in the world and developing a skilled workforce and providing them with jobs presents a great challenge. Besides, the fact that the GCC countries are the largest recipients of temporary migrants in the world has implications for social sustainability in terms of the coherence and fabric of societies. In general, within the MENA region, the failure of countries to engage in sustainable development, with particular consideration of the social and economic impacts, was arguably one of the main contributors to the Arab Spring. For example, from an economic perspective, the MENA region suffered from an unequal distribution of wealth which is a direct result of the lack of clear sustainable development strategies. Similarly, from a social perspective, the failure to engage all parts of the community in the decision-making process and provide equal opportunities for all, again through a lack of strategic sustainable development, fuelled a sense of alienation and isolation which ultimately led to the Arab Spring.

Description and Rationale

The aim of the workshop is to provide a forum for participants from both inside and outside the GCC to engage in a discussion and debate related to the key challenges the GCC faces in ensuring that development in their countries take place in a sustainable fashion.

To date much of the research in the area of sustainability has been western-centric and there is a need to broaden our understanding of the subject to other contexts. By reviewing and discussing aspects of sustainability in the GCC countries, there is the potential to contribute to the expansion of Gulf Studies. Therefore this workshop will explore the sustainable development challenges that face the GCC and outcomes from the workshop will help decision-makers in both the public and the private sector organizations to better understand and develop appropriate policies and practices for sustainable development.

Topics that could be discussed in the workshop include, but are not limited to:

- Political implications/risks in GCC countries of not adopting a sustainable development approach
- Individual/organizational attitudes and attributes relating to sustainability in the GCC
- Contextualizing the (western-centric) concepts of sustainability to the GCC countries
- Cultural issues affecting sustainable development in the GCC

- International, intra-national, industry-wide and sector-specific responses to sustainability in the GCC
- Barriers to sustainable development in the GCC
 - Costs v benefits
 - Policies, legislation, regulations and incentives
 - Roles and responsibilities
 - Availability of materials
 - Knowledge availability, sharing and management
- Drivers of sustainable development in the GCC
 - Demand-side and supply-side
 - The role of environmental sustainability in driving social and economic change
- Sustainable development trade-offs in the GCC
- GCC environmental sustainability
 - Current activities and practice (at the macro and micro level)
 - Potential contribution (both within and beyond the GCC)
 - Role of legislation and accreditation
 - Technological developments i.e. sustainable agriculture
- GCC economic sustainability
 - Current activities and practices
 - Potential contribution
- GCC social sustainability
 - Current activities and practice
 - Potential contribution
- The impact of the GCC's future sustainable development policies on other regions
- Sustainability lessons learnt from other regions that can be applied to the GCC

Anticipated Papers

The workshop aims to bring together resources and knowledge across different fields related to sustainable development in the GCC and beyond. Therefore, it is expected that contributions will encompass those involved in policy-making and practice and will include many different perspectives, including science, engineering, politics, economics, social sciences and management sciences. However, in order to ensure that participants can engage fully and participate in the workshops, contributors are asked to avoid submitting highly technical papers. Papers in the workshop could take various forms, including case studies, surveys, reflective studies, conceptual papers, and policy and practice statements.

The workshop is aiming to attract papers from the following organizations/individuals:

- Government and public agencies responsible for sustainability-related policy and regulation
- National and international companies involved in sustainability-related activities in the GCC

- Regional institutions promoting sustainable development
- International accreditation bodies
- Academics and research institutions

Workshop Director Profiles

Dr David Bryde is Professor of Project Management in the Built Environment & Sustainable Technologies (BEST) Research Institute, Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU). He brings a management science/social science perspective to the topic of sustainability. Working with Dr Al-Rasheed and Dr Mouzughi, he is investigating attitudes and behaviors towards sustainability among key stakeholders in Saudi Arabia. His work has also encompassed the topics of sustainable project management and sustainable procurement. He has published over 80 journal papers, research monographs, book chapters, conference presentations, invited guest lecturers/presentations, expert interviews and articles. Recent publications related to his work on sustainability include a journal paper: Meehan, J. & Bryde, D.J. (2010) "Sustainable Procurement Practice" in *Business Strategy and the Environment* 20 (2), 94-106; a research monograph, Bryde, D.J. & Maravelea, F. (2011) "Sustainable Management Assessment in Building and Infrastructure Projects" in Collins, R.J. (ed.) *Project Management*. Nova Publishing, New York, US and a chapter titled "Sustainable Project Management" in Cotgrave, A. & Riley, M. (eds.) *Total Sustainability in the Built Environment* (Palgrave MacMillan (forthcoming, 2013).

Dr Yusra Mouzughi is a Principal Lecturer at Liverpool Business School and the Programme Leader for Doctoral Programs. Her main responsibilities include overseeing the Ph.D. and Doctorate of Business Administration (DBA) programs as well as teaching a range of postgraduate courses. She is currently supervising 11 doctoral students. Dr Mouzughi is also a member of the Centre for Stakeholder Management. Her research is cross-disciplinary focusing on a broad range of sustainability issues including general attitudes towards sustainability as well as the impact of information and technology on sustainability. Her research interests include the field of knowledge management with a particular emphasis on critical success factors for knowledge management as well as the role of key stakeholders in knowledge management activities. She has various publications in the knowledge management field including a research monograph "Critical Success Factors for Knowledge Management" (Germany: Lambert Publishing, 2012). Being of Libyan origin, Dr Mouzughi also has research interests in various aspects of Libyan development and has given invited lectures on a range of management issues within the Libyan context.

Dr Turki Faisal Al Rasheed established Al Ulama Management and Agricultural Consultancy Services and Feasibility Studies for both private and government organizations. He is the Chairman of Golden Grass, Inc. (GGI) and Turki Faisal International Corporation (TFIC) and the Founder-Director of Saudi Voters Center. Dr Al Rasheed is currently Acting Chairman for the Southwest Initiative for the Study of Middle East Conflicts (SISMEC), University of Arizona, USA, which addresses issues for the betterment of the Middle East. In 2000-2004, he served as a Board member of the

National Agriculture Development Company (NADEC). He is frequently invited to be a speaker at international conferences and recently gave lectures at Princeton University, University of Arizona, Universidad De Palermo, King Saud University, King Abdulaziz University, and Hail University. He is a weekly columnist for Al Jazirah newspaper which covers the local and current issues particularly in Saudi Arabia. He has published *Al Taba Al Ula* and *Ma KaTabt* (in Arabic) and *Agricultural Development Strategies: the Saudi Experience* (English); soon-to-be released are three books in Arabic titled *Agricultural Development Strategies: the Saudi Experience*; *Post Arab Spring*; and *Shammar Tribes: Horse Breeders, War Poems, and Honorary Title*.

Selected Readings

Al-Saleh, Y., and H. Taleb. The Integration of Sustainability within Value Management Practices: a Study of Experienced Value Managers in the GCC Countries. *Project Management Journal* 41, no. 2 (2009): 50-59.

Hertzog, S., and G. Luciani. Energy and Sustainability Policies in the GCC. Kuwait Programme on Development, Governance & Globalisation in the Gulf States. The Centre for the Study of Global Governance, 2009.

Nga, J., and H. Soo. The Influence of Personal Attributes on Perceptions of Economic, Social and Environmental Dimensions of Sustainability. *Journal of Global Business and Economics* 1, no.1 (2010): 99-119.

Sultan, N. "Working for a Sustainable GCC Future: Reflections on Policies & Practices." In "The GCC Economies: Stepping up to Future Challenges," ed. M.A. Ramady (Springer: New York, 2012).