

أول الشجرة بذرة  
"A tree starts with a seed"

**Exeter Gulf Studies Conference  
16–20 July, 2012**

**Tourism Development  
in the GCC States:  
Reconciling Economic Growth, Conservation  
and Sustainable Development**

Organized by:

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## بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

تعيش دول الخليج العربية ازدهارا متزايدا وتسارعا في عجلة التطوير، يصاحبها تزايد في الانماط الاستهلاكية لدى مختلف فئات مجتمعاتها. ونتيجة لذلك فقد تزايد الطلب على السياحة بوتيرة عالية خلال العقد الأخير مما حتم على الحكومات التعامل مع السياحة بقدر كبير من الجدية. ومع حجم الطلب القائم المتمثل في طلب سكان هذه الدول على السياحة بالإضافة إلى الطلب الخارجي للسياحة التقليدية و"الدينية" والحجم الكامن المرتبط بالقدرة على الجذب السياحي، فإن التحدي الأصعب يتمثل في إمكانية تطوير صناعة سياحية تستثمر المكون المميز للمنطقة وتنجح في تطوير عناصر الجذب السياحي وتطوير البنى التحتية اللازمة دون التعاطي مع الممارسات السائدة في البيئات التي تختلف معها ثقافيا وحضاريا.

ومن خلال هذه التجربة فإن هناك العديد من المحاور المهمة حول تفاوت النجاح في تكوين صناعة سياحية بين هذه الدول، وتنوع المعطيات الثقافية والحضارية والتراثية والسياحية الكامنة التي يمكن تطويرها، ومدى إمكانية تطوير صناعة السياحة بما يتواءم مع هذه المعطيات، ومدى الاستدامة في أي صناعة سياحية تتوخاها الجهات المسؤولة عن هذا الملف في هذه الدول. وفي هذا المحور، يأمل المنظمون أن تطرح الأسئلة المهمة والحساسة حول هذا الموضوع الحيوي لاقتصاد وثقافة المنطقة ويتم التعامل معها بأكبر قدر من النقاش وتبادل وجهات النظر لإثراء المحتوى العلمي وتعزيز العائد العملي للمشاركين أفراداً ومؤسسات. وقد احتوت أوراق العمل المقدمة على جوانب كثيرة مما سبق ذكره بما يؤكد أهمية وحيوية المحاور المذكورة.

ونتوجه بالشكر الجزيل لجميع المشاركين بأوراق العمل والحضور على مشاركتهم، ونتطلع للمزيد خلال جلسات المؤتمر.

**Exeter 2012  
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16–20 July**

**Session Description  
Tentative  
Session & Edited Volume Contributions**

**“Tourism Development in the GCC States:  
Reconciling Economic Growth, Conservation and Sustainable  
Development”**

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## **Thematic Rationale**

Tourism is one of the world's largest as well as fastest growing industries and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states are expected to be increasingly important engines of such growth. By boosting both international travel and generating increasingly vibrant regional or domestic tourism sectors, tourism promotion is often considered an integral element of their economic strategies. The sector is generally publicized as a vital source of employment, revenue, foreign exchange benefits, public infrastructure, diversification and inducement in reviving national pride. Nevertheless tourism as a catalyst for economic development can be a controversial device.

While certain short term economic benefits clearly arise from an expanding tourism industry in the Gulf economies, **its unsustainable rapid development has had detrimental environmental, socio-cultural and security impacts, particularly because this industry is dependent on and a major user of natural resources and habitually collides with the values, skills, and aspirations of GCC nationals.**

One feasible response to these negative side effects could be the promotion of sustainable tourism, which stimulates a prominent concern for equity and fairness. Thus it can contribute to the conservation and sustainable management of natural resources, the protection of local heritage, and a revival of indigenous cultures. Nonetheless, the concept of sustainability in general and especially when applied to tourism is either perceived in various ways or even worse entirely misunderstood by local stakeholders. Indeed, the term has been bent into a variety of shapes and meanings and some policy makers seem to believe it means 'business as usual'. Consequently, the tourism sector still justifies expensive infrastructure developments that primarily serve to enhance the power and privileges of local elites, sustain their underlying political ideologies and simultaneously expand control over their societies.

While the pace of the current large scale tourism expansion in the GCC should conceivably best be seen as a 'threat multiplier' that intensifies existing problems and vulnerabilities in the region, there is a dearth of studies that have deconstructed the efficacy of these policies. The objective of the session is hence to fill this void and to draw together interdisciplinary research on the relationship between tourism, conservation and sustainable development in the context of the Gulf economies with respect to lessons learnt and conclusions drawn from the utilization of tourism as a diversification tool. In addition to these specific aims, there is an urgent need to explore the institutions of the political culture, the power dynamics, and **the benefits and costs of tourism development for regional and local development and to ensure that long-term prosperity and the quality of life of future generations of Gulf nationals is not placed at risk.**

## Objectives and Scope

The panel will adopt a **holistic multi-disciplinary approach** with the specific objective to foster greater understanding and collaboration between scholars from diverse disciplines, practitioners and (at least in theory) policy makers. It especially aims to fill the void in the literature and to discuss the processes of tourism planning and policies. In this context, we will explore questions concerned with achieving environmental, social and economic sustainability of tourism alongside the governance mechanisms needed to support sustainable tourism in the Gulf economies. We will further aim to develop new strategies to be employed to avoid the errors committed in the past and propose remedial actions to those currently unsustainable development pathways. In consideration of the fact that all types of tourism will eventually have a **negative impact on the fragile environments** of the GCC, we will take a closer look at the net social benefit of tourism development, to encapsulate economic, social and environmental benefits and costs, and ask whether benefits outweigh costs overall. Such an approach will include non-monetary values and will allow the necessary trade-offs across economic, social and environmental domains. Concurrently, research indicates that in their aggressive pursuit of tourism development, Gulf governments either **failed to address or deliberately ignored the critical question of local employment**, ergo it is also crucial to assess the status quo, discuss why tourism has or has not been able to succeed with the set policy goals and especially elaborate the political rationale behind these deficiencies. Finally, several studies confirmed the immense **social impact of tourism on Gulf nationals**, resulting in disapproving attitudes. Since such resentments can impact future tourism development, we would like to highlight the importance to put more emphasis on documenting and understanding the negative attitudes of GCC nationals. In consideration of the severe negative impacts of tourism on identity, the more responsible approach could also serve to promote a feeling of national pride, especially by conserving and promoting cultural heritage. **Therefore the session will especially encourage submissions that analyze new perspectives and approaches to heritage tourism, in particular best practice examples to preserve archaeological sites and historic urban areas, including UNESCO World Heritage sites in the GCC.**

Moreover, we acknowledge that low impact nature-based tourism allegedly offers great potential to be used as a conservation tool. Thus, we welcome studies that analyze these opportunities as well as the **potential impact of tourism on protected areas** in the region. We also like to encourage contributions that look into various other forms of niche or science-based tourism in the region. Here we would especially like to emphasize the **potential of geotourism or hiking (mountaineering) in Oman and Saudi Arabia**, scuba diving, agro-ecotourism, language learning tourism, and so forth. Finally, contributions in respect to **Islamic tourism**, empirical work and comparative studies are also welcome, especially if they offer new insights and best practice guidance.

## About the Exeter Centre for Gulf Studies

The Center for Gulf Studies (CGS) at the University of Exeter has the largest concentration of Gulf Studies experts in the world. The Center's focus encompasses the Arabian Peninsula, Iraq, and Iran and its collective expertise encompasses: anthropology, development studies, economics, history, international relations, Islamic studies, literature, material culture, Persian, political economy, political science, and sociolinguistics. It runs the world's only MA in Gulf Studies and its staff supervises a large number of PhD dissertations on the Gulf region. Gulf studies at Exeter began in 1978 with the foundation of the Center for Arab Gulf Studies. In 1999, the Center was merged with the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies to form the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies. The CGS has been **hosting the world's longest-running conference series on the Gulf region and Arabian Peninsula** since 1979. The Gulf Collection is one of the largest in the world. For more information please see the [Centre for Gulf Studies](#) website.

### In a Nutshell: Three successful independent initiatives studying the natural and cultural heritage in the Gulf and its preservation



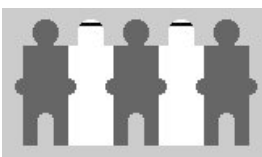
#### Exeter MARES Project

Based at the Institute for Arab and Islamic Studies (IAIS) at the University of Exeter, the MARES project is multi-disciplinary initiative focusing on the maritime traditions of the peoples of the **Red Sea and Arabian-Persian Gulf**. Drawing on ethnography, archaeology, history and linguistics, it seeks to understand how people have inhabited and navigated these seascapes in late antiquity and the medieval period, and how they do so today. Among the topics covered by the project and its conferences are for example marine ecologies and their human exploitation; pilgrimage and the spiritual landscape; terrestrial hinterlands; maritime networks, seafaring, navigation and ports; oral traditions including storytelling, poetry and song; as well as maritime industries, economies and migration. One of the highlights was certainly the 'Red Sea V: Navigated spaces, connected places' conference and the Dhow Exhibition in 2010. For further information please contact **Professor Dionisius Agius**, Al Qasimi Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies: [D.A.Agius@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:D.A.Agius@exeter.ac.uk) or +44 1392 725257

#### Conservation Workshops for the Biodiversity of Arabia

In recognition of the importance of that networking and information sharing in addressing major regional threats to biodiversity, His Highness Sheikh Dr Sultan bin Mohamed Al Qasimi, Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Sharjah hosted the first Conservation Workshop for the Fauna of Arabia at the Breeding Centre for Endangered Arabian Wildlife (BCEAW) in February 2000. Annual conservation workshops have been held since then under the auspices of the Sharjah Environment and Protected Areas Authority (EPAA). These meetings have become an important annual event, bringing together regional and international scientists and conservationists to discuss the status, threats, challenges and the future of biodiversity conservation in the Arabian Peninsula. Thirteen workshops have taken place between 2000 and 2012, attended by people from a total of 41 countries, including all those in the Arabian Peninsula others in the wider Middle East and outside the region. There has been regular involvement from IUCN Species Survival Commission, including direct participation by the IUCN/SSC Antelope, Canid, Cat, Conservation Breeding, Reintroduction, and Rodent Specialist Groups. Meetings from 2000-2006 followed a Conservation and Management Planning (CAMP) format and entailed the regional assessment of key taxa. From 2007 onwards a parallel theme was introduced to consider **all aspects of protected area establishment and management**; from 2010 the taxon evaluations adopted a formal Regional Red List process; and in 2012 for the first time a technical workshop sessions were introduced.

Information about past and future Conservation Workshops can be obtained by contacting the Breeding Centre for Endangered Arabian Wildlife, Sharjah, UAE (e-mail [breeding@epaa-shj.gov.ae](mailto:breeding@epaa-shj.gov.ae)).



#### GCC Network for Research and Development (NDRD)

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Network for Drylands Research and Development (NDRD) is a regional scientific organization with the core objective to establish a science-policy interface to increase response capacity and mitigate environmental change in the Arab Gulf states as well as analyze sustainable development concerns. Ongoing research includes next to sustainable tourism development & heritage preservation, the demographic imbalance and food security in the Gulf. Established in 2006, the organization has been presided over by Prof. Dr. Abdulaziz bin Hamid Abuzinada, who has been elected by an open call for a second term. For further information please contact Andy Spiess: [spiess@ndrd.org](mailto:spiess@ndrd.org)



## Tourism Development in the GCC States: Reconciling Economic Growth, Conservation and Sustainable Development

### Thought Piece for the Exeter 2012 Gulf Studies Conference, 16–20 July

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#### Thematic Rationale

Tourism is one of the world's largest as well as fastest growing industries and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states are expected to be progressively more important engines of such growth. By boosting both international travel and generating increasingly vibrant regional or domestic tourism sectors, tourism promotion is often considered an integral element of economic strategies, particularly for developing nations where once prevalent primary industries are in decline. The sector is generally publicized as a vital source of employment, revenue, foreign exchange benefits, public infrastructure, diversification and inducement in reviving national pride.

Euromonitor International revealed at the World Travel Market Vision Conference in 2011 that both the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia will experience some of the world's strongest inbound tourism growth over the next five years. Their Travel and Tourism Global Overview report forecasts Saudi Arabia to have one of the largest annual growth rates in the world which will result in an additional 9.3 million visitors to the Kingdom and a 12.3 percent increase in arrivals between 2010 and 2015. This makes Saudi Arabia the fifth largest country in terms of absolute arrivals growth over the forecast period. The anticipated growth is driven mainly by religious tourism, in particular the annual Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina, supported by infrastructure developments in air transportation and travel accommodation. By contrast, the UAE will experience an annual increase in arrivals of 6.9 percent, resulting in 3.6 million new visitors, being the 14<sup>th</sup> largest country in terms of absolute arrivals growth over the same time frame. Here again the report highlights the significant infrastructure developments on which the growth is build. On a regional basis the market evaluation mentions that among the positive developments are the regions strong air transportation sector and the 2022 FIFA World Cup taking place in Qatar (Euromonitor International, 2011). A few more basic and unquestionably contradicting indicators of the tourism sector in the GCC are presented in Table 1. Next to three developed nations for comparison the table also shows the basic indicators for Nigeria, a country that certainly does not represent a so called "tourism destination" and hence reveals the practical absurdity of some of these figures. Nevertheless, Nigeria and Saudi Arabia share one atypical characteristic, the fact that these two nations are so far inaccessible to individual non-business travelers.

Concomitantly, these positive statistics offered by the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report 2011 of the World Economic Forum, and the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) project an illusory picture of the contribution of tourism particularly in respect to developing nations. While all of these institutions essentially represent the industry, those often highly manipulated data sets serve to justify expensive infrastructure developments that primarily according to Hall (2005) serve to enhance the power and privileges of local elites and their promotion of the myth of sustainable tourism. Mowforth and Munt (2003) refer to the fact that the WTTC has consistently lobbied for the expansion of travel infrastructure, the liberalization of policies to encourage even further growth of the tourism sector and the removal of physical, bureaucratic and fiscal barriers to travel. For instance, the "Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report" of the World Economic Forum supported by Emirates Group, Etihad Airways and Jumeirah Hotels & Resorts finds the UAE to be not only the third most sustainable tourist industry on a worldwide scale (based on questioning stakeholders in the industry and ignoring the fact that the UAE is rated one of the most unsustainable economies in the world), but makes this nation the global winner when it comes to "ease of hiring foreign labor" (Blanke & Chiesa, 2011, p. 371). Hence it should be no surprise that Forstenlechner & Mellahi (2010) point out that the tourism sector in the UAE has a tendency not to employ nationals. This inclination however is symbolic for the situation in the GCC, albeit at different scale, and hence the apparent contribution to employment presented in the table is depending almost entirely on expatriates. In other words the alleged economic benefit of tourism is significantly reduced due to an excessive dependence on foreign intermediaries, labor and products (for instance imports of equipment for construction, food and consumer goods). This phenomenon known as leakage also includes the repatriation of returns by foreign investors, as well as the considerable role of transport, marketing, and other services based in the originating countries of the visitors. Other fundamental dynamics that will reduce the net balance of the tourism sector in the GCC are for instance the amortization of debt incurred in tourist development and the immense subsidization of energy, water, food and numerous other services in these welfare states. Bianchi's (2011) notion of the "precariousness of an economic model built on the shifting sands of speculative real estate and tourism industries" will clearly apply to the situation of tourism development in the GCC as well.

**Table 1: Basic Economic Indicators of the Tourism Sector  
(World Ranking in Parentheses)**

	Direct Contribution to GDP 2011 (US\$bn)	Direct Contribution to GDP 2011 (% share)	Direct Contribution to Employment 2011 ('000)	Employment: Direct Contribution Average real growth p/a 2011-21	Direct Contribution to GDP Average real growth p/a 2011-21	International tourist arrivals in 2011	Projected international tourist arrivals in 2021
Bahrain	1.59 (76)	6.59 (037)	33.1 (117)	3%	4.4%	5,817,000	7,166,000
Kuwait	4.17 (53)	2.78 (107)	71.6 (94)	0%	2.1%	362,000	639,000
Oman	1.93 (72)	2.98 (103)	35.1 (114)	3.6%	5.4%	1,182,000	1,929,000
Qatar	1.04 (95)	0.75 (181)	9.5 (153)	3.6%	6.4%	1,685,000	2,206,000
Saudi Arabia	13.45 (27)	2.96 (104)	289.7 (45)	1.6%	3.1%	14,740,000	26,590,000
UAE	18.36 (20)	6.05 (039)	140.0 (64)	4.1%	6.5%	10,509,000	15,011,000
Nigeria	3.21 (61)	1.05 (175)	526.9 (27)	2.9%	5.7%	1,217,000	1,808,000
US	403.96 (01)	2.63 (110)	5491.6 (03)	1.5%	3.5%	62,823,000	79,323,000
UK	57.04 (09)	2.43 (119)	955.7 (15)	2.3%	3.9%	29,646,000	44,819,000
Germany	53.89 (10)	1.68 (156)	750.0 (21)	-0.2%	1.6%	26,690,000	30,010,000

Source: World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), 2011. World Economic Impact Research Report. London, 14<sup>th</sup> February.

Nevertheless while certain short term economic benefits, including increased business activity or the insubstantial positive image, clearly arise from an expanding tourism industry in the Gulf economies, **its unsustainable rapid development has had detrimental environmental, socio-cultural and security impacts, particularly because this industry is dependent on and a major user of natural resources and habitually collides with the values, skills, and aspirations of GCC nationals.** Additionally, there is common consensus that not only uncontrolled tourism expansion is likely to lead to severe environmental degradation, but also that environmental degradation, in turn, poses a serious threat to tourism activities (see for instance Jones & Phillips, 2011). In light of this, Sheppard et al. (2010) examine the substantial changes that have taken place in marine habitats and resources of the Gulf over the past decade. They conclude *“despite the many marine studies undertaken in the Gulf, collateral environmental damage from coastal development continues at an unprecedented and alarming scale. Effects of scores of individual environment impacts are clearly by far the greatest threat to the region. Extensive research, environmental assessments and alleged ‘baseline surveys’ have brought no guarantee of natural resource or coastal protection. Short-term and often ill-conceived investments continue to be big drivers of coastal use and allocation of beach frontage in the region”* (Sheppard et al., 2010, p. 33). In an equally alarming study, Al-Sulbi (2010) analyzed the environmental sustainability of King Abdullah Park in Damman and came to the conclusion that both in design and implementation all indicators of sustainability appear to have been ignored, while highlighting the clear negative environmental impacts of the project.

He emphasizes the avoidance of all development intended to modify the Saudi coastline or alter its related natural interactions. Similarly Al-Shuwaikhat warned that the lack of transparency, public participation, unified standards and clear implementation procedures for environmental impact assessments prevent their success in the Kingdom. He notes that such assessments are not publicly available in Saudi Arabia, which hinders public awareness and prevents research work from contributing to the environmental discourse. He concludes that *“in Saudi Arabia, national policies and plans still remain immune to criticism”* (Al-Shuwaikhat, 2005, p. 312) and most certainly this inference is transferable to the entire GCC. Correspondingly, this does not represent the Habermasian ideal of institutions, which practice planning emphasizing widespread public participation, sharing of information, reaching consensus through public dialogue rather than exercise of power and avoiding privileging of technical experts and bureaucrats (Habermas, 1995). In general any meaningful development through tourism is established not only as a result of its human-made capital (infrastructure, transport, energy, etc.), or its natural capital (mountains, wadis, deserts, biological diversity, national parks, etc.), but as well by its human capital (professional skill, education & vocational training, individual & traditional knowledge, etc.) and social capital (subjects’ ability to coordinate their own actions and choices in view of common goals). Ergo the type of institution-building needed for implementing the concept of sustainability, in and of itself, requires social capital (Fukuyama, 2002).

Ambitious unsustainable tourism development can have the additional negative effect of seriously disrupting the social fabric of the destination society, including the potential loss of language and identity, and can contribute to changes in moral behavior. In this respect, tourism has been associated with increases in prostitution, with the prime example of this effect being the regional sex tourism industry of Dubai. Uncontrolled tourism growth, next to the prevalence of millions of resident foreigners, has further been linked with increased crime and narcotic drug trade. A recent study by Robins (2011) showed that while prior to the 80ties domestic consumption in Dubai was modest and mainly limited to migrant workers, this trend has shifted and today Emirati citizens are more likely to be users while their drug of choice has shifted from hashish to heroin. There is common consensus among scholars that large scale tourism development can act as a facilitator for international crime. For instance Davidson (2009, p. 4) reports that *“for many years Dubai has attracted the attention of both international criminal and terrorist organizations, many of which have exploited the emirate’s laissez-faire attitudes and impressive physical infrastructure to set up various smuggling, gunrunning, human trafficking, and money laundering operations”*. His observations were confirmed by a diversity of other assessments.

Irresponsible large corporate tourism expansion further has the potential to exacerbate existing problems of political instability or generate further violence. Especially where tourism development is primarily used as a tool for political or ideological goals and fails to benefit the local population, the resentment comes in many forms. These may include in a worst case scenario the direct targeting of tourists or foreigners, who come to be seen as agents of unwanted change. There should be no doubt that the tourism industry and the demographic disequilibrium as a result of the immense foreign presence that comes along with it will certainly play a significant role in the future GCC security dynamics and that rising income distortions, inflation and declining individual living standards will trigger frustrations and set off or extend potential challenges to regime legitimacy. In the absence of employment opportunities that suit the prevailing unrealistic demands of GCC nationals, other growing socio-economic strains and legal means for expression, conditions will be ripe for disaffection, growing dogmatic religiosity and eventually even a shift to the above mentioned radicalism. The plethora of tourist facilities in the region, such as golf courses or luxury resorts, add little to the quality of life for the majority of the local population and hence do not contribute to their long term public interest. Crowded and tremendously polluted cities, further environmental degradation, food insecurity, as well as the ongoing alienation of the local populace, especially in the UAE and Qatar, will unequivocally undermine the future human security in these oil economies. According to Ulrichsen (2009), if these new security challenges are ignored or inadequately tackled, they have the potential to strike at the heart of the social contract and redistributive mechanisms which currently define state-society relations, and will leave a legacy of fractured polities with a greater susceptibility to future external and global threats to security from issues such as food market volatility or climate change. Accordingly, large scale tourism development should conceivably best be seen as a ‘threat multiplier’ that intensifies existing problems and vulnerabilities. (Focus 1: Tourism and GCC Security Dynamics, p. 10)

On the other hand by its very nature, the tourism industry is at the leading edge of the globalization phenomenon. **In the promotion of intercultural dialogue, tourism can be a powerful approach for fostering mutual acquaintance and respect, if it is based on values rather than on consumer-driven services. Thus, the intermingling of different cultures can contribute to a better knowledge or image of a country, promote peace and understanding.**

Mounting economic reliance on tourism increases vulnerability to seasonal aspects of this volatile sector and to shocks, such as pandemics, regional conflicts, terrorism, piracy, political or economic instability (see Bahrain and Oman), global economic recession, oil price hikes, natural disasters, and other unexpected events such as ash clouds from volcanic eruptions. In addition, changes in consumer tastes and off-putting media coverage on for instance human rights violations, labor camps, human trafficking, or simply decadent megalomaniac visions can produce drastic negative responses in certain segments of the source markets.

One response to these negative side effects of tourism development based on profit-maximization has been the concept of **sustainable tourism**, a somewhat contentious, all-encompassing term for practices based on responsible environmental policy and respect for people, culture and heritage. One of the earlier definitions came from Heukemes referring the term to *“all forms of tourism development, management and activity, which maintain the environmental, social and economic integrity and well-being of natural, built and cultural resources in perpetuity”* (Heukemes, 1993, p. 5). Nowadays, the reasons to nurture sustainability should be clear; the concept includes the need to address environmental degradation, climate change and to preserve the world’s cultural diversity in the face of overwhelming forces pushing for global standardization. Best practice operations in specific sites throughout the world have shown that sustainable tourism can contribute to safeguard cultural heritage, preserving the environment, establishing global partnerships for development, empowering previously neglected social groups and alleviate poverty, perhaps more efficiently than any other industry. Consequently, sustainable tourism has become an important policy tool for community and regional development, which could also be utilized in the GCC. Nonetheless, there are still many practical and principal challenges to overcome in the relationship between political ideologies, tourism industry and development. Certainly the transition from what exists at present to what is required by ethics and social responsibility is going to be anything from easy. Yet it is the internalized mentality among Gulf nationals that needs to be urgently altered, since change will only transpire if ethical and normative standards are revived and respected. A perfect description of this contemporary mindset has been contributed by Niblock as: *“primarily living in a cocoon created by apparently unearned income, divorced from the problems facing other peoples, sets a population apart from the global community — creating attitudes and mentalities out of touch with international realities”* (Niblock, 2007, p. 1).

This further created a condition of negative consent, resulting in a situation where nationals have a tendency to be submerged into a morass of individual interests at the expense of collective welfare (Noland & Pack, 2007). For this



reason it would be about time to discontinue using foreign labor as a political tool to postpone painful domestic confrontations, but the task will surely be a minefield.

The very basic guidelines of sustainable tourism defined by the UNWTO are illustrated in Table 2. This represents a rather vague definition, but the concept should still be sufficiently clear. While sustainable development still emphasizes economic growth as a pillar of development, it promotes quality over the quantity, understanding that any system has **limits to its carrying capacity and the amount of growth viable**. Thus, growth should be **mindful of local priorities** and meet the needs of the people for respectful and fulfilling livelihood development, rather than just pursuing increased economic productivity for its own sake. Thus the UNWTO concludes that: *“Sustainable tourism development requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as **strong political leadership** to ensure wide participation and consensus building. Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process and it requires constant monitoring of impacts, introducing the necessary preventive and/or corrective measures whenever necessary”* (UNEP & UNWTO, 2005, p. 11).

**Table 2 - According to the UNWTO sustainable tourism should:**

1. Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.
2. Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.
3. Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.

Source: UNEP & UNWTO, 2005. *Making Tourism More Sustainable - A Guide for Policy Makers*, p. 11.

Regrettably, there is coherent scholarly evidence to suggest that tourism growth in the fragile ecosystems of the GCC may not be consistent with environmental sustainability principles and that these ecosystems are especially susceptible to human pressure. Yet, the explicit objective of tourist supranational organizations and GCC governments is often to increase tourist numbers based on some abstruse assumption that more tourists represent change for the better.

Nonetheless, critical to the ability of local decision makers to implement sustainable tourism development is the understanding that tourism net benefit is not only a function of tourist numbers but also tourist types. While tourist attitudes and behaviors are presumed to be a critical component in successfully developing tourism in a sustainable way, there is amazingly little research in what

type of tourist is the most appropriate for a given destination and even less advice in this respect for governments and planners (Van Egmond, 2007). The question of preferred tourism type in a given destination and associated trade-offs is however associated with political choices and based on value systems. Hence all the GCC countries seem to know only one type of tourist, namely “very affluent” (sometimes also referred to quality, high-value, high-end or luxury) and who displays the same behavior patterns consistent with local trends characterized by hyper-consumption, the need to be entertained in man-made facilities (entertainment parks, shopping malls, etc.), requiring lots of highly professional service and with a predominant preference for major cities (refer to Focus 6: Regional or Domestic Tourism - Compatible with Sustainable Pathways?, p. 15). Nonetheless, their orientation towards high-spending market segments which is characterized by the highest resource use per capita (Gössling et al., 2002) does not take into consideration the immense environmental impact of this type of tourism development nor does it alleviate the systemic inequalities. Apparently overlooked by GCC tourism planners, there is a “**new tourist**” (sometimes also referred to as ‘alternative’ or ‘responsible’ tourist) emerging and according to Chambers (2008) these trendsetters are likely to be well-educated elites and comfortable in culturally diverse situations. He argues that they will have an understanding of the consequences of global economic development, and will better realize that their participation in tourism comes with a cost to communities and environments through which they pass. **Consequently, they will appreciate tourism experiences that support principles of environmental sustainability, especially authentic heritage preservation and cultural diversity, as well as human equality.** It is likely that this segment expects travel experiences that have breadth as well as depth and that provide opportunities for self-improvement as well as leisure and entertainment. In general it is argued that this new tourist seeks understanding rather than feeling superior to the local context, seeks to establish meaningful exchanges with people from other countries or to acquire a different vantage point from which to view foreign policy. A general trend in this direction becomes more and more visible and that is what drives tourism to increased sustainability, by demanding new ‘alternative’ challenging experiences.

Increasingly recognized as a major consumer movement, the industry has unsurprisingly acknowledged “LOHAS” as a new social phenomenon that has emerged over the last decade. The acronym stands for “lifestyles of health and sustainability” and refers broadly to consumers interested in goods and services “focused on health, the environment, social justice, personal justice and sustainable living”. Essentially, these are individuals who live and consume in an informed, aware and ethical manner, especially with regard to their own health and fitness, and to social and environmental issues. According to an analysis presented by the Schober Group *“They think global, are very mobile and open-minded. They are looking for a type of tourism that is ecologically sustainable and meets their standards of ethics and social justice.”* But they are also critical consumers, especially of those ‘greenwashing’ marketing strategies that the Gulf economies seem to be particularly predisposed to and needless to say human rights violations. Estimates of the prevalence of these consumers in Western societies vary widely from 5 to 30 percent of the adult population, but



there is no doubt that sustainable tourism is becoming increasingly popular as additional individuals, business and organizations are supporting responsible tourism and joining together with authorities and local communities to strengthen sustainable tourism standards as well as promoting environmental and responsible tourism products and services (IPK International, 2010). As a paradox, this 'alternative' tourism segment has undoubtedly been around for centuries (maybe the movement started with Alexander von Humboldt or could be blamed on the era of *romanticism* per se) only with somewhat less fancy descriptions.

Nonetheless, the concept of sustainability in general and especially when applied to tourism is either perceived in various ways or even **worse totally misunderstood by local stakeholders**. Indeed, the term has been bent into a variety of shapes and meanings and some major policy makers and so called "visions ..." in the GCC seem to believe the term means '**business as usual**'.

### **Synopsis of the Region's Tourism Development: Short-term profit – long-term loss?**

Most likely representing the worst case scenario on a global scale when it comes to sustainable development in general and in respect to tourism in particular are the **United Arab Emirates (UAE)**, notably Dubai. In terms of ecological footprint (EF), in other words comparing consumption and lifestyles, and checking them against nature's ability to cope, the UAE reveals a distressing score with an ecological deficit of 11 global hectares per capita (gha), while in comparison Saudi Arabia used 3.7 gha and Germany 2.8 gha for the same year. Moreover the country also scores highest (or among the highest depending on source) in per capita water use, which equals roughly four times that of Europe, waste generation and energy consumption. Data from the International Energy Agency report presents a disconcerting exposé of the growth of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, their source, and their spatial distribution in the region. In world rankings, Qatar (58.01 tons CO<sub>2</sub>/capita), UAE (29.91), Bahrain (28.23) and Kuwait (25.09) occupy the first four positions. In comparison, Saudi Arabia emits 14.79 tons CO<sub>2</sub>/capita and Oman 13.79 (IEA, 2009, p. 90). Consequently when it comes to the general Environmental Performance Index 2010 the Emirates received the 152<sup>nd</sup> place out of 163 economies, while Saudi Arabia scored 99<sup>th</sup>, the United States 61<sup>st</sup>, Germany 17<sup>th</sup> and the United Kingdom 14<sup>th</sup> (Blanke & Chiesa, 2011). While in the past environmental impact assessments were commonly used to evaluate the consequences of tourism, which were later enhanced by using carrying capacity concepts (CCC) and the limits of acceptable change system (LAC) analysis, there is a visible trends toward footprint considerations as a means to incorporate the global consequences of travel (spearheaded by the WWF).

While security experts and hydrologists are continuously highlighting the fact that the UAE along with some other GCC nations is facing an 'extreme risk' of water shortages in the near future (while already being one of the most water scarce countries in the world) the irresponsible orientation toward short term profit maximization seems impervious to any change. The most striking example may be the abundance of water-intensive grass golf courses and the

drive to host international golf sporting events to promote tourism (not to mention the hazardous fertilizers and pesticides used, again putting the UAE in the top world ranks for fertilizer usage per hectare). Based on a megalomaniac compulsion to develop something with so called 'international distinction', Dubai has received intensive criticism in the media and has recently been labeled as a "*serious challenge to common sense*" as its artificial façade slowly starts to deteriorate. Yet it is not only the West that views the developments in the UAE with increasing suspicion and in this context the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES), articulating the Islamic position on environmental protection based in London presents itself with an interesting question on its website: "*These [environmental] issues will affect us [Muslims] sooner rather than later, but it doesn't help when we are engrossed in dredging the sea to build silly little islands, which are then hired out to the very people we begrudge for invading our lands? What an irony!*" (IFEES, 2011).

What is certain is the fact that with the declared determination of Dubai to attract further assumed 'high-end' predominately Middle Eastern and South Asian visitors "*it must ceaselessly strive for visual and environmental excess*" (Davis, 2006, p. 53). Nevertheless despite artificial islands, indoor ski slopes, refrigerated swimming pools, outdoor air conditioning and artificially cooled beaches, Dubai's ruling elite insisted in 2007 that it places "sustainability" at the heart of its plans for existing and future projects (Hickman, 2008).

Yet there are limitations to viewing the unsustainable tourism development in the UAE by only addressing its environmental impacts and ignoring the social dimensions. While the ongoing severe abuse and exploitation of migrant labor as well as the human trafficking component has also been well documented in both academic literature and the media, there is almost a complete void in respect to the social impacts of tourism development, the invasion of resident foreigners that come along with this industry and the envisioned 15 millions future tourists that certainly by and large do not belong to the "responsible" tourism segment on the already highly marginalized Emirati community. In this respect, Al-Suwaidi emphasized that foreigners constitute almost 90 percent of the resident population and accentuated this figure by saying "*sometimes we feel like strangers in our own country*" (Al-Mezel, 2007). Likewise, Al-Roken is deeply concerned about the ongoing alienation in the most contradiction laden society in the Middle East and enunciates that sensitivities of locals should be recognized (Shadid, 2007). While audacious enough to question one of the tacit social contracts underpinning the modern UAE that explicitly caters for foreigners at the expense of nationals to achieve maximum economic growth, he is trying to conceptualize how to safeguard Emirati identities from an overpowering encroachment of a globalized culture by recapitulating: "*We have exiled ourselves from our own land*" (Quarmany, 2008, p. 60). Similarly in an op-ed piece, Qatari national Al-Kuwari, describes the situation as a premeditated infringement of the rights of citizens and questions if the UAE government respects the rights of their peoples as citizens and human beings. In line with non politicized scholarly discourse, he highlights the construction expansion that spearheads the so-called development, as a nationally unjustified choice and "*the development of loss*"; the loss of precious native land,

the disintegration of national communities, and endangerment of the livelihood of future generations (Al-Kuwari, 2008). Nevertheless, the economic diversification in the UAE requires a lack of political participation by citizens and hence the progressive alienation ought to be considered a specific and deliberate political tool fostered by the regime.

Dubai is now confronted with the need to implement recessionary measures to attract further all-inclusive mass tourism to one of the most water scarce countries in the world. When preparing this proposal package deals from 678€ (935 USD) to 995€ (1372 USD) were available for a two week vacation in a five star hotel of a well known international hotel chain including the flight, transfer, and breakfast or half-board respectively. In consideration of the real cost, including highly subsidized imported food and services, not to mention the air-conditioned pool this should be an example of a political agenda with obscure motives that would need further discussion. In a recent study analyzing the performance of hotel chains in the GCC Assaf and Barros (2011) concluded that hotels located in the UAE had experienced the highest drop in productivity (in comparison Saudi Arabia maintained growth). The authors suggested that the country might thus need to focus on developing its mid-scale hotel market to improve its resilience and diversify its tourist base. Stephenson and Ali-Knight (2010) came to the same conclusion a year earlier. However they emphasized that the need to encourage people to travel to the destination in significant numbers could challenge any productive notion of a socially sustainable tourism environment and intensify prevailing social concerns. Odeh (2011) in a very audacious study specifically analyzed the local perceptions of tourism in Dubai and concluded that there were significant feelings of resentment.

Another Gulf country that already has an overwhelming expatriate presence and likewise has the declared objective to bring in even more foreigners is **Qatar**. The initiation of a more ambitious tourism promotion in 2010 came along with an investment of roughly 20 billion USD in five years to promote the so called infrastructure that supports tourism. Qatar is vying with Abu Dhabi and Dubai to become the Gulf's transit hub with all three destinations boosting airport capacity. According to the Qatar Tourism Authority (QTA), room numbers are projected to grow to 30000 by the end of 2013, including hotels and furnished apartments mainly in the luxury segment (Walid, 2010). Conversely, the QTA said hotel occupancy rates fell by 6.3 percent in 2009 compared to the previous year, and the revenues earned by four and five-star hotels fell respectively. The authority's strategy focuses on business, cultural, sports, and educational tourism. Next to the proverbial "high-end" leisure tourist, Qatar is specifically also targeting the business segment. The question how useful both cultural (based mainly on imported culture) and sports tourism (based mainly on foreign athletes) in respect to sustainability principles is may be contentious, but to focus on meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE) sounds like a reasonable comparative advantage in the absence of other unique endowments (refer to Focus 7: MICE Tourism: Reconciling Growth with Sustainable Development and Restrictive Policies. p. 17). This orientation also correlates with the quest to become a transport hub between Europe and Asia.

In 2004 **Kuwait** announced that a twenty year tourism masterplan was being developed and to be implemented in 2005. The main objective was to create employment for nationals and to develop and improve domestic tourism. As a second priority, Kuwait tries to position itself as an inbound GCC tourist destination with a strong emphasis on MICE and as a family holiday destination for GCC residents. As a first implementation step the country drastically improved immigration policies and provided incentives for foreign investment. The longer-term plans for Kuwait's tourism industry include the large-scale development of offshore islands, open areas, and current commercial locations. However, according to business elites the lack of a coherent tourism strategy by the Kuwaiti government has failed to deliver. By contrast, another source claims that low cost carriers such as Jazeera Airways and premium service airline Wataniya Airways are attracting a growing number of visitors to the country with its ever-increasing selection of luxury hotels and resorts (Nacheva, 2010). From a sustainable development point of view it might actually be a wise decision to not rush into tourism development to please the business elite and give priority to some more urgent domestic concerns. Once ready to invite a carefully selected group of visitors into the country, who will respect local culture, urban heritage and enjoy the extreme hospitality as well as tranquility in Kuwait, the country could for instance benefit from cooperating with Saudi Arabia in promoting an alternative tourism experience (e.g. with travel literature covering the Kingdom and Kuwait).

**Bahrain** certainly can be considered the oldest regional mainstream tourism destination in the Gulf, which registered very excessive growth patterns since 1950 by being a key destination for Saudi visitors and especially by establishing an atmosphere of tolerance and freedom. While there has been no significant effort to promote the tiny archipelago as a destination for the past years, Bahrain saw some noteworthy innovative input since 2009. According to Aziz, Bahrain will try to benchmark itself as a weekend get-away as well as a MICE destination, for primarily "high-spending" regional visitors (comprising of both GCC nationals and foreigners residing in these countries). While there are indicators that Bahrain wants to distance itself from being a destination of vice, new initiatives to promote the islands historical treasures (for instance the Dilmun civilization) and urban heritage (by revitalizing old houses and addressing multiple uses of space) are in the pipeline. Most importantly, there are signs of at least the 'sincere commitment' to implement sustainable approaches and the commendable realization that tourism development in the past has not been sustainable (Aziz, 2009). If there will be a chance to overcome the immense political obstacles and to find feasible ways to incorporate those constructive programs for community-based tourism into Bahrain's branding strategies remains to be seen. However, the fact that there is already a scholarly analysis on how the indigenous craft sector could play a larger and more important role within the development of the Bahraini economy in general and the tourism sector in particular should be considered a step in the right direction (see Follad, 2006).

Likewise **Oman** has in general pursued more sustainable development pathways. Being the only GCC country next to Saudi Arabia with a serious long term sustainable tourism potential and global comparative advantage with its



uniqueness and natural assets (with Oman's spectacular wadis just representing one of the country's treasures), the Sultanate should give priority to developing this sector responsibly and reversing some of those progressively evolving negative trends. In a comprehensive study entitled *"Prospects of mountain ecotourism in Oman: the example of As Sawjarah on Al Jabal al Akhdar"* Buerkert et al. carefully present the incoherence of GCC tourism policy in respect to sustainability principles (the paper will be distributed among session participants, including photos that reveal the unique and immaculate beauty of Oman's mountains). To date there is no better analysis available that puts that drive towards infrastructure development and private sector involvement into perspective with the reality of Gulf politics and values. Accordingly the authors note: *"In Oman's Al Jabal al Akhdar mountains, this development has already taken shape in the form of a three-lane access highway, several new hotels and paved roads to some of the more remote areas of the Sayq Plateau, where tourists can wander through the gardens and decaying houses of now abandoned settlements and sometimes leave nothing but their garbage behind"* (Buerkert et al., 2010, p. 105). Finally, the article presents ways in which the village of As Sawjarah might serve as an important model case for a cautious but rigorous transformation of a traditional agro-pastoral mountain oasis into a cultural heritage site and ecotourism destination. Furthermore in another relevant study, all mangrove environments of Oman are considered of extremely high conservation value because of their relative scarcity. The author recommends that these habitats are to be granted full protection from future impacts by government legislation (McCue, 2005). A comprehensive study of the development of Oman's tourism industry since the seventies has been contributed by Winckler (2007). He examines the role of the tourism industry within Oman's overall macroeconomic development framework, explores the countries comparative advantages in relation to both regional and international markets, takes a closer look at the status quo of tourism policy as well as facilities development, and concludes with comparing Oman's potential with the barriers for future tourism growth.

Yet despite the fact that the long-term consequences of mass tourism for the fragile desert environment of Oman's mountains and coasts would need urgent attention, there are visible tendencies of maldevelopment. Oman's tourism plans envision 12 million inbound visitors annually by 2020, presenting an almost eightfold increase on the current level and thus an overexploitation of its carrying capacity. Large-scale construction projects include three new airports and an approved spending of around 8 billion USD on tourism-related property developments across the country. While an increasing sea cruise trade brought more than 120 cruise ships and 300000 passengers during the 2010-11 season, the focus is mainly on attracting intra-regional tourism (including India and Iran) as well as Russians. At the same time religious authorities in Oman voiced their concern against the government's efforts to boost mass tourism at the expense of cultural and Islamic values requesting to reintroduce a nationwide alcohol ban. While the Sultanate continuously claims that they are not seeking large scale tourism (Oxford Business Group, 2010), there is an obvious misconception on the principles of low-impact tourism and the general believe that establishing so called "environmentally friendly" resorts corresponds to "sustainable tourism".

Finally, **Saudi Arabia** presents itself as a very unique case study in development policy. While the official body responsible for tourism development in the Kingdom, namely the Saudi Commission for Tourism & Antiquities (SCTA), sets itself apart from the majority of Gulf institutions by being staffed with exceptional leadership, equipped with integrity, commitment, courage, endurance, incontestable environmental stewardship and a corresponding highly qualified educational background, these relentless efforts are embedded in a socio-cultural environment that is not conducive to the adaptation of the necessary far reaching and multisectoral approach to implement sustainable development pathways. **In short:** "Ideologies of *good governance* supplemented with 21<sup>st</sup> century *Romanticism* versus Saudi *Realpolitik*" (Spiess, 2011).

In general it can be said that those policy recommendations that have been strictly followed by SCTA's president over the past decade are conceptualized around Western-derived standards of conduct. In other words, the normative concepts of 'good governance' and 'sustainable development' are assumed to be adopted by and applicable in non-Western politico-cultural contexts. Evidently policy makers, no matter how privileged, do not operate in a vacuum and thus the desired sustainable progress still faces formidable political, socio-cultural and institutional constraints. Besides multiplication, overlap and low level of integration of various state agencies, the political landscape in the Kingdom as elsewhere in the GCC is still characterized by an absence of effective coordination, administrative streamlining and participatory decision making processes, dysfunctional legal frameworks, poor levels of enforcement of existing legislation, ambiguity in regulations, bureaucratic clientelism, shortsighted planning, extremely low monitoring and data-gathering compliance, inefficient national research strategies as well as inadequate capacity building and enabled society. Further intractable hindrances constitute next to ad-hoc royal top down directives and interventions those *"unaccountable and seemingly immovable mid-level actors stalling decisions and pursuing their own agendas"* (Hertog, 2010, p. 185).

Despite these difficulties, the question remains if Saudi Arabia is ready for sustainable tourism. This answer is unequivocally yes! However, when it comes to the present manifestation of tourism development, which is based on massive construction, visible pollution, environmental degradation and bringing in even more foreign labor (illegally, facilitated by alleged 'religious tourism') that is currently pursued by certain interest groups in the Kingdom, the response will not be affirmative. In fact such irresponsible development can have detrimental effects on the future wellbeing and human security of Saudi society.

The Kingdom is literally blessed with everything that the 'alternative' traveler is seeking (with the exception of a feasible public transport system). Next to an abundance of spectacular landscapes (black and white volcanoes, extensive lava fields, limestone caves filled with speleothems, the Asir mountain range, the Rub' al Khali, the Al Wahba crater, Al-Hasa oasis, endless coastlines, some of the world's most spectacular dive sites and so forth – it is an endless list), Saudi Arabia has a tremendous amount of tangible and intangible heritage to offer (adobe architecture, historic urban & religious heritage, a diversity of folk music & traditional dances, poetry, crafts, delicious local cuisine,

coffeehouses, the Jinadreeyah Cultural Festival, UNESCO World Heritage sites, etc. – another endless list), a diversity of cultures and even more important **generous as well as amazingly hospitable people**.

Ergo the Kingdom could in theory easily turn into a top secret pioneer destination and hence would appeal to the same type of traveler that can be found for instance in Torres del Paine National Park (Chile), the Salar de Uyuni (Bolivia) or in Agadez (Niger), seeking remoteness, extreme challenges and to curiously “*explore strange new worlds*”, however in the real world foreign tourists are still not permitted to discover any of this and hence the motto “*to boldly go where no man has gone before*” (sometime in the distant future) fits perfectly. As a peace offering SCTA published a new picturesque English-language magazine entitled ‘Saudi Voyager’ to display the countries magnificent assets. However there is a catch, the exquisite source of information is only meant “*.... for all those living in the Kingdom*” (Hawari, 2010).

Moreover, there is another serious dilemma to be overcome with this modern von Humboldt tourist typology and their preferred mode of baggage (in consideration of the fact that most countries do not build three lane highways to make their mountains, ancient heritage sites and protected areas ‘easily accessible’, but have a preference to conserve their assets): ‘Backpackers’ are the Kingdoms worst nightmare and Saudi Arabia is not only searching for the proverbial high-end tourist, but there is a superlative in this particular case which translates into “very high-end”. They did not yet decide on a minimum net worth, but it should be clear enough that the average professor or researcher will never qualify. Nevertheless, while this top-down dichotomous thinking among policy makers is ‘hopefully’ based on lack of information or false impressions, the average Saudi citizen is extremely welcoming to visitors and in adherence with Islamic values usually does not prejudge people based exclusively on their income.

Transforming cultures – especially such arcane approaches to deliberately discourage cross-cultural understanding and tourism as a vital force for peace - is with certainty not a challenge to be underestimated. Normally the task will require long term efforts in which selected cultural pioneers (usually those that studied abroad with the ability to sufficiently step out of their cultural realities to critically examine them) perform diligently to redirect those strategic culture shaping institutions. Saudi Arabia should realize the prospects that the authentic version of sustainable tourism development could bring, especially in respect to creating meaningful small scale entrepreneurship, community initiatives, national pride, and to provide those urgently needed employment and training opportunities for the youth. In consideration of the fact that the Kingdom already has a highly developed infrastructure, the country should depart from the perception that they must “build things” to stimulate tourism development. Moreover, the nation should reexamine its responsibility as both being the birthplace of Islam and as a G20 member state toward promoting peace, understanding and friendship through the direct, spontaneous and non-mediatised contacts delivered by alternative tourism and realize that policies of exclusion do not always provide the required outcomes for a better future.

One noteworthy point in the direction of a more sustainable tourism is that the tourist has to comply with the social conducts of Saudi Arabia. This recommendable policy shields the local population from being confronted with disrespectful foreigners and would automatically filter the tourism type of the currently still ‘fictional’ international leisure traveler in a more “responsible” direction.

Despite all the stupendous work that has been done to prepare Saudi Arabia for tourism (enough to fill almost 400 pages in the forthcoming monograph about Saudi tourism development from the perspective of human security), the SCTA president is certainly still facing a minefield in consideration of the diluted implementation of broader-based policies that the success of tourism will depend upon and with certainty the mission will require a great amount of resilience. The situation reminds of a famous quote from cultural anthropologist, Margaret Mead: “*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has*” or maybe with a touch of romanticism from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: “*Dream no small dreams for they have no power to move the hearts of men.*”

### Significance of Topic to the Expansion of Gulf Studies

Despite the fact that tourism development represents a major policy component in GCC member states and that the pace of the current large scale tourism development should conceivably best be seen as a ‘threat multiplier’ that intensifies existing problems and vulnerabilities in the region, there is a dearth of studies that have deconstructed the efficacy of these policies, the power dynamics or the underlying political ideologies of tourism promotion in the Gulf.

When reviewing the broader literature, it can be said that the evaluation of tourism policy in general is extremely rare and that “*most studies of policy within the frame of tourism have been prescriptive studies of what governments should do rather than evaluations of what has happened and why*” (Gössling, 2008, p. 44). According to Bianchi political analysis of tourism have in common that they concentrate on external macro-structural processes and essentially ignore local socio-political and economic circumstances (Bianchi 2004: 271). Tisdell emphasized that the economics of any tourism destination should be considered carefully because an unprofitable destination is declared “sustainable” **only if it is subsidized by government interests** (Tisdell, 1998). Astleithner and Hamedinger (2003) opted for a multi-faceted examination and demonstrated that for example, the details and processes of governance, the relationships between political actors, and the institutions of the political culture provide the context in which the local concept of sustainability and its related indicators are understood.

Hazbun (2008) was the pioneer to offers a unique perspective on the political economy of the Middle East from a tourism perspective. He contextualizes how **government elites are using tourism to take part in globalization while, at the same time, crafting it to serve state interests and repress their societies**. The notion that the expansion of travel in the region has allowed states to



encourage integration into the global economy while simultaneously expanding control over their society represents in his opinion a serious paradox.

Nevertheless, when it comes to the GCC member states, the available information consists of mainly descriptive or unsophisticated business/economic analysis and to date there has not been a single scholarly analysis that deals with the above mentioned questions. In fact the few authors from either tourism studies or related fields (however not political science) that have published noteworthy articles within their respective domains concerned with the GCC have been cited in this proposal. Unsurprisingly, there is not a single comprehensive scholarly book on either tourism development in the region or on each of the Gulf economies available. Albeit a small number of case studies, especially on Dubai, made their way into the mainstream tourism literature. However, while these authors obviously displayed a remarkable knowledge on the global tourism industry, predictably their understanding of the social and cultural tourism dysfunctions as well as the political ideologies in the GCC continue to be very limited. Concomitantly, available tourism analysis presents itself as non scholarly and has been provided by business intelligence services, such as for instance the Oxford Business Group or Euromonitor International. Paradoxically, the only forthcoming book based on a multiyear analysis evaluating the concept of tourism development through the lens of human/national security, the negative externalities, power dynamics, political ideologies and the institutional deficiencies is concerned with Saudi Arabia – the only GCC member state that is not even open to international leisure travelers. Accordingly, there would be a much more urgent need to evaluate what is currently happening in the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman and Kuwait.

Moreover, as a result of the political dimension of tourism development in the GCC the sector is characterized by a general lack of data, and data which is often incomparable, inconsistent or not credible. Some of the urgently needed information tends to be confined to consultancy and government reports, which for reasons of perceived sensitivity and confidentiality, are unlikely to enter the public domain. **Hence lack of available data and knowledge, next to political will, presents itself as a key limitation to informed and appropriate decision making designed to realize the full social and economic potential of the tourism industry.** The void results in the inability to assess the sustainable tourism potential for any destination or tourism product, identifying its competitive position and defining the 'appropriate' markets and addressing them effectively.

## Objectives and Scope

The session aims to fill the void in the available literature and to discuss the processes of tourism planning and policies in the GCC countries. In this context, we will explore questions concerned with achieving environmental, social and economic sustainability of tourism alongside the governance mechanisms needed to support sustainable tourism in the Gulf economies. We will further aim to develop new strategies to be employed to avoid the errors committed in the past and propose remedial actions to those currently unsustainable development pathways. In

consideration of the fact that all types of tourism just like all other industries (e.g. agriculture) will have a negative impact on the fragile environments of the GCC, we will take a closer look at the net social benefit of tourism development, to encapsulate economic, social and environmental benefits and costs, and ask whether benefits outweigh costs overall. Such an approach will include non-monetary values and will allow the necessary trade-offs across economic, social and environmental domains. Concurrently, research indicates that in their aggressive pursuit of tourism development, Gulf governments either failed to address or deliberately ignored the critical question of local employment, ergo it is also crucial to assess the status quo, discuss why tourism has or has not been able to succeed with the set policy goals and especially elaborate the political rationale behind these deficiencies. Finally, since several studies confirmed the immense social impact of tourism on Gulf nationals, resulting in disapproving attitudes or in the case of Saudi Arabia an altogether false perception of tourism even preceding the advent of international leisure tourism. Paradoxically the proportion of Saudi nationals that do travel themselves is extremely high in comparison to other nationalities and the concept of travel especially to seek knowledge is accepted and encouraged both implicitly and explicitly by Islam. Since such resentments can impact future tourism development initiatives, we would like to highlight the importance to put more emphasis on documenting and understanding the negative attitudes of GCC nationals. Consequently, structured community consultations and surveys should provide a truthful reflection of economic, social and environmental impacts in different GCC settings. Next to tourism's severe negative impacts on identity, the more responsible approach could also serve to promote a feeling of national pride, especially by conserving and promoting cultural heritage. **Therefore the session will encourage submissions that analyze new perspectives and approaches to heritage tourism, especially best practice examples to preserve archaeological sites and historic urban areas, including UNESCO World Heritage sites in the GCC.** (please do not forget that there is a policy dimension to this (!) and in order to maintain our holistic approach please try to consider the impact of climate change on heritage preservation). However empirical work and comparative studies, especially with neighboring countries (e.g. Jordan, Iran, Egypt) are also welcome, especially if they offer new insights and best practice guidance.

The session will adopt a **holistic multi-disciplinary approach** with the specific objective to foster greater understanding and collaboration between scholars from diverse disciplines, practitioners and - at least in theory (we plead guilty to being hopeless idealists) - policy makers.

In addition to the specific objectives, the panel intends to assist in the creation of new networks, put a special emphasis on encouraging scholarly work from young GCC nationals, promote new research as well as disseminate the gained knowledge and assessments by publishing an edited book which will not only include the proverbial synopsis for policy makers, but to provide feasible recommendations that can lead to a more equitable, resilient and sustainable future for Gulf nationals. Finally the panel is based on the assumption that 'indigenous' human and social capital is a prerequisite for the development of sustainable tourism and while its implementation could be possible in some of the GCC countries it would eventually require fundamental shifts in operations, systems, ethics and philosophies.

## Possible Panel Themes / Questions

**Please note:** These suggestions are just meant to be *'thought provoking'* to encourage 'out of the box' thinking and challenge myopic approaches! Every topic that is relevant to the critical evaluation of tourism policy in the GCC is very welcome – there is no need to relate to any of these foci. The fact that some of these themes are quite sensitive **was intentional to stimulate opposing views**

### Focus 1: Tourism and GCC security dynamics

From a security perspective, contemporary **tourism development in the GCC should be discussed in terms of both human security and the established field of security studies**, and it should be emphasized that the probable associations are indirect and highly contingent on the future political decisions of Gulf regimes.

The prevalent characteristics of the current Gulf Arab reality which pose serious obstacles to sustainable progress and the widespread absence of human security as a prerequisite for noteworthy development have already been adequately discussed in several Arab Human Development Reports (UNDP/RBAS, 2002 to 2009). The latest assessment argues that the concept of human security is a useful lens for viewing challenges to and envisioning solutions for, sustainable human development in the region and should be used as an operational tool for policy formulation and implementation. In this respect, **contemporary tourism development in the GCC is intrinsically linked to those intense, extensive, prolonged and comprehensive threats to which nationals' lives and freedom are vulnerable**. These diverse challenges include for instance water scarcity, food security, pollution, desertification, (youth) unemployment, public health, poverty, oppression, inequity, demographic imbalances, loss of heritage/identity and so forth. Thus the human security paradigm provides an opportunity to identify threats, to avoid them when possible, and to mitigate their effects when they do occur.

Nevertheless, to focus entirely on the human security approach and to be dismissive of traditional security concepts can be potentially ambiguous since the current irresponsible tourism development has the potential to exacerbate those existing problems of instability and generate acts of aggression. This scenario is especially true where trade-offs between positive and negative impacts are perceived to be too high by the national population per se or by different strata of this community. In the GCC context, it cannot be excluded that certain individuals or groups who support strong cultural and/or religious values and feel that these values are threatened by tourism to an extent that is increasingly unbearable, become gradually more radical in their approach and may even resort to terrorist attacks as an ultimate means to combat the 'perceived' threat. Hence the potential impacts of tourism need to be analyzed according to their probability to provoke such intense reactions from residents or even international extremist networks. The fact that *'Dubai is rapidly changing into a secular state'*, while tolerating the profound use of so called non-Islamic ways to excess has certainly not only raised the attention of religious hardliners, but also of critical thinkers from around the globe. Aziz (1999) notes that violence is a human reaction to irresponsible tourism development per se and that this cannot be linked to Islam or global terrorism (in fact no

other scholar has thus far managed to establish a correlation). In fact, the amazing hospitality that is still found in some GCC states or was available in the past as part of the regional culture can at least partly be connected to Islam, which supports the duty of hospitality toward travelers regardless of race, nationality or religion. Aziz comes to the conclusion that instead of pointing a finger at the Muslim host communities alone, the atmosphere of rejection of tourism can directly be linked to the careless actions of the tourism industry, the governments, the developers and the tourists. Al-Hamarneh (2005) shares the views of numerous authors by emphasizing that face-to-face intercultural dialogue is the most promising way to prevent negative and violent developments in the tourism sector. However, the practiced concept to alienate foreigners by spatial isolation makes them and those working in the sector more vulnerable to insecurity, while at the same time impeding the potential for dialogue between different cultures. This phenomenon is especially visible in the UAE where contact between nationals and their culture is discouraged in numerous ways.

Yet from an objective point of view those behavior patterns incongruent with Islamic traditions cannot be attributed to the influx of Western tourists alone, but in fact can certainly to a great extent be ascribed to regional tourism as well. Undeniably excessive economic abundance among GCC nationals gave rise to a culture that attributed great social significance to symbols of material differentiation, resulting in a form of hyper-consumption (especially shopping) and the extreme display of extravagance that severely contradicts basic Islamic values. Moreover, the so called outbound 'tourism of vice' from Saudi Arabia to Bahrain and Dubai has been discussed in the media and even academic literature. The question why this special segment of Saudi society tends to behave much more extreme when confronted with what is often termed as 'openness' in comparison to the often well educated Saudi elites that spend their summer vacations in Southern Spain, France, Miami or California (evidently there are a few *enfants terribles* among those as well, but they certainly don't stand out from other nationalities) should make an interesting academic analysis, especially in respect to strategies targeting primarily regional and domestic tourists.

Religious tourism, especially in form of the annual hajj pilgrimage, presents another serious human as well as traditional security threat to the region and especially Saudi Arabia. Albeit this is a very sensitive topic and hence it is very difficult to have a reasonable discourse, there is still a need to discuss the impact of these threats (for instance illegal immigration, facilitation of international crime, epidemic events and pandemic spread) on the current and future well being of Saudi society (and these problems do not respect borders). Next to the immense burden on Saudi security forces, the current 'open door policy' is basically an invitation to criminal activity, especially for inbound visitors from less developed nations. Is the Kingdom really this naive to believe that everyone is coming for religious purposes? Don't they know that the most corrupt institutions in some of the source countries are handling the so called 'pilgrimage travel'? Don't they realize that these are the channels for human trafficking, money laundering and prostitution into the country? On the other hand, do they know that many of these pilgrims cannot really afford this trip and hence are sacrificing their children's education, health, etc. and are



borrowing the travel costs from impoverished relatives that may never be paid back? Since all of this is very unlikely, why doesn't anyone put an immediate end to these practices and thereby reduce the overcrowding? How much greed of a few can be acceptable for a country that is proud of its religious values and why does society still prefer to ignore these issues, while at the same time complaining that they are restricted to go to their religious sites as often as they wish?

These new emerging security threats need to be taken seriously and there is an urgent need to find a novel sustainable equilibrium between human security and traditional approaches. In this context, Ulrichsen (2009, p. 30) reminds us that a balance between *"competing visions of the national and regional security architecture, between incremental reforms to political and economic structures and the deeper systemic problems which undermine longterm solutions, and between rising demands for, and falling supplies of, natural resources"* must be found.

### Focus 2: 2022 FIFA World Cup - Who will benefit?

Qatar's controversial success in taking the 2022 FIFA World Cup bid however has raised an avalanche of protests and the initial objective to bridge the gap between the Arab World and the West can already be considered a complete branding failure. Next to disappointed soccer fans and the possibility that decision might still be reinvestigated, a multitude of organizations are already highlighting the "darker side" of infrastructure development in Qatar, a phenomenon that was previously by and large associated with the UAE. The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) has just launched a new multimedia report in Brussels to bring attention to the few rights and inhuman living conditions of migrant laborers in Doha and Dubai with the declared intent "to put pressure on FIFA, Qatar, and the rest of the region, to improve labor standards" (IUTC, 2011). Transparency International has also just released a new publication which is clearly asking for an independent investigation to clear up the corruption allegations related to the selection of World Cup host countries (Schenk, 2011). Documentaries to enlighten the general public will undeniable reveal some of those topics – for instance human trafficking and the abuse of domestic labor – **that will certainly not shed a positive image on the entire region and may even lead to further hostilities against Arabs and the Islamic world in general.**

On the other hand, Qatari nationals will be confronted with an influx of foreigners who beyond doubt will have very little respect for the cultural sensitivities of the host nation in both the process of preparing the World Cup and especially during the event. The notion of "offensive behavior" in the form of fanatic fans, partying almost nude under the influence of alcohol has certainly raised reasonable criticism among the more conservative Gulf population.

Will any of this lead to a sustainable form of tourism, which is meant to promote cross-cultural awareness and should enhance the understanding of the Gulf Arab and Islamic world, especially among Westerners? Skeptics believe that numerous concepts presented by Qatar (based entirely on foreign expertise – Germany certainly being among the

countries to profit most from this) are not feasible, while numerous issues in respect to environmental degradation have so far been totally ignored. In this respect, Scharfenort is asking the million dollar question that is currently being raised by many scholars in respect the some of the GCC projects: *"Still not exactly clear is the aim of hosting the FIFA World Cup: is it for marketing purposes only to rise from the ashes next to famous Dubai that has fallen into disgrace or is Qatar honestly interested to establish itself as a number one sporting destination"* (Scharfenort, 2011). She concludes that with Islamic values exceptionally influencing socio-cultural norms and policies in Qatar, a balance between tourism development, tourist influx and traditional culture of local residents will be difficult.

**The real question is how will such an event seriously benefit the future wellbeing of Qatari nationals and the sustainable development of their society?**

### Focus 3: Tourism development - Will it really be a cure for national unemployment?

Policy makers in the Gulf economies often promote their surge for tourism development as a means to create employment opportunities for their citizens, especially since investments in this sector tend to generate a larger and more rapid increase in employment than equal investment in other economic activities. The International Labor Organization estimates that on average one direct job within the tourism industry induces around one and a half additional indirect jobs related to the tourism economy (ILO, 2002). Since tourism creates a variety of jobs requiring different employee profiles with the majority having lower formal qualification requirements, it would be the most suitable policy approach to cater to the dearth of skills among nationals in the Gulf economies. Moreover the sector has a tendency to employ younger people and those who prefer to work part-time (notably women) or temporary (for instance students during vacation time). At the same time, available research suggests that most workers in the tourism sector tend to earn less than workers in socially comparable occupations.

Conversely, despite the recurrent rhetoric of policy makers, a fundamental gap still exists between the available national human resources and the needs of the labor market in general. When looking at the status quo, the attempts to "nationalize" the workforce should be considered, at best, incomplete successes and at worst absolute failures. At the same time unemployment especially among the youth is on the rise in all of the GCC states and the vast majority of the young unemployed never held a job before. Prevailing patriarchal structures and the redistributive policies in the region, permit youth to spend extended periods of time searching or waiting for a preferred civil service and public-sector enterprises job (Yousef, 2003). Hence, unemployment appears to be still largely 'by choice' due to unmet expectations on salaries and working conditions. Consequently, it is unlikely to assume that with the current structural deficiencies GCC nationals will be willing to work in the tourism sector, where they will not encounter customarily high wages, job security, generous social

allowances and retirement benefits, short working hours and the ability to display a lack of work discipline.

So at least in theory, a shift to sustainable tourism concepts could alleviate some of the difficulties currently associated with the employment of nationals in the globalized GCC tourism industry since it offers small-scale opportunities that require less skills (e.g. language skills). For instance the 'alternative' tourist that goes hiking in Bolivia, does certainly not expect the local family business that rents out rooms in a mountain village to speak any English. In this context, tour guides, bicycle, horse or camel rentals, running minibuses or local restaurants do not require many years of vocational training and still seem to provide quite adequate services to millions of 'alternative' travelers in all corners of the globe. Achieving these aspirations however requires a good fit between the types of service which tourists demand and those which locals are willing to provide. Policies which prevent or discourage independent travelers are reducing exactly these opportunities for local small scale entrepreneurs, who tend to choose employment models which complement their existing livelihood strategies and thus maximize their returns.

Since this is the case in most GCC countries, is the rhetoric about creating meaningful employment opportunities sincere? From both a security and sustainable development point of view, to develop a tourism industry that is dependent on foreign expertise and labor is unacceptable and should be considered a 'development of loss' that uses up the resources required for future generations. Hence every effort should be made to implant those nationalization policies and create the necessary awareness for the urgency of these policies.

A sector-focused approach to sustainable tourism has recently been identified in the development of self-regulatory codes of conduct and practice. While encouraging participating members to both take a leadership role in managing sustainability issues and to build a collective identity of responsibility, the system functions by means of peer pressure and status determinants, the threat of government regulation and social perceptions. One of these codes in the GCC member states could be to advertise their businesses as "nationalization compliant", based on relevant government media campaigns and the necessary framework conditions (labor/immigration/education). While prospects for widely-based adoption of sustainability standards in society and the private sector are expected to be dim, this approach certainly has advantages and reduced costs compared to forced compliance or litigation. Is this a feasible step in the right direction? How can the Gulf economies overcome their structural differences? When it comes to vocational training required for the tourism sector the situation looks even worse, since only Oman has so far managed to implement somewhat sustainable training. How can the private sector be involved in developing these urgently needed skills based on the German model? What if the protection of the system continues to take the upper hand over promoting capacities and skills?

#### **Focus 4: Agro-ecotourism for GCC Food Security - A feasible way to sustain socially responsible and sustainable agriculture in rural areas**

One feasible option to sustain rural areas is to introduce and promote agro-ecotourism. This form of niche tourism is

considered to have the potential to not only assist rural communities with feasible solutions to help diversify their economic base, but it would also facilitate increasingly urban GCC populations to understand the important role that rural life played in their history.

While ecotourism is nature-based and agro-tourism is farm-based, the neologism agro-ecotourism presents itself as a best practice combination of both concepts. The rural landscape, usually a combination of peripheral areas and agro-ecosystems, is the most important resource for sustainable low impact tourism development, while possessing a greater aesthetic and recreational potential over uniform, degraded and/or polluted agricultural areas. In this respect the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in its fifth meeting in Nairobi came to the conclusion that *"in some areas, low-input and small-scale agricultural activities that result in both an attractive environment and the maintenance of high levels of biological diversity can also offer an opportunity for tourism."*

*Sale of products (souvenirs, crafts and arts) derived from sustainably harvested natural resources may also provide significant opportunities for income-generation and employment"* (CBD, 2000: Decision V/25, 12 e). Thus the symbiotic relationship between rural hospitality and agriculture (including livestock) offers new employment and income generating opportunities for rural populations, together with the expression and cultural exchange of agricultural traditions, craftsmanship, development of new value-added products (for instance jam or sweets from dates), or even culinary heritage. Cavaliere (2006) conceptualizes that agro-ecotourism will be characterized by eco-agriculture, ecotourism, and community-based initiatives. Moreover this novel form of tourism can also create incentives to shift to the urgently needed organic agriculture since people can increase their confidence in organic products through better awareness. Eco-organic agricultural practices which benefit the environment while at the same time financially gratifying farmers include the accommodation in buildings renovated or built according to ecological architecture (natural materials such as adobe, bioclimatic criteria, energy saving and waste management, landscape planning, etc.); naturalistic and didactic activities (e.g. organic gardening, compost making); on-farm consumption or selling of organic foodstuffs, and sensitizing guests on rational use of natural resources (e.g. in-house solar energy but also in greenhouses or for processing, water reuse and recycling). In this context, organic agriculture is considered to be one important approach to environmentally sustainable food production and can generate several positive impacts to rural society. Community-based participation however must first determine the extent to which rural societies are comfortable interacting with the various types of people that may visit their farm.

Above all date production in the GCC (especially in Saudi Arabia) could benefit from a shift toward introducing sustainability standards and organic agriculture (best practice examples to be found in Tunisia, Egypt and California). One obvious beneficiary would be the seriously threatened - as a result of overexploitation - natural marvel of Al-Hasa (Al-Ahsa) oasis. Another example can be traced to



the Asir Mountains where crops were traditionally cultivated on steeply terraced mountainsides, a practice which is slowly being abandoned due to lack of terrace maintenance and the non-availability of labor partly as a result of rural-urban migration. At the same time these old environmentally suitable traditions are being replaced by unsustainable intensive agriculture which is encroaching into the fragile environment of higher altitudes and is responsible for diverting water for irrigation from *wadis* by installing dams.

While responsible and sustainable tourism development could help to reduce such devastating practices, this would require a dramatic shift in values and sincere regulations from the leadership. There are indeed more examples scattered over the Gulf, but unfortunately hitherto the potential of tourism development was never linked with more sustainable agricultural production systems in the region (in Saudi Arabia only with large scale agriculture, not with a shift to sustainable production or organic farming).

#### **Focus 5: Heritage Tourism in the GCC - A missed chance to reinforce national identity and preserve cultural as well as natural heritage?**

Another form of tourism that could have a positive impact on sustainable development in the Gulf economies and serve as a remedy to the regions loss of identity is heritage tourism. As with all the other forms of niche tourism there is a multitude of definitions, but at least one useful working interpretation can be found on the website of The National Trust for Historic Preservation in the United States. The private, nonprofit organization includes cultural, historic and natural resources and defines 'cultural heritage tourism' as "traveling to experience the places, artifacts and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present" (National Trust, 2011). What makes it even more problematic is the fact that the concept includes the term 'culture', thus encompassing everything that defines a community from its way of life to tangible and intangible elements. Because of the diversity of encounters and products that constitute it, cultural heritage tourism can be further segmented into smaller, more specific subcategories which for instance include the very important regional and international experience of **pilgrimage/religious tourism** (Hajj/Umrah) to Saudi Arabia.

Timothy & Boyd (2003) distinguish between 'passive' and 'serious' heritage tourists, a classification which would help to define the difference between the mainstream organized tour consumer or the 'responsible' new independent tourist that looks for the educational encounter and seeks a specific heritage experience of one kind. This special learning component was also applied by Acott, LaTrobe and Howard (1998) to differentiate 'shallow' tourists from their 'deep' counterparts when it comes to nature-based tourism. The later being "ecocentric" and/or "allocentric", in particular in search of intrinsic value, small-scale development, authentic community identity as well as participation and the notion that materialism for its own sake is intolerable. On the other hand, the 'shallow' or anthropocentric tourist has a business as-usual attitude, where nature and everything in it is seen as a resource to be exploited in maximizing profits and human benefits, while management decisions are based on utilitarian reasoning and sustainability is viewed from a very

weak perspective. When it comes to the 'serious' or 'deep' type, studies have consistently shown that heritage travelers stay longer, are extremely well educated, more likely to be female and have a preference for locales off the beaten track. As a paradox this form of travel often tends to be a special subdivision of the often maligned backpacker travel (in the US often referred to hiking, trekking or adventure tourism). However this is most likely one of the most misunderstood concepts by developing countries policy makers and it should reflect the absence of knowledge of tourism types and markets, since for many using a backpack (considering the fact that a quality trekking backpack for the determined outdoor tourist that will not have a negative impact on the owners health will start from 300 USD) is simply the most comfortable form of carrying around your belongings when heading for less developed destinations and remote areas. Consequently, Scheyvens (2002) as well as numerous other authors calls for holistic socio-cultural research on the characteristics of contemporary backpackers and their potential to assist the sustainable development of destinations. Nevertheless, according to Van Egmond (2007), the 'serious', 'deep' or as some authors call them 'dedicated' (insert 'responsible', 'alternative', 'purposeful', etc.) tourist is much more difficult to manage, since they are more demanding in their interaction with locals and when authenticity issues are concerned. For instance, this type of tourist engaging in the religious pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia would care if the faith-based souvenirs on sale are imported from China or if they represent local craftsmanship.

Yet the **concept of natural and cultural heritage preservation and tourism** (just like many other concepts in development policy) **is entirely based on Western constructs**, which are deeply embedded in European cultural, economic, and political processes. In this context, a so called heritage consciousness first transpired with the Enlightenment philosophy of 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe (Lowenthal, 1985). During this period intellectuals sought to mobilize the power of reason in order to reform society, advance knowledge, and oppose intolerance as well as abuses by the religious authorities. They reflected upon Greek and Roman antiquity for examples of intellectual progress, aesthetics in the arts, advanced architecture and philosophy. Consequently, this specific era was characterized by tremendous economic, political, and social change as countries made the transition from trade-based mercantile economies to industrial ones, while at the same time shifting from oligarchic political control to broader-based liberal democratic relations of authority. Thus the concept of the nation state was born and with it came novel challenges that needed to be resolved. When society ceased to be constrained by the absolute authority of the elites and the church, it embraced novel social ideals, especially the **Enlightenment** notions of individualism, liberty, and social justice, resulting in many governments struggling with social control and allegiance of the populace. Consequently, these states had to devise a way to bond people and regions, dissimilar in their class interests, geographical locales, and sometimes in their religious and ethnic backgrounds, to the highly abstract notion of the state, where inhabitants were connected to imagined 'homelands' through the new concept of citizenship.

Subsequent to this period of drastic change, another intellectual movement was conceived in Europe that originated in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which could be considered partly an escape from modern realities as well

as Enlightenment rationalism embodied especially in the scientific rationalization of nature. Next to the emergence of poetic mystery, the zeitgeist of the era had a strong recourse to historical and natural inevitability in the representation of its ideas. The shift to **Romanticism** induced an emphasis upon solitude, privacy and a personal, semi-spiritual relationship with the sublimity of untamed nature and its picturesque qualities. According to Urry (2002) *“individual pleasures were to be derived from an appreciation of impressive physical sights”*. Exemplary objects of these ideals would be the scenery and landscapes of the Alps or magnificent stretches of coastline, but also the remoteness of historical buildings or alien cultures. Nevertheless, besides being the cradle of eco-tourism in its celebration of nature as object of extreme emotion, one of Romanticism's fundamental ideologies and enduring legacies of its political philosophy is the assertion of the concept of nationalism. Strongly inspired by the works of Rousseau and von Herder, the movement had inter alia a focus on the development of national languages and folklore, and the importance of local customs and traditions. By contrast, the contemporary natural and cultural heritage industry on a global scale may serve less for nationalism and identity than as a palliative for rapid social change and the increasing uncertainties of our times as well as to shield us from the seemingly rootless and transient after-effects of modernity and globalization (Chambers, 2006).

When it comes to cultural heritage tourism, the Gulf economies seem to put an emphasis on the built heritage with a preference for using the idiom ‘Build Environment’ (a differentiation that already foreshadows some of the challenges). The term was defined as *“...the identity of a community or of a country. Indeed, the built environment is the reflection of a lifestyle, of a social organization, of artistic practices, and of the architectural adaptation to climatic, geographical, cultural and religious factors”* by the Built Environments for Sustainable Tourism (BEST) conference that was held in Muscat in 2005. When reading this definition, the question that instantly comes into one's mind is what the foreign designed, foreign build and most unsuitable to climatic, geographical, cultural as well as religious factors skyline of Dubai has to do with the identity of the UAE and its citizens? How does this drive toward ‘elusive bought development’ in the form of foreign iconic copy & paste architecture lead to the construction of a ‘sense of place’, a sense which enables nationals to feel that they ‘belong’ to a place, or that a place ‘belongs’ to them? A very similar question could be asked, when taking a critical look at the infrastructure developments in the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. In this particular case it should be up to Muslims and especially Saudis to decide if somewhere in between Burger King, Dunkin Donuts, massive concrete international hotel chains or Starbucks close to the Prophet's burial site is the heritage, identity or architectural adaptation to cultural and religious factors that they wish to present to the world as the most sacred place of Islam. Moreover, there is the question of what those responsible for this devastating development wish to leave behind for future generations and humanity in general?

Within the context of policy planning, a dichotomy exists between preserving the past for its intrinsic value and the call for development in response to changing societal values. This paradox has been profound in the GCC, where we witnessed heritage destruction at an unprecedented scale in

some member states. Sadi and Henderson (2005) observed that in Saudi Arabia, numerous well known landmarks have given way to development projects as part of the nation's drive towards modernization, thereby reducing its attractiveness as a tourism destination. Numerous other important heritage sites in the Kingdom are still under threat. Hence it should be no surprise that the International Conference for Urban Heritage in the Islamic Countries, which was held in Riyadh in May 2010, designed a comprehensive roadmap to preserve architectural heritage and recommended *“to lay and execute plans to ensure balance between urban heritage preservation and requirements of contemporary development”* as well as *“to enact binding controls to preserve mosques and religious facilities”* (SCTA, 2010). In theory, the development of sustainable heritage tourism would play a significant role in providing a native self-image and could serve as a source of dominant visual representations of the nation, but will this concept be feasible in the Gulf economies? For instance, according to a working paper presented by Al-Ghabban there are 1985 identified urban heritage sites in Saudi Arabia, hence how can sustainable tourism contribute to preserve these valuable assets? Islamic urban heritage, with its elegance, simplicity and being based on complex mathematical computations for design, bears testimony to the knowledge and scientific advancement of Islamic civilization and is being admired by millions of international tourists around the world (for instance in Istanbul). What needs to be done to root the value of natural and urban heritage in Gulf societies' minds and to promote the understanding of the need to share this heritage with the rest of the world especially in Saudi Arabia? What will prevent the illusion that they must continuously invest in construction to promote tourism in both Oman and Saudi Arabia? Instead of trying to replicate those unsustainable “tourist” attractions, they should focus on the natural abundance that they already have. Well-presented rural villages and towns can have sufficient charm (see Austria, Canada or US for instance) and may contribute to community pride. Accommodations made out of adobe have an aesthetic traditional appeal and provide perfect insulation from both the heat and freezing temperatures during winter, while well-maintained heritage facilities (does not mean newly constructed, but for instance being clean) assure that visitors feel welcome. For instance restoring the historic Hijaz railway and its stations authentically – preferably without visible pollution - would be another invaluable asset for Saudi Arabia. What will prevent the relentless commodification or outright replacement of cultural practices (Russian belly dancers in the UAE), heritage and landscape resources?

#### **Focus 6: Regional or Domestic Tourism - Compatible with Sustainable Pathways?**

Almost paradoxically Gulf economies see the regional or domestic tourism market as a prime target for their initiatives. The logic or political strategy behind this shall be an interesting topic for discussion during the conference. From an economic perspective, domestic tourism basically involves a regional redistribution of national income, and hence most countries tend to give priority to international tourism to earn foreign exchange. Moreover, on a regional basis - as already mentioned above - this market segment is



based on excessive consumption, hence entirely dependent on foreign inputs, so the leakage is even greater while sustainability approaches will tend to be nearly impossible.

Some proponents in Saudi Arabia claim that their citizens are in their words 'big spenders' and that there is an urgent need to keep those revenues within the country. Such assumptions are only partly true and do not reveal the realities of contemporary Saudi society. First of all, those statistics include all types of tourism, including official, business or medical travel which is usually paid for very generously by the Saudi government or companies. Since government officials routinely stay in five star hotels in London, Paris or New York, this will noticeably influence the per capita expenditure. Moreover, one needs to consider that there is a small proportion of Saudi and other GCC elites, who will undeniably classify as 'big spenders' while vacationing abroad and Google is quite willing to surrender detailed information on this. For instance the search words 'big spenders' plus 'Saudi Arabia' will instantly produce this headline *"Hopscotching from Saudi Arabia to Switzerland, ... fashion lovers can drop six figures in a single spree"*.

There should be no need to highlight that such consumption patterns are seriously distorting the statistics. Conversely, when the average Gulf tourist is spending 3.5 times more than the average tourist in the UK and more than 1000 € (1380 USD) per day in Germany we should question such figures and consider the distribution.

When it comes to outbound GCC leisure tourism, we can also see very distinctive trends. An article in Arab News reported that the average cost for a Saudi couple traveling to a European destination including tickets and hotel is 20000 Saudi Riyals (equivalent to app. 5332 USD or 3911 EUR) for a period of 15 days (Al-Jassem, 2011). While the amount spend seems way above average in comparison to the offers available in Europe, the article claims that spending vacations in Europe is becoming *"a necessity for some families, not only because of the revolutions elsewhere, but also because of its ostensible prestige and the cool weather"*. (Obviously no one has yet noticed that the weather is not all that fresh in many parts of Europe during summer and especially that not everything is air-conditioned – London underground can certainly be an alternative sauna). Nevertheless, since most Saudi families cannot afford the amount of money that is required to apparently spend *"a good time in Europe"* they are inclined to get a loan from the bank or borrow the required sum from friends or relatives, often as a last resort for demoralized males suffering from extensively nagging wives. As unsophisticated as such articles may be, they do reveal certain trends that are relevant. As a result of their consumption pattern, GCC nationals have a preference to head to major cities, instead of opting for the much cheaper farm/hiking vacation in a scenic village in for instance Austria or Spain. The second trend is in respect to motivation, since satisfying the need for 'prestige' does not lead to someone being interested in the destination or in the host community. Both these trends have been confirmed by available statistics published in the UK and in Germany. A new report from Visit Britain revealed that the number of tourists visiting Britain from the Gulf economies has increased by almost 10 percent in 2010, with most tourists coming to London and with shopping being the predominant interest. While the British might be a bit disappointed that all those efforts to promote their remarkable heritage got ignored, Germany is suffering from

exactly the same inclination. While Germany also displays continuous increases of visitors from the Gulf economies, recording almost a million overnight stays with over 50 percent of these coming from Saudi Arabia alone, shopping and medical purposes constitute their main interests (Statistisches Bundesamt 2011). Specific data for Hamburg, the second most preferred destination after Munich, reveals that shopping and entertainment (... strangely we are only really famous for one specific type of entertainment???) are of relevance. In comparison, almost all other inbound leisure tourists come to Germany for its natural and cultural heritage – what a relief for Neuschwanstein Castle where 1.3 million visitors per year squeeze in search of Romanticism. Across the Atlantic, the US reports the same trends for GCC nationals – shopping and entertainment (amusement parks, etc.) are the predominant interests. In a way these facts would be more comprehensible, if there wouldn't be those mega size shopping malls with exactly the same shops to be found in abundance across the GCC! The last implication is that Gulf nationals like to travel and that especially Saudis seem to have an urge to leave their home turf quite frequently. Despite all the efforts to tempt its citizens to spend their vacations in the Kingdom, even the latest statistics from Saudi Arabia's Tourism Information and Research Center confirm that Saudis increasingly traveled abroad. While domestic tourism fell more than 28 percent in 2010, there was an almost 17 percent increase in outbound tourism and a 62.9 percent increase in the number of nights they spent outside the country.

These figures only substantiate what most independent experts already projected, a significant number of Saudis and especially those **that are responsible for the high expenditure** will always prefer to travel abroad. Those that can afford it will continue to spend their summers in Florida, California, Marbella, Côte d'Azur or elsewhere where you can go for a sunset walk on the beach of an authentic (non-artificial) island and everyone else will be lured by cheap prices to Egypt, Lebanon, Turkey, Malaysia, Indonesia, UAE or Bahrain along with a few other destinations. However, decreasing per capita incomes, immense population pressure resulting in progressive youth unemployment may force some segment of society to eventually involuntarily to stay at home (with projections of temperature increases as a result of climate change it might be an unpleasant stay) which could lead to a new set of challenges.

Additionally, some experts assert that GCC governments could use national or domestic tourism to enhance national integration and identity, but according to Hazbun so far we have seen very little of this. In an interview with Gulf News, he notes that sites remain too commercial with shopping malls and entertainment parks while archeological ruins have tendency to mostly appeal to Western tourists. The lack of interest for cultural heritage was confirmed by Aluwaisheg by explaining that *"when a family from the Gulf region travels abroad, for France as an example, they visit Euro Disney. Very few would watch a play in a theatre"* (Al Tamimi, 2008). The question really is how successful will the promotion of heritage tourism and the urgently needed preservation of the same be, if GCC countries continue with their preference for domestic/regional tourism? Is there not a mismatch between policies and the market? Can the preservation of natural heritage have a future, if those that are meant to use it prefer shopping and entertainment based on massive infrastructure? Can wildlife protection and



preservation really work, if society does not yet have the educational foundation to appreciate such ambitious endeavors? Or in the case of Saudi Arabia show an outright lack of interest to watch the TV programs prepared by the National Commission for Wildlife Conversation and Development (AL-Shayaa, 2007)? Another example would be the displeased reaction of citizens in Ta'if, a town located on the slopes of the Al-Sarawat mountains in Mecca Province, when the SCTA decided to choose a 'Sacred Baboon' as the city's tourism emblem (they must have changed it to a rose?). While the hamadryas baboon (*papio hamadryas*) was a sacred animal to the ancient Egyptians, seems to be a serious Saudi tourist attraction (represented in countless photos on the web and unfortunately sitting in between lots of garbage) and in general baboons can easily live in harmony with humans with a little applied common sense of the latter, there are yet numerous challenges to be overcome on this very disturbed human-animal relationship. A study found out that "the most important cause of the low level of awareness about the importance of wildlife among the study population is the lack of emphasis on the importance of wildlife in the socialization process of the young generations" (AL-Shayaa, 2007). On the other hand, regional travel in the GCC is meant to be so called "family-oriented" tourism, so why can this not happen while hiking in undisturbed nature with the so far missing educational component delivered by parents? If this is not possible, since maybe the parents do not have the necessary knowledge either, it would be about time to restructure education in general instead of investing into even more superficial entertainment (more shopping malls, more theme parks, etc.), since tourism development cannot fix those structural socio-cultural deficiencies. Yet while obesity rates, especially among women and children are reaching dramatic proportions, everything has to be made 'even more accessible'.

In an article in Asharq Alawsat, Zahi Hawass, a world-renowned Egyptian archaeologist, expressed his worries about the initiation of projects to pave the roads within the historical town of Al-Diriyah in order to facilitate tourism or even more lucrative contracts to construction companies. The UNESCO World Heritage site Turaif, being considered a unique model of Najdi architecture, represents a small quarter within the historical town situated on the edges of Wadi Hanifa with large areas of palm groves. Instead of making the precious area accessible by walking and preventing destructive traffic, this is yet another example of unsustainable development which should provide enough substance for further discourse. Is it really sustainable to destroy your authentic heritage to make it accessible to 'shallow' tourists, but at the same time loosing it for those who would have a preference for a 'responsible' approach? Just imagine they would have built an asphalt paved road to Machu Picchu in Peru or destroyed the scenic jewel-green peaks with building that intended cable car. The GCC could learn from the fact that in 2008 alone 141000 Inca trail hikers embarked upon that seriously 'not all that easy' multi day trek to the 'Lost City of the Incas' struggling for oxygen somewhere in between 3000 and 4200 m above sea level – without basically any infrastructure whatsoever (except the backpacker train and a few restrooms). In fact the number of those interested was so great that the Peruvian government had to issue quotas (500 hikers per day) to restrict access. Saudi Arabia has the Frankincense trail, but the question is – will they destroy that asset by building massive

infrastructure to promote domestic tourism or will they depart from their xenophobic policies and take advantage of those natural endowments by promoting sustainable low-impact tourism? On the other hand will sustainable tourism in the GCC be feasible, when the intended market segment is not interested? Wouldn't sustainable tourism formats, especially low-impact outdoor activities practiced by foreign travelers (especially hiking), have a trickle down effect and eventually attract the curious youthful Saudi population? Is it reasonable to assume that especially this youthful population will be interested in heritage tourism, while this segment is usually more of interest on a global scale to middle-aged and older travelers? Next to sports, youth cultures tend to involve having 'lots of fun' (even if this fun is as innocent as just watching others having fun) – is there really enough of that available in the Kingdom to cater to this huge young generation? Finally, is it healthy for a country to at least attempt to isolate its citizens from the rest of the world (obviously that does not work anymore anyhow – tourism or not) and thus foster frustrations?

#### **Focus 7: MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) Tourism - Reconciling Growth with Sustainable Development and Restrictive Policies**

Another visible trend in the GCC is the development of the so called MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions) or simply business tourism representing another high-spending segment of the industry. However, while this sector is one of the more rapidly growing market segments of GCC tourism simply as a result of the current pace of economic growth, its promotion requires considerable investment and policy planning. For instance Oman has just commenced construction of a new \$1 billion Oman Conference and Exhibition Centre in Muscat scheduled to be completed in 2014 with the premises to transform Oman into a key destination for major business events in the region. However, with heightened levels of competition for the conference and exhibition market at national, regional and international level, a sense of uncertainty surrounds the long-term prospects of many of these facilities. Further there are a number of key challenges on the supply side which must be first addressed in the Gulf economies. When it comes to sustainability principles, there will obviously be a number of trade-offs and compromises in this sector. Unlike the 'alternative' leisure tourists, business travel demands a high degree of elegance, efficiency and safety. Hence sustainability can only be achieved as a result of technical improvements (e.g. carbon neutral facilities, water saving measures, etc.) and reasonable planning (no Golf courses and air-conditioned swimming pools). However, there are obviously a number of services that the MICE sector will not be able to do without: adequate provision of business related amenities, convenient transportation connections and high-quality dining facilities. Since business trips are much more restricted in terms of choice and normally determined by business opportunities and involvement of the traveler with organizations at the destination, they provide opportunities of much higher revenues, especially as consumers are willing to pay more to suits their inflexible schedules. Yet when it comes to non-compulsory events, such as congresses, conferences, exhibitions, etc. the question will be if the exclusion of certain nationalities, the prohibition of alcohol and in the

case of Saudi Arabia segregation of women and strict dress codes may just deter some potential, in particular female, clients. How could this obvious problem be solved? Would it be feasible to create KAUST like enclaves where there is no segregation and women can wear their normal business ensembles? While you can expect that leisure tourists strictly adhere to the host countries norms and values (after all they came there voluntarily), can you really expect the same from business travel and believe that you have a competitive destination to host for instance an international medical congress?

To maintain a competitive business travel sector, while adhering to sustainability principles, a country would need a trained workforce capable of delivering the desired high-quality product. Are the Gulf economies ready for this? What would urgently need to be done to improve the situation? Obviously, a MICE industry that depends on foreigners is not conducive to sustainable development pathways, since in the absence of meaningful employment opportunities the environmental trade offs would be far too great. While inadequate English and other foreign language skills among guest-contact staff is a recurrent theme in nationalization discourses, languages such as Mandarin Chinese, Japanese or Russian are also becoming increasingly important in the business travel world. Further, while it is possible to outsource some tasks in this sector to international IT centers, local knowledge of the destination is still needed to ensure accurate and timely information. In view of the current situation in the GCC, what will be the chances of success for this industry?

## Session Abstracts

### Part 2: Sustainable Tourism Development and Heritage Preservation in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

#### State-society Relations, Economic Change, and Tourism in the GCC States

**Matthew Gray**

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At first glance the state-society relationship and tourism may seem to have little in common, apart from the often casual and haphazard ways in which states seek to promote tourism, either as a nation-building exercise or for its economic benefits (especially job creation and foreign currency generation). However the transformation of the political economies of the Gulf since the 1990s – the smaller GCC states in particular, but also Oman and Saudi Arabia – has created multiple linkages between state-society dynamics and tourism, which warrant investigation for the insights they provide into both the state-society relationship and the structure and nature of tourism policies in these states.

It will be argued here that three main dynamics have acted as causal or relationship factors between state-society relations and tourism in the Gulf over the past two decades.

1. Economic diversification, caused by a restructuring of the rentier bargain between state and society, has meant that states have sought out new economic sectors to address the fluctuations and political problems underlying basic rentier bargains. That said, rentierism still defines the GCC states, but it is a redesigned and refined rentier bargain that I call 'late rentierism'.
2. Changes in the economic characteristics of the state, including a renewed acceptance of state capitalism, *asabiyya* capitalism and the declining legitimacy of economic neoliberalism. Tourism has become part of the state's profit-driven economic strategy. At the same time, the GCC states stand in contrast to most other parts of the world, because the state is not seeking to develop tourism because it is labor-intensive and will create employment. Most tourism jobs in the Gulf are held by foreign workers. However tourism creates some senior positions for nationals, and above all, still also delivers economic benefit to the state overall and to key commercially-linked members of the elite too.
3. Changes in how the GCC leaderships view each other, including a growing economic competition between them. First Bahrain, then Dubai, and now Abu Dhabi, Qatar, and to a lesser extent the other GCC states, have begun competing as regional 'hubs' and business centers. In this, each is trying to 'brand' itself as distinct from the others. Tourism is important here as (a) a sector that most of them are focused on and (b) a sector that has great branding and image benefits in-built into its nature.



## **Place Making and Tourism Development in the Gulf Region: Sustainable Models for Learning, Reflection and Growth**

**David Kendall**

Centre for Urban and Community Research,  
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University of London

Imaginative reflection is essential in forming communal and secure environments of continuity within urban spaces, encouraging sustainable tourism in cities.

Structural façades and brand identities created by infrastructures of Globalization may not reveal or absorb social experiences on the ground. Sustainable growth requires ongoing social dialogue initiated by embodied interaction, shared conversations and the development of 'collective memory'. One could propose that collective or cultural memories are possessed and transmitted by individuals, but shaped by group relationships, producing sites where storytelling, memories and people integrate and are assembled / reassembled by human activity. Experiential relationships that evolve between residents, tourists, economic migrants and city planners in the Gulf region have the potential to inspire and maintain new social discourses, stimulated by intimate communal rhythms, local knowledge and observational practices. 'Place' could be defined as an event; relational, productive and mobile with a shared focus on everyday activities that are instant and often overlooked. These processes may merge with existing leisure experiences and structures to form alternative architectural strategies, transformed by local exchanges, historical sensibilities and cultural specificities unique to the Gulf region. My presentation will utilize existing research and practice developments to propose visual sociological methods and place making strategies that could promote sustainable models for learning, reflection and discussion.

My goal is to generate ideas and propose pragmatic collaborative methodologies, producing new narrative tools to encourage, or strengthen, alternative social and spatial interactions between new or existing participants and stakeholders. Allowing ephemeral activities to become definable narratives that begin to map and sustain past and present relationships between residents, architectural development, planning processes and tourism in the Gulf region.

## **The Paradox of Urban Conservation in the Gulf: A Tale of Two Traditional Markets (*Souqs*)**

**Ali A. Alraouf**

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Qatar University  
Qatar

The paper will conduct a discussion for understanding current trends and future developments in the study of people-urban environment relations, with an emphasis on the concept of diversity within the Gulf cities. This is explored in relation to: theoretical approaches, urban public spaces, people's lifestyles, social groups and inclusive urban environments. Contemporary Gulf cities are providing unique examples for research on urban diversity. Its demographic structure is distinctive for a minimum of 50 percent expatriates in overall population. Gulf cities are obliged to cope with such a compelling fact. The challenge is to move away from indifference and bring about better acceptance of others. On the relationship; city spaces and culture, the paper argues that traditional markets (*Souqs*) must be envisioned as spaces for cultural expressions. Traditional markets are a rich display of products and talents and a great opportunity to share and meet with people from same culture and others. *Souqs* are a popular tourism attraction in every Middle Eastern city. The *souq* is popular with locals,

expatriates and tourists who experience the traditional setting of a unique marketplace. They authenticate the past by reflecting its heritage. There, people are attracted by the aura of history and fascinated by what is genuine and rare. Using comparative analysis approach juxtapositioning the selected cases, of two Gulf *souqs*, the paper confronts questions like what does Gulf urban diversity mean in the present. And, is diversity in urban spaces only a challenge to be dealt with or is there also economic potential that can be taken advantage of? How do we ensure that Gulf cities are indeed spaces of tolerance? How to give visibility to the spaces of marginalized groups, as these spaces are often ignored or worse, eliminated? How to preserve or regain spaces in the city for the expression of traditional cultures of those migrating from other areas, regions or countries? The paper explores the socioeconomic and cultural mechanisms that can encourage inclusive pluralism in the Gulf cities' open spaces within conserved and preserved traditional *souqs*.

## **International Tourism Law as a means of Sustainable Development and Protection of Cultural Heritage of GCC States**

**Phil Cameron**

Executive Vice President  
International Forum of Travel and Tourism Advocates (IFTTA)  
USA and Japan

This essay describes the impact of cultural and heritage tourism law as a positive influence on particular economies and societies, using examples from all over the world, as well as the Gulf States, so that GCC governments and industry can refer to successful models in developing its cultural heritage.

Sustainable tourism law examples illustrate the great potential to create, protect and indirectly support job creation in several segments of the economy, while maintaining the environment, culture, and jobs for future generations. Sustainable development can be achieved through tourism laws that increase employment opportunities, develop infrastructure, and create host people's standards for individual, corporate and social activities related to tourism in the states of Arabia, Iran, and Iraq. This essay emphasizes that the significance of maintaining cultural heritage is important both for the common heritage of humanity but also for the daily lives of people that make a living from the income created by tourism. Examples of helpful laws, case studies and treaties are outlined, concluding with descriptions for new and stronger legal protections of cultural heritage to enable sustainable tourism development.

## **Welcome and Leave My Country Alone: Reconciling Preservation Efforts and Tourism Promotion in the GCC**

**Shannon K. McNulty**

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Within the context of the conference and the multiple angles from which to address tourism development, this paper seeks to focus on the conundrum of reconciling cultural and heritage preservation efforts with tourism promotion throughout the GCC. While the region as a whole shares some similar concerns, each country faces its own individual strengths and challenges. These challenges range from managing unprecedented levels of economic growth and expansion to maintaining areas of natural beauty and/or historical significance in remote areas to minimizing the effects of pollution.

While tourism is, perhaps mistakenly, being viewed as a relatively new and easy way to diversify the GCC economies, it is by nature invasive to the country itself (physically) and the society. This calls for a logical and sensitive approach to promote tourist activities which are appropriate, acceptable to the population, and economically beneficial. During the past ten-year tourism boom, the approach has been to target “higher-end” guests seeking a luxury experience. Whether or not this niche market will prove sustainable in the medium to long term is doubtful, particularly as the global economy fluctuates. In order for tourism to succeed in the longer term, a more mainstream audience needs to be identified (in some cases it already has, for example, with respect to participants in conferences and exhibitions and/or transit passengers). The impacts, both positive and negative, that visitors have had and will continue to have on the overall infrastructure of the country and on the lives of residents in the country will unfold as tourism grows.

While tourism expansion is pursued at varying levels in different countries, pressure from locals and preservationists to refrain from “too much change too fast” is ever-present. Promoting tourism to external parties exists simultaneously with the promotion of a national identity internally – who are the citizens of the country, what are their values, what do they stand for, and what achievements have they made that are worthy of sharing with visitors? A successful tourism promotion policy requires buy-in from all stakeholders, including nationals of the country. It is local participation in industries directly and indirectly associated with tourism that will provide authenticity and therefore a meaningful tourism experience

## **Potential Impact of Nature-based Tourism on Protected Areas in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Member States**

**Philip Seddon** (in absentia)

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Tourism is a huge industry of global significance. Ranging from highly structured mass tourism through to “free and independent travelers”. One of the fastest growing sectors is nature-based tourism, defined as tourism focused on the enjoyment of nature and natural settings. Low impact nature-based tourism appears to offer great potential to be used as a conservation tool. Such tourism can provide incentives for the protection of important ecosystems and relatively pristine habitats; it can generate funds for environmental NGOs and parks agencies, and it can engage the visiting public in environmental awareness. However, it is a challenge to realize these benefits since in reality tourism is a business with business priorities and the actual contribution of the industry to conservation is small. There is a very real danger that tourism in natural areas will create more problems than benefits. Any tourism will have an impact on the environment, the goal is to minimize and mitigate these. While some impacts are obvious, easily measured, localized and self-limiting, for example trampling of vegetation by off-trail hiking, other impacts may be hidden, hard to measure, diffuse and self propagating.

Protected areas must strive to be sustainable, not only environmentally, but also financially and socially. While in some protected areas there may be possibilities to generate resources, such as the sale of surplus wildlife to game ranches in southern Africa, for many protected areas tourism provides the only feasible means to generate funds and engender public support. The challenge is to ensure that tourism within protected areas does not jeopardize the primary objectives of ecosystem, habitat, site or species protection in perpetuity. Tourism is the only industry that can operate in areas protected from other industries. To ensure that impacts of tourism are minimized requires careful integration between protected area management planning and tourism planning.



Some countries within the Arabian Peninsula have well developed tourism, but this tends towards commercial, sporting and other mass tourism activities. Other countries have or are developing rational networks of protected areas, but have not yet developed nature-based tourism within protected sites to any great extent. There are however, countries that have both a well-established network of protected areas, and ecotourism development that is site-specific and appropriate. Clearly there exist with the region useful models of fruitful approaches and examples of best practice in the sustainable development of protected area tourism.

This paper will review five countries of the wider region; Jordan, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and the United Arab Emirates, to draw out valuable examples of protected area tourism and the institutional arrangements that are used to regulate this.

## **The Museum-cultural Heritage Relationship in the GCC: the Effects of the Use of Western-style Museum Theory and Practice on Local Visitorship and Tourism**

**Pamela Erskine-Loftus**

Curator

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This paper will discuss the relationship that has grown between cultural heritage and museums in the GCC, specifically in the UAE and Qatar, and how this relationship may affect nationals of the GCC. Museums are considered in the west to be of great importance to the collection, conservation, research and sharing of objects across many disciplines. The spread of this western concept of museums has been extensive, and the emergence of museums in the GCC in the early 1970s can be linked to this spread and the perceived view of museums within the 'world stage' of emerging countries. Western museums are reliant on tourist visitorship for income, which is often used to offset resources and programming for local audiences - a very different economic situation than most of those in the GCC. However, within the GCC the building of museums and the attendance at museums by local citizens (as well as those from other GCC states) are two different aspects. Within the Gulf States links between museums and heritage sites and practices have been made in order to establish museums as cultural sites of worth. This relationship coincides with the increase in the 'internalized duality' of many citizens in the GCC, where the components of traditional culture run parallel to those of the modern and globalized life their country now follows. Nevertheless, GCC nationals make up a small proportion of the visitorship that museums receive, and the concept of museums and their relevance to daily life is very limited.

By examining the relationships between heritage and museums this paper will show that local cultural aspects and understandings play an important role, possibly a decisive one, in the use (or not) of museums by local citizens and regional tourists, and that this has a direct effect on their future sustainability.

## **Art and Sustainability**

**Neil van der Linden**

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Culture as part of a strategy for sustainability is a highly relevant theme. This is the case everywhere in the world, including in the Gulf region, with its fast growing metropolises, mixes of innovation and tradition, and challenging climate in combination with its wealth of mineral resources.

There are two aspects to the theme of art and sustainability. The first is about sustaining art and culture itself, the second is about using art and culture as a tool for promoting the sustainability of a society. Regarding the first, sustaining art and culture itself, there is a subdivision between preserving the existing art and culture in a sustainable way and developing sustainable new forms of art and culture. Both are relevant for the Gulf region. Iran and Iraq have always had strong and viable forms of art and culture. During the recent decades both countries have been able to preserve their traditions comparatively well and even letting them develop into modern forms, as can be seen especially in Iran's vibrant modern arts (theatre, film, poetry and visual arts), which emerged seemingly naturally from its traditional arts. Actually because of its long standing traditions, and despite of some efforts by fanatic or ignorant authorities to rather destroy things, Iran is an example of a viable and sustainable cultural life. The impression is that even in the administration some people can't help that they adore Hafex, Shajarian, Kiarostami, A Separation, Atilla Peysiani etc.

Among the GCC countries Bahrain and Oman have comparatively stable local communities and both have been able to preserve traditional arts and culture. The Emirates, Qatar and Kuwait have rather marginalized their traditions, at least in the cities that emerged since the oil and gas boom. Perhaps due to the somewhat too rapid modernization, meanwhile Qatar, Sharjah and Abu Dhabi have been trying to find a link with the past, sometimes a somewhat speculative past. Compare the numerous attempts at "redeveloping", "redefining", "reinventing" a past, partly aimed at creating illusions of a past of which is was not sure that it was ever there. Art critics and curators from outside duly assist in these ambitions.

Saudi Arabia, for several other reasons a case apart, is developing a festival aimed at preserving traditions, the *Jinadreeyah Cultural Festival* in Riyadh, but given all the restrictions that the KSA imposes, one perhaps cannot expect that much coming out from this. On the other hand it seems a serious attempt to find a way to stay somewhat close to the locally embedded cultural phenomena. For all the Gulf states a comparison to the cultural strategies of Morocco with its numerous vibrant festivals keeping the traditions alive could be useful. To a lesser extent for instance Jordan and Turkey provide interesting opportunities for comparison.

The Gulf states are known for investing heavily in prestigious new arts and culture projects, like the museums in Abu Dhabi and Qatar, the film festivals in Abu Dhabi and Qatar, the Dubai Art Fair, the Muscat opera house, the ambitious new theatre centre in Bahrain to be finished the coming autumn, etc. However there are some doubts about their viability. Several of the projects in Abu Dhabi have been put on hold, due to the economical crisis, but maybe also partly due to the fact that they are quite alienated from the indigenous populations. The adult indigenous populations mostly hardly feel connected to the new prestigious projects. For instance the new opera building in Muscat is considered by many, incl. nationals, to be out of place. And too little attention seems to be paid to connecting to the younger generations, the future audiences, who hardly seem to count in the cultural policies of the various cities and states. The same goes for getting the expatriate communities involved, in particular the various generations from the Asian communities that will be around in the region for some time.

The second aspect of the relation between arts and cultural and sustainability are where arts and culture are used as a tool for enhancing a viable and sustainable society, which is not forever dependent on oil and gas revenues. Culture and especially all these prestigious venues and festivals are becoming a core part of the GCC tourism strategy. In Abu Dhabi the TDIC has take over a part of the cultural policy since the demise of the Abu Dhabi Arts and Cultural Heritage Authority. An interesting aspect is whether these attractive cultural facilities are not only aimed at the rich, but broader masses, which as a whole may generate more income than only the rich. But also in this field doubts are possible. Are the Doha Cultural Village and the Saadiyat island museums in Abu Dhabi really going to attract masses? Also in this field, the Gulf states could take an example in Morocco where festivals like those of Fes, Rabat, Casablanca, Agadir and Marrakech help feed a lively tourism industry. Comparison to Jordan is useful too, a potential candidate GCC member. Meanwhile in observing the role of culture in raising amounts of tourist in regard to sustainability the effects of travel should be taken into account.

## **Audiencing YouTube: Exploring Politics of Representation for Tourism in the Gulf**

**Massimiliano Fusari**

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Contemporary societies are more and more experienced through media over-reaching personal and social dimensions; different but converging new tools, like mobile and smart phones, tablets and computers, offer the occasion for a new exploration of the dialectics between media usage and media possibilities. In this context, a theory of knowledge intertwining the progressive unfolding of ideas into new media forms might prove of particular relevance in supporting any performative dimension proper to the visual.

This contribution aims to explore forms of (self) representations as specifically arranged around tourism. For the present context, tourism is not assessed as a purely neutral subject, thus implying purely neutral hermeneutics in its experiencing, but it is suggested that it follows the same connotative dimensions of any other field of representation of cultural practices. Furthermore, representation as a cultural practice will be assessed as a social space for discussion, with a particular attention to visual forms of research.

In doing so, I will rely on YouTube channels, thus explicitly recognizing cultural dimensions of this specific Internet based platform. I will first explore the few videos produced by the various GCC Ministries of Heritage and Culture as well as corresponding tourism institutions, and eventually focus on the case of Qatar: such a preference derives from an assessment of Qatar's decision to produce visual centered communication arranged both in English and Arabic, thus recognizing a multi audiences approach.

However, such a premise will be deconstructed to explore how both channels of representation (audio and visual) have not been arranged upon considerations of specific audiences, but merely translated: in my assessment, this clearly rejects the same idea of articulations of preferred audiencing practices, and eventually raises more general issues of audiencing. Therefore, I will specifically assess the latter issue through contemporary approaches to audience studies: I will explore how the "audience" has been identified, imagined, constructed and tested, and contextualize how these four analytical elements have been arranged.

The contribution will finally explore limits and possibilities of YouTube as a visually centered communicative channel, and articulate a few workable suggestions to support a more refined understanding and appreciation of Internet based audiences.

## **National Tourism Organizations in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)**

**Amitabh Upadhyia**

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The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) highlights the important role of the public sector in destination management and marketing. It further advocates, based on the survey of Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) around the world, the need of public private partnership to promote and organize destinations. The report notes, that there was also a very high level of agreement amongst participating DMOs that tourism development, management, marketing and promotion should be managed within an integrated structure (UNWTO, 2004). In the complex global scenario that exists today, the National Tourism Organization (NTOs) and/or DMOs have become the fulcrum of all developmental activities of a destination (Presenza et al., 2005). NTOs in most countries, irrespective of the political system of governance, are structured as government departments, semi government organizations and or even private associations. Having the potential of earning



precious foreign exchange and generating employment, governments in general are unable to resist the temptation to keep control of policy directions of the NTOs (Wanhill et al., 2008).

In this respect, this study is an attempt to investigate and analyze the nature, structure and compulsions of the organizational set-up of the tourism sector in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). It is based on the premise that political environment of a country plays a major role in management of tourism. In countries which have a unitary constitution, or centralized government, as in the case of Spain and some other European countries as well as a few developing countries, tourism is controlled by the central government. On the other hand, in countries with a federal constitutional form, the tourist organization comprises one or more cooperative bodies at the national level and individual provinces enjoy a great deal of freedom in tourism matters (Sharma, 1999). A federation like UAE has a diversified structure of tourism management and each state unit is responsible for its own development while Jordan has a centralized Tourism Board. The official position of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on tourism is for development of 'domestic' tourism to preserve the unique values, traditions and identity of Saudi society (Burns, 2006). Thus, the study intends to probe further into the organizational characteristics of National Tourism Organizations and explore if there exists a relationship with the established political system of the respective countries in the GCC member states. The research question therefore is whether the NTO is organized in consonance with the political philosophy of the system of governance and as such is effective in achieving its objectives?

Further, the perception that in a democracy all organizations/institutions will have a democratic structure while in a monarchy/autocracy the institution will be organized by the chosen few and managed arbitrarily shall also be the focus of this study. Is the NTO an elected body? Is only a directly elected body democratic? How is the tourism organization structured in countries which do not have western type democracies? Is there multiplicity of institutions claiming stake to achieve similar objectives? How are the interests of different stakeholders fulfilled? And finally what is the level of involvement of stakeholders?

It is interesting to note that not much literature is available on aforementioned dimensions giving an impression that the implications may be insignificant while the study so far, notes that there has been an ever prevalent desire on the part of governments to influence tourism policies through the NTOs in most cases, as the consequences have political undertones more so in the arena of international affairs.

## **Nationalization Policies and the GCC Tourism Industry: Human Resource Development (HRD) as a Key to Sustainable Development**

**La'aleh Al-Aali**

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In recent years the governments of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states exerted efforts to embark on the formulation of labor market strategies to improve the economic situation by creating sufficient employment opportunities for nationals in the private sector and to limit the dependence on the expatriate labor through so called 'nationalization' policies. Looking closely at these reforms, we notice a commonality in policies throughout the Gulf economies ranging from imposed quotas for national employment, creation of jobs, (vocational) training programs, higher quality educational systems for locals and attractive incentives as well as preferential treatment for companies in compliance.

Despite these ambitious reforms, thus far only the public sector has been partly successful in nationalizing the workforce. GCC nationals still see the private sector as unattractive with lower salaries, longer working hours and have difficulties in terms of accepting an expatriate supervisor. Sometimes working in the private sector is perceived as debasing the nationals' social status and local businessmen have strongly opposed the enforced quota system as they consider it adversely affecting productivity and profitability of their firms. Hence, a national is still not an employee of choice for many private organizations owing to the negative perceptions of nationals as being less productive than expatriates, receiving higher salaries for the same work by legislation and the ongoing resistance of expatriates to transfer skills and knowledge to a national employee.

Nevertheless, there is common consensus that the longevity or sustainable success of such nationalization strategies as part of the national development plans depends heavily on human resource development (HRD) as a key element. Nationalization programs with concepts of performance management, organizational learning, career planning, and retention strategies have to be well designed to support labor market

requirements. Especially HRD programs focused on change management can enable the alteration of national mindsets toward accepting positions in the private sector and tolerating to work with expatriates to mutually benefit the organization and the nation as a whole.

By generating increasingly vibrant international, regional or domestic tourism sectors, tourism development is now considered an integral element of most GCC economic diversification strategies.

Gulf governments tend to justify this move with the rhetoric to create new employment opportunities for nationals and to foster their participation in the workforce. However when it comes to this industry, the attempts to nationalize the workforce should be considered, at best, incomplete successes or especially in the UAE as an absolute failure.

The purpose of this paper is to explore how human resource development (HRD) could serve as a key to developing a sustainable tourism industry in the GCC. The analysis will first describe the nationalization policies in selected GCC states and will demonstrate their negligible impact in respect to the tourism sector. The paper will further address the role of the Gulf governments and its agencies in creating an enabling environment for effective HRD within the tourism domain, through policy and planning as well as the delivery of actual sustainable HRD initiatives.

## Toward a long-term tourism paradigm for the Gulf

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For domestic, regional or incoming tourism in the GCC states to be sustainable, it will have to rely on nationals valuing their rich traditions, next to being curious, educated and open to the world. In other words a society, where new generations take up the speed of initiatives and have the willingness to find new and innovative ways to succeed. It is imperative to note that any development initiative will either be a sustainable, long-term process at trans-generational scale, or it will not be a success. Sustainable tourism is thus closely connected to the richness of the GCC's offerings and to locals being conscious about them. The current economic success and state of development of GCC states offers the chance to develop an entirely new integrated approach to tourism, thinking along the following key lines:

(1) Analysis:

- What segments of the tourism market is wanted by and adapted to the GCC states?  
(This will most certainly not be a simple projection of the status quo into the future.)
- What is in line with and required by a development of GCC states that is open-minded, sustainable and generates social stability and wealth from inside?
- Classification of the possibilities that GCC states offer on the heritage level.
- What interventions and planning measures are desirable in order to enhance rapid building up and sustainable use of infrastructure that will serve both national life and tourism?

(2) Breakdown into concepts:

From there, anchors for axes of intervention are to be distilled from the following questions:

- What are the starting points for designing tourism services in this context?
- Which long-term market demand trends are relevant in this specific environment?
- What will be the future evolution of concepts that cater both to local as well as foreign visitors?
- How are measures to be designed in order to maximize the opportunity for trans-cultural communication (that will have a non-negotiable political impact)?

This is inspired from the finding that branding models in tourism have always required a much wider approach compared to most other sectors: They need to fully and seamlessly integrate geographical and natural attributes, people, political systems, access and on-site facilities in order to function sustainable. An approach in line with the two global tourism mega-trends of "quest for authenticity" on one hand and "excitement and interaction" on the other, bases future differentiation from competitors on the **authentic Arab spirit of**

**hospitality**, knowing that only getting from customer relation to customer integration creates a long-term reliable success.

The approach suggested here thus builds on the GCC countries' uniqueness:

- Geostrategically as "natural transport hub" in the field of force between the poles Europe and Asia, with a significant number of travelers coming to or flying through the Gulf region. This can particularly well be developed into strong MICE tourism of a new kind, given that travel times, time shifts and lodging costs can in many cases be significantly reduced by choosing the Gulf as a location.
- Tradition-based with a century-long heritage of hospitality and trade. This is especially a focus for heritage tourism, both domestic and inbound. Here, the biggest threat is rapid overdevelopment leading to damages to the experience and the sites. From research in service industries it is known that there is a strong relation between the impact of both customer satisfaction and relationship quality on customer retention.
- Politically as emerging and future-oriented regional powers in the Middle East: GCC countries welcoming and open on the world will see a well-designed tourism offer have significant repercussions both in the fields of business and in a world-wide perception on individual level. Here, it is vital to get away from the gross "money can do everything" image that is today frequently and negatively associated with the GCC's economic success, reaching for more subtle, ground-breaking and long-term oriented solutions that are themselves worth discovering, thus attracting visitors. This will be a booster both for domestic as for foreign tourism: it is important to note that tourism design will always have a strong political component in the GCC region. A clever designed tourism offer will be a powerful tool for mutual understanding. This is the chance to position for GCC nationals to learn and act together and to position themselves as future oriented, open-minded yet traditional cultures in the Muslim world: GCC countries will take the regional lead as traditional cultures open on the world. Well-thought tourism offers are among the most powerful tool to drive this.

### (3) Infrastructure is Key

What Rem Koolhaas describes as "tabula rasa" situation offers the chance to plan largely from scratch, but elements of a solution suggested here radically disagree with his postulates of generic urbanism that is a pitfall to absolutely circumvent. It is developments like Masdar City that need to set the standards for infrastructural development, but then thinking must go further: In order to assess the need for further development of infrastructure that is to be integrated with the one needed for the future of the GCC societies, the masterpiece could be an integrated ground transportation network with hubs in residential and tourism sites. The opportunity for wide ex-ante system design "from scratch" is opportunity and threat at the same time: While rapid development is desired and of greatest internal value to society, overdevelopment or too massive interventions will lead to a loss of socio-economic balance and a threat to the sites themselves, with a perceived loss of value for both heritage and newly designed focal points. An integrated transport network thus needs to follow axes of development defined by both regional and trans-regional needs for GCC residents. The basic idea is the observation that those infrastructures bringing a country forward economically and socially - indissociably! - also will be those that will be best adapted to sustainable tourism.

Starting out from the opportunities of the Gulf's geographical position, attractions and development speed, planning would have to specifically embrace selected options that are open for the next decade:

- Shaping urban spaces on the 2025 horizon in an over-regional trans-national GCC master plan. These will be some main hubs for and tourism access points to a ground transportation network.
- Boosting educational efforts in order to get GCC nationals into planning and shaping tourism offers on the front, requiring visionary and highly-skilled professionals
- Fostering the region as a regional hub by political and infrastructural interlinking
- Defining zones of intervention and zones whose natural characteristic is to be activated

for tourism in a delicate, coordinated and preserving way

The detailed way to follow will, at the base, be the same as for other successful developments of past 20 years: Taking the most successful models in the world, learning from them, contracting experts and training own people, develop locally adapted versions and implement them. What is different here is that GCC nationals need to get involved at an early stage to develop these concepts further.



## Part 2: Country Studies from the Gulf Region (Arabia, Iran, Iraq)

### Saudi Arabia

#### Hidden Treasures: The Potential of Geotourism in Saudi Arabia

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Natural landscapes and geological wonders have inspired humans on a global scale and hence serve as a fundamental part of a culture's identity. Being a relatively new form of niche or science-based tourism with considerable growth potential, geotourism can act as a tool for the conservation of our geological heritage and community advancement through appropriate sustainability measures. Its definition has recently been refined by Newsome and Dowling (2010) and describes "... a form of natural area tourism that specifically focuses on geology and landscape. It promotes tourism to geosites and the conservation of geo-diversity and an understanding of earth sciences through appreciation and learning. This is achieved through independent visits to geological features, use of geo-trails and view points, guided tours, geoactivities and patronage of geosite visitor centers". The evolution of the concept to safeguard and develop selected areas having significant geological features, rarity or aesthetic appeal as well as its placement within the sustainable development context comes in form of an UNESCO initiative, namely the Global Network of National Geoparks (Global Geoparks Network [GGN]). According to UNESCO (2010), a geopark is a voluntary quality label protected under the respective local, regional or national legislation that combines conservation with the promotion of sustainable development and the active involvement of the local communities who live there. These criteria include the objective to encourage rural development, by generating new job opportunities and additional sources of income to reduce the rate of unemployment and rural-urban migration trends. It should further foster the identification of the population with their locale, and stimulate next to cultural development a "pride of place". Moreover the initiative serves as a platform for an active cooperation between experts and practitioners in geological heritage. Yet for a country to earn the worldwide recognition for its geological sites under UNESCO's umbrella is a challenging endeavor and while the GGN currently has 77 members in 25 countries, there is to date not a single accredited Global Geopark in the Arab world.

Indisputably, the development of geotourism is influenced by social and political factors and will thus act as an articulation of particular values which sometimes do not reflect the grassroots approach promoted by UNESCO or sustainable development principles per se. Especially the exploration of the geological tourism potential when primarily based and fostered by the economic component, can be predatory to the environment, putting under threat the geological heritage, the diversity and the local community itself. Such approaches are usually founded on practitioner and supply side led methodologies rather than the conservation requirements of the landscapes, geological sites or the region in general (e.g. water). Next to political interest groups, they come along with potential commercial stakeholders, who lack any significant academic or scientific engagement. Consequently as a result of an inadequately developed theoretical framework and awareness campaign, the rationale for conservation and the societal significance of the geological resource base is not always fully appreciated.

This analysis will study the potential of geotourism in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by introducing the wide variety of natural landscapes and abundance of geological resources available. In this respect the Saudi Geological Survey (SGS) suggested 26 geological sites placed into six categories (caves, springs, deserts, beaches, rocky forms, in addition to open settings) for further development. It will further outline the theoretical underpinnings of geotourism, approaches to its sustainable management and the immense challenges involved. The paper concludes with suggestions for future policy priorities.

## **Planning for and Management of Sustainable Tourism within Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs) in Saudi Arabia**

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The tourism industry is one of the fastest growing economic sectors, not only in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), but on a worldwide scale. Its huge direct contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) encourages employment as well as the potential utilization of natural, socio-cultural and economic capital to develop and promote tourism programs and products. Such development initiatives often take place within so called 'Environmentally Sensitive Areas' (ESAs), which are ecologically, socio-culturally and economically fragile and at great risk of high impacts to ecosystems' functions, or at risk of not being successfully compensated or mitigated. In other words, their enormous significance to human security warrants their protection in the best long-term interest of the nation.

Achieving sustainability is considered an ultimate goal of development, aiming to maximize the benefits, minimize impacts on socio-economic issues and conserve environmental resources. Thus, while the Kingdom has a rich diversity of natural ecosystem and socio-cultural heritage, which are considered valuable assets for tourism development and promotion, utilizing these ESAs by applying sustainability concepts will certainly pose a great challenge.

This study tries to develop a preliminary framework for classifying ESAs within Saudi Arabia, based on their landscape, wildlife or historical value and degree of sensitivity. Accordingly, criteria and guidelines will be put forward to ensure planning and management of ESAs for sustainable tourism that enhances environmental conservation and their development with minimal or no impacts.

## The Development of Cultural Heritage Tourism in Saudi Arabia: Bridging the Gap

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”رَبَّنَا إِنِّي أَسْكَنْتُ مِنْ دُرِّيَّتِي بِوَادٍ غَيْرِ ذِي زَرْعٍ عِنْدَ بَيْتِكَ الْمُحَرَّمِ رَبَّنَا لِيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ فَاجْعَلْ أَفْئِدَةً مِنَ النَّاسِ تَهْوِي إِلَيْهِمْ وَارْزُقْهُمْ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَشْكُرُونَ  
سورة ابراهيم – آية 37

*“O our Lord! I have made some of my offspring to dwell in an uncultivable valley by Your Sacred House (the Ka’bah at Makkah) in order, O our Lord, that they may perform As-Salât (Iqâmat-as-Salât). So fill some hearts among men with love towards them, and (O Allâh) provide them with fruits so that they may give thanks”*  
Sûrat Ibrâhîm (Abraham) XIV

يا حبذا جبلُ الريان من جبل  
وَحَبِذَا ساكِنُ الرِّيَّانِ مَنْ كَانَا  
جرير

“Would love Alrayyan mountain  
Would love whoever lives there”  
Jareer

The Arabian Peninsula was home to some of the oldest civilizations dating back thousands of years with notable periods of greatness in the ancient world as well as medieval times. Consequently, contemporary Saudi Arabia has been blessed with a rich cultural heritage, such as monuments, historic towns or urban areas (notably Islamic urban heritage), books, works of art, and artifacts. Yet, the heritage in the Kingdom is not limited to these material manifestations and includes the often oral traditions and living expressions that its diverse communities have inherited from their ancestors and which will be passed on to future generations in order to create a sense of identity, source of inspiration and continuity. Next to customs and religious beliefs, these include for instance festive events, folklore, traditional craftsmanship or oral literature. For instance, the memories of the various phases of ancient Bedouin life and their deep feeling of intimacy with nature, the places (such as Mada'in Saleh) as well as the harsh living conditions in an inhospitable environment in the Arabian desert which influenced their modes of thought, have been conserved in the collection of seven pre-Islamic Arabic odes (qasida). While being considered as masterpieces of world literature, these Mu'allaqât serve as a best practice example on how a complex system of ethical values has been passed from generation to generation through poetry. However, despite this considerable accumulation of human heritage, the predominant tourism activity in Saudi Arabia both domestic and international is religious tourism, in particular the annual Hajj pilgrimage to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina.

While focusing on the Saudi Commission for Tourism & Antiquities (SCTA) strategy to develop cultural heritage tourism, this study will outline the strength of these approaches as well as analyze the gap between the intended objectives and the efficacy of such measures. Here the paper will especially present the conceptual, methodological and capacity building challenges that must be overcome, if the development of heritage tourism in Saudi Arabia is to deliver on the promise of sustainability. Thus, it will present weaknesses, such as the lack of conservation measures in respect to significant sites in the cultural domain and elaborate on the future threats of climate change to the Kingdom's heritage. Finally, the paper will provide recommendations for the future development of the sector and will demonstrate best practice examples by showing how the creation of for instance museums by concerned members of Saudi society can contribute to preserving cultural heritage for future generations.



## **Archaeological Sites in Wadi Al-Ghayran of the Rub' Al Khali Desert: Spatial Analysis as a Critical Tool for Research, Conservation and Sustainable Tourism Planning in Saudi Arabia**

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GIS technologies along with the spatial analysis methodologies are important tools for advancement in archaeological research and to get better explanation of the ancient history. A wide range of information can be collected and analyzed through the study of the spatial distribution of archaeological remains. Also, these are very useful tools that can be utilized for conservation of such valuable archaeological places and for the sustainable tourism planning in Saudi Arabia. During its gas exploration operations and as a part of its commitment to protect the archaeological sites in Rub' AlKhali desert, SRAK company limited sponsored the archaeological survey project conducted by teams from the local museums in Dammam and Al-Hasa in 2006. This research used the data obtained during this project and tried to utilize the capabilities of GIS technology along with some spatial analysis methodologies to study the distribution and characteristics of the archaeological sites in Wadi Al-Ghayran, Saudi Arabia. Most of the archaeological sites recorded in this region are related to the prehistoric periods.

The research mainly investigated the distribution and characteristics of archaeological sites and its proximity to old water resources. The study also tried to make inferences about the relationships of intervisibility between related archaeological sites within Al-Ghayran landscape. Finally, some analysis will be used to help in planning future archaeological conservation survey and sustainable tourism planning in this part of Saudi Arabia.

## **Role of Women in Traditional Architecture of Saudi Arabia**

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Conventional gender roles, stereotypes and women's role in development have always been a critical source for discourse, especially in many so called developing economies. This could be related, more or less, to local traditions or customs in patriarchal societies, which sometimes undermine the value if not the existence of women. However, when it comes to traditional architecture, women have played an essential part in the formation of local built environment and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia does not represent an exception in this respect. Specific gender-related contributions vary from heavy construction work to light finishing of interior and exterior of buildings.

This research focuses on the Asir region, geographically situated on an elevated plateau in southwestern Saudi Arabia running parallel to the Red Sea, where women took a leading role of both construction and finishing works. This has been exhibited in colorful interiors of traditional buildings of the Asir. The work inside, being inspired by the surrounding mountainous landscape, is unique not only to Saudi Arabia but also the Arabian Peninsula. It also indicates the charming, dictated, artistic and sensitive personality of the hard-working women of that region. While global perceptions are preoccupied with the alleged systemic deprivation of women's rights and specific gender-related social roles in the Gulf monarchies, sustainable tourism would present an opportunity to foster greater cultural understanding and alleviate some of the misconceptions visitors might be bringing with them.

Finally, the presentation aims to explore, whether the present form of tourism development in the Kingdom will be able to serve as a means to disseminate in-depth knowledge about these female contributions to the Kingdom's heritage to a global audience and thus stimulate greater awareness of its cultural diversity.

## Development and Architecture in the Gulf: the Abraj al-Bait Towers in Mecca as a Case Study

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The Burj al-Arab hotel in Dubai, the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, and the Abraj al-Bait Towers in Mecca are iconic examples of modern architecture in the Arab Gulf States. They also are part of the larger phenomenon of development in these states, marked by competition for similar markets and emulation of one another's initiatives. National leaders have used architecture as a physical embodiment of their nations' newly-found power and wealth, in the process developing unique 'brands' for themselves in order to attract investment, political power, and tourists. These structures are new yet they revisit older problems and issues in modern architecture. First, their architects work globally and are not citizens of the region. This invites questions about how modernity is constructed in the Arab Gulf and shows how rulers have sought to be modern without relinquishing traditional values or the histories of their built environments. Many share a global modernist visual language but also integrate references to Islamic art, earlier British styles, and American skyscrapers. This use of historicizing elements reflects a tension between international image and local culture, and invites questions about the intersection between politics and architecture in the Gulf.

## Oman

### The Impact of "Integrated Tourism Projects" on the Urban Development in Oman

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Muscat Capital Area (MCA) has been expanding rapidly since 1970. The path for development was laid out in the 1980s with a "generous" zoning plan, strict separation of functions (residential, commercial, administrative, recreational) and land provisions for massive infrastructure (highway, ports, airports), resulting in unprecedented urban sprawl along the Batinah coast. The demographic pressure (7 children per women, census 2010) and a mechanism of land allocation by lottery account for a striving building industry, producing almost identical single family villas (136.000 applications for plots in 2009). While this trend will continue for the lower- and middle-income sector, the up-market segment is almost saturated. In the best capitalist logic, the same developers brand villas, condominiums and apartments in so called "integrated tourist projects" (ITPs). Foreign investors and expatriate willing to reside in Oman in ITPs are seen as temporary guests - tourists. In a few years, MCA has seen the rise of several ITPs:

- ❖ the Wave, a yacht and golf village tucked between the airport and the beach,
- ❖ fully serviced residences at the Shangri la
- ❖ Muscat Hills, a golf club / semidetached houses
- ❖ Safa Beach development
- ❖ The "Blue City", 65km North of Muscat has never reached more than planning stage in the wake of the 2009 financial crisis.

Considering the growing number of ITPs in Oman, the phenomenon has to be examined on the urban, national and regional level. ITPs typically market an exclusive leisure activity (yachting, golfing, water-sports) with a unique location (sea-front, spectacular setting, proximity to infrastructure). Since these commodities demand a massive upfront investment, most ITPs need to reach a certain size to be economically viable. At the same time ITPs need to close themselves off from their surroundings to maintain the aura of exclusivity. Since ITPs cater for higher-income clientele - working in the city – ITPs occupy central nodes of the urban fabric. These constraints shape ITPs into islands dominating and draining on the urban fabric. The exclusive use of scarce resources (land, location, infrastructure) and the restriction of use to a privileged few, makes ITPs absolutely unsustainable. If not located within the city, virgin landscapes, mountains and even traditional villages are sacrificed to make way for an ITP. The village of Yiti was relocated inland and the remaining houses not repaired following the destruction by hurricane Guno, conveniently making space for a multi-hectare development by the sea. In Oman, fragile landscape and urban fabric are intertwined (water table, rock stability, floods, habitats and social tissue). Yet, ITPs go in line with Oman's restrictive policy regarding foreign investments in the real estate market, most ITPs are government backed. Since the government is the largest stakeholder in these projects, the demand for ITPs is artificially maintained and distorts the real-estate market on the overall urban level. Foreigners willing to invest will pay higher than market prices, speculating on a continuous and exclusive development of ITPs. This distorted market prevents less affluent locals to participate and live in these compounds, sharpening the social divide between rich and poor, local and expatriates.

The willingness to pay higher than market prices and the apparent exclusivity of ITPs, create a shadow market as well as the rise of “copy-paste” settlements. These informal neighborhoods congregate on the space “left-over” from ITPs, following the formula of the ITPs minus the facilities and the prime location, yet causing similar damage to the environment and the city. By exposing these mechanisms, this paper aims to address the urge for sustainable urbanism in Oman and the region.

## **Tourism on a Plate: Marketing Responsible Geotourism in the Sultanate of Oman**

**Peter L. Keage**

Senior Adviser  
Ministry of Tourism; Sultanate of Oman

The paper summarizes the research behind the marketing campaign for the 3rd Global Geotourism Conference. The paper provides insights into the challenges in marketing an emerging and valuable tourism theme. Challenges arise from an evolving definition of geotourism, the low geo knowledge-base in the tourism sector, and the overshadowing market profile of established geo attractions, destinations and experiences, many of which appeal to mass tourism.

While Geotourism is frequently cited as a niche theme, the Conference's on-line marketing campaign focused on the wider responsible travel market. The Organizing Committee selected this pathway to boost awareness in geotourism and the Sultanate as a destination for responsible tourists. This focus may have value to geotourism marketing promotions in other areas.

Oman's Al Dhakhiliyah (region) with its diverse natural and cultural attractions is used as a case study to illustrate how geotourism can enhance destination marketing. The case study can be used as a template for future action.



## **Bahrain**

### **Successful Best Practice of Sustainable Tourism Initiatives in Bahrain**

**Sheikh Khalifa Ahmed Al-Khalifa**

Directorate of Archeology and Heritage  
Ministry of Culture  
Manama, Bahrain

Abstract will be submitted (not his fault – we messed up)

### **Tourism in Bahrain: a continuous search for economic development and for preservation of cultural heritage**

**Magdalena Karolak**

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The aim of this paper is to assess the efforts undertaken to promote development and transformation of tourism sector in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Thanks to a Western lifestyle, Bahrain, the smallest country of the Gulf Cooperation Council, has long established its reputation as a getaway destination from its conservative neighbor - Saudi Arabia. Nonetheless, in 2009 a parliamentary debate over the negative influence of "unclean" tourism promoting un-Islamic values opened after Manama was marked as one of the top ten "cities of vice" worldwide on an Internet portal. The solution aimed at curbing down the phenomenon of prostitution and promoting family tourism called for closing of nightclubs in hotels and a complete alcohol ban. Ultimately, economic needs prevailed and the solution was slowly abandoned as unpractical. The problem of transformation of tourism is part of a larger debate over how to tackle the loss of cultural identity in rapidly modernized states as well as how to politically direct the development of tourism bearing in mind the needs for economic development. Yet, heritage tourism could become a factor strengthening the local identity. The revamping of Manama souk as well as the project to include Muharraq's houses of pearling traders on UNESCO World Heritage list are examples of governmentally supported initiatives that could put Bahrain in the international spotlight. This paper presents an analysis of this continuous search for a balanced economic development and for preservation of national heritage.

### **National Employment in the Tourism Sector: A Perspective from the Kingdom of Bahrain**

**Mohammed A. J. Al-Hajeri**

Directorate of External Relation and Centers of Excellence  
University of Bahrain, Manama, Bahrain

This paper focuses on the employment of nationals in the tourism sector in the Kingdom of Bahrain. In this respect, this paper will in particular look at the skills gap being faced in the tourism sector and will evaluate a recent study in this sector. It will also examine the size of the labor force and here especially the respective proportion of employed foreigners in this sector and the potential job growth rate it offers. Finally the paper will attempt to shed light on the following questions:

Is the tourism sector considered an attractive sector for the Bahraini worker?

What are obstacles are being faced by the tourism sector?

Are there efforts being made by government or the private sector to encourage Bahrainis to consider tourism as a career of choice?

## **United Arab Emirates (UAE)**

### **The Price of Branding: tourism and the elusive search for "culture" among Emiratis in Dubai, UAE**

**Akbar Keshodkar**

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Zayed University  
UAE

Branding Dubai has required creating the image of a cosmopolitan environment compatible with other global cities, yet maintaining itself as different from the rest. In promotion of tourism, the use of cultural legacy to distinguish its uniqueness has been an instrumental feature. However, the problem lies in how notion of cultural legacies are constructed and promoted to tourists and in turn, projected onto the local Emirati population as part of constructing the Emirati identity. Increasingly recognized as the Mecca of capitalist commodity consumption in the world, the legacy of devotion to Islam and tribal practices in Dubai come into direct contrast with now emerging notions of belonging within the emirate. Based around this notion of consumption, maintaining the Dubai brand also requires a continuous, large scale importation of human resources as a consequence of which Emiratis now make up less than fifteen percent of the population in the Emirate.

This paper evaluates how efforts to brand Dubai as a specific tourism destination within this discourse contributes to the emergence of new meanings and locations of differences for the local, Emirati population. The paper also examines how demarcation and re-construction of urban, rural and natural spaces as representations of local heritage and legacy for the tourist gaze contributes to creation of new meanings through which the citizens of the state attempt to identify themselves as Emiratis. Furthermore, the paper investigates how the re-appropriation of various tourist spaces and practices to continuously create new ideas of legacy to maintain Dubai as an attractive destination for tourists alters how Emiratis consume the Dubai brand and at the same time, conceptualize and accommodate this shift in their heritage and legacy, in shaping their understanding of the past and more importantly, their notions of belonging for the future in this rapidly changing landscape.

## **Come and Watch Us – Maybe**

**Alia Yunis**

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In 2010, the first Emirati feature length film to play theatrically did very well at the local box office, mediocre with international critics, and left Emiratis both happy to see themselves captured on screen and unhappy with what they perceived as a somewhat negative portrayal of themselves: the idea that their male youth are irresponsible and do not always follow the rules of Islam, that their country is made up of foreigners, that there is poverty to be found in the country. Similar criticism has been launched at both documentaries and feature films by GCC filmmakers.

However, for people living outside the country, these films, artistically and technically flawed as they are, portray a UAE that is not just about tall buildings and millionaires, a place that indeed does have a genuine heritage (rather than the contrived camel and date heritage), a place not merely of decadence but rather flawed human beings, making it all the more alluring, more worthy perhaps of a visit. But is the country brave enough to go down an honest path in film? More than a billion dollars is being spent on creating a sustainable film industry, not to mention the growing number of international film festivals made to draw in hundreds of international visitors as part of the UAE's substantial tourism efforts. But are the Emiratis up to viewing themselves honestly? This is key to a viable cinema, and we exam this question through conversations with Emirati filmmakers, executives in the film industry, and students currently studying film in the country's film education programs.

## **Dubai: Image and Reality in a New Tourism Destination**

**Sanuja Mohammad Ali**

University of California, Berkeley  
USA

Through a careful examination of Dubai's history of development and its modernization projects, this paper will critique predominant understandings of Dubai's growth into the quintessential tourist destination. I consider the city's positioning in the world of tourism through different tropes such as its built environment, megaprojects, and changes in urban policies.

While I emphasize the unique nature of Dubai's developmental pattern to show how strategically it has garnered global attention, one of the main concerns of this paper is to bring out the effects these policies have had on the local population. The artificially created "downtown" for instance remains uninhabitable; they are images and symbols divorced from sociality but powerful nonetheless and consumed in another way, as a source of city pride and uniqueness. Dubai presents many paradoxes and seemingly revels in being a mass of contradictions. While it has an open door policy to foreigners and seemingly every new project is geared towards inviting more and more outsiders, access to legal citizenship or even permanent residency is strictly guarded. While nationals are well provided for by the government in the form of numerous hand-outs, public discourse and civic participation are almost non-existent. In the absence of vibrant civil society, how do we conceive of sustainable development?

On one level I will critically examine various modernization projects in Dubai and what they represent as well as what they are meant to represent on the global stage. On another level, I critique the very image of Dubai disseminated (by itself and to a certain extent global media)—that of a magical appearance on the world stage—what were vast tracts of desert before, now suddenly shimmering towering skyscrapers. Furthermore, I discuss Dubai's overarching ambition for global recognition and the contradictions represented in the interplay between tradition and modernity in its many projects. One can see by examining the images produced by Dubai that a profound disconnect between the unifying narratives of both tradition and newness, obscures the actual conditions of the city. As scholars, transcending this imaginary and understanding how it constructs and is constructed by hegemonic powers is essential for the understanding of such new urban developments.



## **Prospects and Challenges of Tourism in the United Arab Emirates (UAE): A Case Study of Dubai**

**Fatima Al-Sayegh**

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Tourism in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) began to play a substantial role in contributing to the national income. By taking advantage of its geo-strategic location, its natural resources, its openness as well as rich history, the UAE in general and Dubai in particular have succeeded in establishing themselves as a prominent place on the world tourism map within the past two decades.

Dubai was the first to enter this sector by overcoming major obstacles such as weather conditions and the lack of an appropriate infrastructure. However, despite its accomplishments, Dubai is still foreseeing some major challenges, which could seriously affect any further development in this field. Obstacles such as local resentment towards this industry, and the rising Islamic tide in the region as a whole could seriously affect Dubai's future plans. Another obstacle is the rising concern among locals over the loss of their Arab-Islamic identity. This prevailing attitude is causing serious concern to the authorities. In addition, serious competition from other emirates such as Abu Dhabi could critically affect Dubai's future expansion plans. This paper is going to deal with three major questions or issues: Dubai's future plans and new challenges, the rising Islamist tide in the region and how it could affect future development in this field, and finally local resentment towards this industry.

## **The Disappearance of the Locals: The Removal of Emiratis from the Visual and Cultural Landscape**

**Jimmese Wilson Shalaby**

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Rutgers University Newark, New Jersey, US

In 2000 adverts in newspapers, often depicted the Emirati as an extended family. Normally, it was the one or two grandparents, a mother and a father, and a brood of five or more children. At the time, Dubai had only few major commercial tourist attractions. For the most part the tourism sector was mostly on dependent on the aura of its culture; souqs, masjids, forts, beaches, the creek, camel and horse races, heritage areas, and the newly built Burj al Arab along with Dubai shopping festival.

Zoom ahead to 2012 and we find adverts that portray Emiratis as single parents with just one child or a nuclear family with the maximum of two children, usually a boy and a girl. The focus of UAE's tourist industry is the glistening Burj Khalifa, the F1 race track, and Dubai International Financial Center, Jumeirah Beach Walk, and the Atlantis, and Emirates Palace luxury spas, music concerts, and film festivals. At the beginning of the decade Emiratis were an integral part of being ambassadors of their culture and heritage primarily the mere idea of UAE was one that included them. Now, this heritage as taking a backseat to multinational brands, signature hotels, and leisure resorts and activities that can be found in Europe and the US however without the trouble of rain, cold, and with plenty of sun. Hence, just like their images the need for Emiratis as representatives of the UAE have been all but eliminated from the visual landscape so has the focus on their culture and heritage. An examination of this disappearance is critical to understanding the social transformation of Emiratis from cultural ambassadors to an endangered society.

## Qatar

### Mega-Projects and Microstates, Bedouins and Businessmen: Qatar's Tourism Vision in Revolution

**Alan S. Weber\***

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*\*Please note that Alan is one of the co-editors of our upcoming edited volume on Sustainable Tourism & Heritage Preservation in the GCC, which will be published with Springer New York by the end of 2012*

Qatar's tourism industry, paralleling other dramatic developments in the small Persian Gulf microstate, has undergone a revolution. Only 15 years ago tourism was literally non-existent: tourist visas were difficult to obtain, there were few hotels beyond the landmark Sheraton opened in 1982, and no developed attractions. By 2009, however, The New York Times had named the country Cultural Destination of the Year for 2009. Small microstates sometimes have little to offer for the tourist simply due to limited geographical size, and an image on the homepage of the Qatar Tourism Authority reads: "Qatar—Your 48 hours destination," indicating the country's suitability as a weekend, stop-over or layover destination. Qatar expects to invest between 17-20 billion USD in tourism in the next 10 years.

The average Qatari citizen, however, is ambivalent about tourism due to the large number of expatriates who make up approximately 86% of the population. Public concerns about loss of cultural heritage and language are frequently voiced, and one new pillar of the Qatar Tourism Authority (QTA) is cultural preservation. The new national interest in tourism among a variety of governmental and private sector interests is so varied and multifaceted, that it is difficult to speak of a coordinated tourism strategy for the nation, even though the QTA represents the official body to regulate, develop and oversee the tourism industry. This chapter describes the various tourism development strategies adopted by the State of Qatar, the Qatar Tourism Authority, Qatar Foundation, and the Qatar Museum Authority and attempts to untangle the competing visions and development plans for this sector.

Qatar has almost no natural attractions: extremely shallow beaches not suitable for swimming extend around the perimeter of the country, and a harsh desert climate prevails with temperatures close to 40-50 centigrade for six months of the year. The southern dune region is frequently used for 'dune-bashing', executing daring turns and feats of balance with land cruiser trucks on sand dunes, but the area becomes so crowded on the weekends that fatal collisions and overturned cars are frequent. Dune bashing also causes a great deal of environmental degradation. The UNESCO MAB programme created the Al Reem Biosphere Reserve in the Northwest corner of Qatar – however, roads in the area are poor, and the region is populated with about 14,000 inhabitants in fishing villages and herd animal ranches. While a valuable area for scientific research, the lands are not necessarily attractive to tourists as misunderstandings often occur between local inhabitants and visitors about land use. These communities are very traditional, including recently settled Bedouin nomads (such as the Al Naim), and the prospect of tourists walking through villages taking pictures in a culture where women are still veiled and gender segregation is strictly enforced is not a sustainable idea. Other ecotourism possibilities include boat trips to observe the native sea cow (Dugong dugon) and other marine mammals, or tours of Qatar's three major unique biosystems—coastal mangrove swamps (Avicennia marina trees), the Khor Al Udeid (inland salt sea), and the barcan sand dunes.

Qatar has embarked on an ambitious museums development plan and the magnificent Museum of Islamic Art designed by I.M. Pei stands at the heart of this strategy. The museum has some of the most historically relevant and rare pieces of Islamic art in the world, and houses one of the world's largest collections of Arabic astrolabes. In addition, the Mathaf museum of modern Arabic art opened recently in Doha. In the planning stages are a National Museum and smaller regional and specialty museums, including the refurbishing of the main traditional marketplace Souq Waqif as a living museum. The successful attracting of major international sporting events to Qatar reveals how tourism is intertwined with larger geopolitical considerations. In addition to building the multi-billion dollar Aspire Zone of athletic facilities, including a biomedical research center on

sports medicine called ASPETAR, Qatar has regularly hosted such events as The Exxon Mobil Open tennis tournaments, Qatar International Rally, and The Qatar Masters Golf Tournament. In 2006 the country hosted the largest Asian Games to date with 45 countries and 40 sports. Qatar's most visible sports achievement was securing the 2022 FIFA World Cup soccer bid. The efforts placed in winning the bid clearly demonstrate, similar to role the Olympics play in attracting both tourist dollars and business opportunities, that the country will use the event to showcase Qatar's booming hydrocarbon economy, which may stimulate further Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the economy.

A similar strategy can be seen in Qatar's focus on the high-end Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) sector. Currently most of the travel to Qatar is business-related, and more and more high profile meetings are being scheduled in Doha. A recent example is the International Stem Cell Conference sponsored by Qatar Foundation and held in the state-of-the-art Qatar National Convention Center, completed in 2011. The strategy of Qatar Foundation, which oversees Education City (a consortium of 8 U.S. and international branch campuses), includes creating a regional educational hub and supporting research in biomedicine, computer science, and chemical and petroleum engineering. The amount of business travel that Qatar Foundation has stimulated including students, professors, researchers and other personnel in and out of the country is enormous. These varied activities demonstrate that there is no government consensus as of yet about the future direction of tourism in the country, but this situation may in fact be advantageous as it stimulates creative debate about tourism and allows a diverse path of development. In developing a national tourist policy based on cultural heritage, both governments and individual private entrepreneurs need to decide what face to put forward. What will they represent to the foreigner and in what manner? Western tourists arriving in the Arabian Gulf and weaned on media representations of Arabs such as David Lean's film Lawrence of Arabia often have preconceived orientalist notions about nomadic pastoralists (beddu), when in fact the region has historically hosted a wide variety of socio-economic groups such as farmers (fellahin), permanently settled date producers and ranchers around oases, fishermen, maritime and land traders, and pearl divers. Also, the Arabian Gulf is more genetically diverse than its own inhabitants are willing to admit, with significant migration in the past from Persia, Africa, Pakistan (Balochistan), and the Caucasus. Interestingly, in attempts to consolidate national identity, Gulf nationals even when not of Bedouin heritage adopt the symbology of its lifestyle: falconry, camels, the black goat hair tent, the majlis, and the khanja.

## **An Institution of Cultural Power and the Role of the Tourist: Reading Islam through the Doha Museum of Islamic Art**

**Courtney Dorroll**

Jacob K. Javits Fellow  
University of Arizona

Museums are designators of hegemonic, cultural capital. For the 2012 Gulf Studies Conference I am proposing a presentation that is based on my project that analyzes the newly established Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, Qatar. This museum opened in 2010 and is financed by the ruling al-Thani family. I.M. Pei designed the building that houses the cultural capital of Islam. Through a political economy perspective I evaluate where the money from the museum is coming from and to whom the museum is marketing its "goods."

It is important to unpack the display of "Islamic Art." This generalization can be interpreted and programmed in a number of ways. Art historians have been struggling with this issue of labeling "Islamic Art" for decades but today it must also be evaluated from an economic growth, conservation and global perspective. The role of the tourist plays a key part in this project. This target audience is visually reading Doha, Qatar and quite possibly the entirety of Islam from the signs and symbols dispersed throughout the museum. Behind the museum lies the curator and arts administrator that controls the discourse projected to the museum tourist.

This project analyzes the architecture, political economy and cultural capital presented in Doha's Museum of Islamic Art. Questions of identity, power and cultural capital arise when analyzing this museum. One must ask what is the role of this museum in the Gulf? What is the ideology behind grandiose structures of culture? How do they project power and how do they produce a visual representation of cultural power, cultural capital and who in this equation is represented and who or what is silenced?



## **Sustainability Questions on GCC Investments in Sports: A Critical assessment of UAE and Qatari Football**

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College of Business Administration  
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UAE

This paper is an exploratory study reporting on the level and pace of GCC investments in sports – notably football. Two key GCC member states – Qatar and the UAE – are cited as illustration of these gargantuan investments. In the first case of the UAE, its premier football league not only recently disbanded its equivalent of the Barclays Premier League (i.e. the UAE Football league) and in the process sacking its CEO.

Before the end of 2011, the UAE Football Association boss Al Rumaithi handed in his resignation due to irreconcilable differences between himself and the professional football administrative machinery. In the second case, Qatar has been used to hosting the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Champions League, which has now been topped with its “controversial” winning of the hosting rights for FIFA World Cup 2022. All these are happening at a time when GCC investments in football has seen the acquisition of top European Clubs from Manchester City (owned by Sheikh Mansoor of the Abu Dhabi Royal family – i.e. UAE investor); Arsenal Football Club (with UAE stadium naming rights); to Paris Saint Germain, PSG (owned by Qatari interests) and the “almighty” Barcelona (sponsored by the Qatar Foundation).

Indeed the resilience of GCC investment in football two caveats require further elaboration. On the one hand, the UAE has stakes in Spain’s Getafe (courtesy of the Emirates Group); shirt sponsorships for AC Milan, Arsenal and FC Hamburg (Emirates Airlines); attraction of big names such as Diego Maradona (now in the UAE as a coach of Al Wasl); David O’Leary (recently sacked); Asemoah Gyan (Al Ain), David Trezeguet (Baniyas) amongst others. This is in addition to the fact that two UAE premier league teams (Al Ahli and Al Wahda) have had the chance to showcase themselves to the world in two consecutive years having featured in the FIFA Club World Cup for 2009 and 2010 respectively. Qatar, on the other hand, has Al Sadd to thank for its damage limitation battle in its 4-0 loss to Barcelona at the 2011 FIFA Club World Cup where Brazilian champions, Santos recorded the same margin of loss at the hands of the “almighty” Catalan side. Furthermore, as Qatar 2022 preparations get under way, the recent scandal at FIFA amidst corruption charges leading to the suspension and resignation of Qatar’s Bin Hammam (former AFC Chairman) raises some key concerns that fall outside the remit of this paper. However, as already reported elsewhere (see Spiess, 2011, p. 12) sceptics are wondering about “Qatar’s controversial success in taking the 2022 FIFA World Cup bid [the objective of which was, perhaps] to bridge the gap between the Arab World and the West [but has only been] a complete branding failure.” To this end, the paper has also included the UAE, and especially Dubai which has also been captured in the literature as a pioneer of such mega-investments that might or might not have been built upon sound economics. For example, it has been reported that the rationale for Qatar 2012 is “still not exactly clear... is it for marketing purposes only to rise from the ashes next to famous Dubai that has fallen into disgrace or is Qatar honestly interested to establish itself as a number one sporting destination” (Scharfenort, 2011, cf. Spiess, 2011, p. 12). This paper seeks to highlight these points in a qualitative manner and drawing evidence from observations and media analysis of developments in the region. Overall, key questions remain as to why there is so much investment by the GCC in sports in general and football in particular? How sustainable are these investments? Any evidence of short-term objectives versus long-term goals?

## Iraq

### The Public Policy of Tourism in Iraq & its Obstacles

#### Azer Naji Al-Hassani

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Iraq

Iraq has a multitude of tourist attractions based on natural and human resources, including some elements which could easily be considered as unprecedented on a global scale. Widely considered to be the 'cradle of civilization', the nation possesses a cultural history of over 10000 years. Distinguished by the presence of the fertile Tigris–Euphrates river system, the area historically known as Mesopotamia witnessed the earliest emergence of a literate urban society. Whilst modern day Iraq offers a diversity of terrains and climates, including a multitude of lakes as well as other bodies of water that cater for different kinds of travel experiences, such as recreational, therapeutic, and hunting tourism. Next to the variety of alluvial plains, xeric shrublands, and desert landscapes, the country is home to breathtaking mountains with peaks up to approximately 3,600 m (11811 ft) which could offer low impact niche tourism, with an emphasis on hiking and climbing. In consideration that the Zagros mountain belt was formed by the collision of the Eurasian and Arabian plates as well as that the region is still geologically active, it should urgently be considered for geotourism and the UNESCO Global Geoparks concept. Iraq further possesses some of the some of the world's oldest and most unique holy sites central to each of the world's three major religions, thus representing an important source for religious tourism which is considered a form of heritage tourism. In addition to the shrines of the prophets of the Jews, Christians and Muslims, there are important temples and shrines of the Yazidis, the Sabaeans, and even of Sikhism. Moreover, the nation assumes prestigious status among Islamic countries and attracts millions of Muslims from around the world to visit the important religious shrines, notably in Najaf and Karbala. Unfortunately most of these sites still have not been sufficiently exploited, which would contribute to tourism development in Iraq.

This situation is due to the shortcomings in making the necessary means to support the existence and availability of other major components of tourism. The quality of services provided in such sites has to be upgraded and the need is to develop the human resources that are necessary to manage service operation. The low level of accommodation and catering as well as the deterioration of routes and means of transportation are obstacles to such development. Attention should also be paid to tourism marketing and its requirements. The administration is the driving force for the development of these facilities to constantly increase and improve Iraq's tourism. The presence of a sensitive management, which is characterized by good scientific reason as well as the power of observation and innovation, has an important role in the desired development of the society in various fields, including tourism. Hotels are the main pillars of tourism and hospitality industry, since they provide a variety of services to foreign tourists and the local community. Thus they must ensure services at a level commensurate with the requirements of the customers, which cannot be provided without the fundamentals of physical and human resources. In addition to that, security issues after the 2003 war and the sectarian clashes during 2006 gave the concept of tourism in Iraq a bad reputation, despite stable conditions in various places like for instance the region of Kurdistan. Nevertheless, the international media still considers Iraq as the most insecure country in the world", which does not help in the nations quest to recover from past difficulties.

To conclude, I would like to encourage government and private sector to hold an international tourism conference which should include ministries involved in services, academics and practitioners to search for feasible solutions to develop the tourism sector in Iraq.

## Iran

### **The role of training in the sustainable development of Iran's tourism sector in meeting the challenges of globalization**

**Maryam Shademan Pajouh**

Teesside Business School  
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Globalization has become one of the most contentious political and economic issues of modern times, and continues to stimulate debate across almost all disciplines. Globalization has brought about dramatic changes in the way people live and work, transforming societies along the way. It has been described as manifesting in three main dimensions; economic, cultural and political. Whilst it is true that 'globalization' is 'everywhere' the extent of its impact varies between countries, and Iran is a good example of a country which has generally been less exposed to the globalization process. There is almost no literature on the impact of globalization in Iran, which has led some academics to argue it has little impact. Yet it seems wholly unlikely that a country which for millennia has been part of international trade routes, due to its location on the Silk Road, could be unaffected by globalization.

Globalization naturally affects some industries more than others due to the nature of their business, and one aspect of Iran which is undoubtedly exposed to globalization is its tourist industry. Iran is one of the oldest countries in the world with vast places of interest to a wide spectrum of tourists but does not have a fair share of this bonanza. Though it has cultural and historical sites of huge significance, the tourism sector has not fully benefited from their presence, due to the country's relationship with the West, its location in a region of ongoing tension and conflict, as well as negative media coverage of the country. Despite this, Iran does attract tourists – mainly from elsewhere in the Middle East, largely to visit important religious sites, but also a number of Western tourists drawn by its cultural heritage. Though some sites of religious significance are also of interest to these Western heritage tourists, in general there is a clear separation, with the result that some locations attract largely Middle Eastern tourists, and others attract largely Western tourists. I particularly want to assess how globalization has impacted on Iranian management in the tourism sector. I intend to make a comparison between management styles in areas where there is a higher incidence of foreign tourists as opposed to areas popular only with local tourists. The aim of this is to ascertain if there is a difference in management styles using data from sources such as Heritage Ministry statistics and annual reports from the hotels in the respective areas and also interviews with managers of these hotels.

This paper will focus on providing insight into the approach and challenges faced by a company in importing foreign management models and practices into its operations with the view of providing a successful and sustainable development of its capabilities to meet challenges and maximize opportunities from globalization.



## General Info on Edited Volume

### Tourism Development in the GCC States: Reconciling Economic Growth, Conservation and Sustainable Development

#### *Editors:*

Andy Spiess  
Faisal Al-Mubarak  
Alan S. Weber

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## General Info

### About the Book

(Totally unexpected) the proposal for our edited volume on sustainable tourism development in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) received an incredible amount of attention among highly reputable publishers. Thus spoiled for choice and after careful consideration, I decided that Springer (New York) Science & Business Media would be best suited to offer us the highest possible quality and service that corresponds with our philosophy.

**Springer** (BTW founded by Julius Springer in Berlin as far back as 1842) will advertise our book internationally and will also promote it at conferences and other events that we suggest to them. Moreover, their innovative publishing approach will ensure that your work is available in as many parallel formats as possible (be it as an eBook, a printed copy, a Kindle edition, individual chapters, etc.). You can find more information on Springer here <http://www.springer.com> and since I published with them several times before, you can be certain to expect the 'very best'. (I just couldn't come up with one of those fancy Dubai superlatives ;-)) Finally, the **title of the book is still tentative**, in other words we will leave it up to the experts in New York to maybe give it a more suitable name later on. (Let us assume that they are more experienced than any of us in this respect)

### Your Complimentary Copy

Further we negotiated with Springer that each author will receive a complimentary copy of the book and the editors will get a few extra editions to be able to distribute them to interested Gulf policy makers.

### Structure of the Book

The book will consist of several parts. Being the pioneer publication concerned with tourism in the Gulf, it was among our objectives to establish the urgently needed science-policy interface and in this respect encourage 'institutional voices' to complement our scholarly analysis with their respective views. In this respect we approached several noteworthy Gulf personalities or relevant stakeholders – see tentative structure below, a **preface** written by the three editors, a **thematic introduction** (from me), **individual chapters (your contributions)** and an **index**.

### **Our Philosophy**

To publish an edited volume of the **highest scholarly quality (critical research), based on mutual respect** (different cultures & disciplines) and of course **with zero censorship!**

### **A Quick Note on Our Audience**

Please remember that our book will be multidisciplinary and our audience will primarily be made up of **scholars from a diversity of disciplines, practitioners involved in development planning or work directly or indirectly related to tourism (e.g. museums), and 'at least in theory' policy makers.** In this respect please be kind to our readers and keep in mind that not everyone is familiar with those acronyms that we use in the Gulf (eg. GCC would easily be misinterpreted as 'Global Climate Change'), Arabic terminology (see p. 5), local currencies or metric measurements (see also p. 5).

### **Media Coverage & Awareness**

We are currently making a huge effort to create awareness of our sustainable tourism & heritage preservation initiative through various means. While I have programmed a database (currently with 200 entries and growing) with the relevant information on relevant stakeholders, Faisal Al-Mubarak and Alan Weber will take care of the media (both Arabic and English) once our book is published. We are especially interested to disseminate the information in Arabic through Al-Arabiya (if possible) and of course other formats. Further Prof. Al-Mubarak is mediating for us with the policy level. To summarize, as I already mentioned to you in those first emails – this is not meant to be just a session and an edited volume, but a **long term sustainable initiative.** We are already planning a future event, which will focus on heritage preservation in the Gulf. Please remember that everything in the Gulf takes time and patience - but we are currently on the right track to succeed ;-)

### **Peer Review Process**

All papers will of course be properly peer reviewed. These reviews will either be done by two of the editors (depending on qualification) or anonymously by independent reviewers that we invited to contribute because they are experts in your particular field (usually only full professors (US) or the equivalent). Consequently most papers are likely to be reviewed by one of the editors and at the same time undergo a so called double-blind peer review, where neither authors' nor reviewers' names are revealed. This level of anonymity is designed to encourage fairness and that your manuscripts will be considered only on their merits. Please don't see this as a challenge, but just as an opportunity to receive feedback from notable specialists in your field, to correct any errors or gaps in literature you may have overlooked or assist to make your contribution more applicable to our audience. Since we are on a very tight schedule, the review process will conclude in 2012.

## **About the Editors:**

### **Andy Spiess**

#### **Associate Professor of Political Science**

**GCC Network for Drylands Research and Development (NDRD), Hamburg, Germany  
Associated with University of Hamburg,  
Department of Economics and Policy**

Andy Spiess is the founder president of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Network for Drylands Research and Development (NDRD), a regional scientific organization with the core objective to establish a science-policy interface to increase

response capacity and mitigate environmental change in the Arab Gulf states. Besides this honorary position, Andy's research in pursuit of a cumulative habilitation (full professorship in Germany) is analyzing the future implications of a shifting security paradigm in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates). This multidisciplinary approach is based on the hypothesis that traditional Gulf security formulations will be insufficient to cope with those intense, extensive, prolonged, and comprehensive threats to which lives and freedom are vulnerable in this region. Hence it suggests moving away from the obsolete tendency to think of security only in

military terms and recognizes that the wellbeing of GCC nationals themselves is also threatened for instance by environmental degradation, climate change, demographic imbalances, inequity, unemployment, food insecurity, energy security, public health concerns, and poverty.

Some of Andy's recent publications or work in progress include: *"Environmental Degradation, Climate Uncertainties and Human Vulnerabilities - Realm of Possible Actions toward a Shifting Security Paradigm in the Arab Gulf Monarchies"*, in: Scheffran, J., Brzoska, M., Brauch, H.G., Link, P. M., Schilling, J.. *Climate Change, Human Security and Violent Conflict - Challenges to Societal Stability. Hexagon Series on Human and Environmental Security and Peace. Berlin: Springer, 2012, p. 387 – p. 408*; *"Food Security in the GCC"*, in Ramady, M. A. *The GCC Economies: Stepping Up To Future Challenges, Springer, 2012*; *"Demographic Transitions and Imbalances in the GCC: Security Risks, Constraints and Policy Challenges"* (2012); *"Developing Adaptive Capacity for Responding to Environmental Change in the Arab Gulf States: Uncertainties to Linking Ecosystem Conservation, Sustainable Development and Society in Authoritarian Rentier Economies"* in: *Global and Planetary Change, Volume 64, Issues 3-4, December 2008, Pages 244-252 [Climate Change and Desertification]*; *"Marginalizing the Self: Social Cohesion, Human Agency and Development in the United Arab Emirates"* (forthcoming 2013) *"Youth Unemployment, Tertiary Education and Labor Market Needs in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Member States: Bridging the Gap"* (forthcoming 2013)

While currently concentrating on a second monograph evaluating the **concept of tourism development through the lens of human as well as national security in Saudi Arabia**, Andy has authored numerous scholarly articles, has a long record of voluntary academic service and serves as a reviewer in several peer-reviewed journals.

## Faisal A. Al-Mubarak

**Professor of Urban Planning & Architecture**



**Vice President for Academic Affairs & Chief Academic Officer (Provost), Al-Faisal University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia;**  
**Chief Planning Advisor to the President of the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities**

Prof. Dr. Faisal Al Mubarak, provost of academic affairs and chief academic advisor, has a rich background in higher education, public policy, urban planning and architecture, as well as tourism, and has served on many national committees and as an advisor to national and international agencies in areas of his expertise. He completed his Ph.D. in Urban Design and Planning at the University of Washington, Seattle (1992), his Masters degree in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Southern California, Los Angeles (1986), and his Bachelor degree of Architecture from the College of Engineering, King Saud University (1981). He has served on the faculty of King Saud University, (18 years), teaching urban design, urban policy and theory as well as urban history and became a full professor in 2005. As the president's advisor to Prince Sultan bin Salman al Saud at the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, Dr. Faisal Al Mubarak headed the department for strategic planning and monitoring and was the executive director of the First International Conference on Urban Heritage in Islamic Countries, UHIC, (May 2010), one of the largest, most well attended international conferences hosted in the Kingdom to date. Professor Al Mubarak has been an advisor to several national committees and ministries including the Ministry of Higher Education, the High Commission for the Development of Arriyadh (HCDA), and the National Environment Council. He has also served as a committee member on the board of the World Tourism Organization (representing the Middle East Region). His planning expertise was well utilized as the Deputy Mayor of Riyadh for Projects and Development, and as a Member of the HCDA Council, Chaired by HRH Prince Salman bin Abdul Aziz al Saud, Governor of the Riyadh Region. He has published and authored numerous articles and reports, in academia as well as media, and has authored a book on policy and urban strategic planning and infrastructural development in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and he has also translated into Arabic a text book on urban theory. Dr. Al Mubarak has authored and participated in the preparation of executive

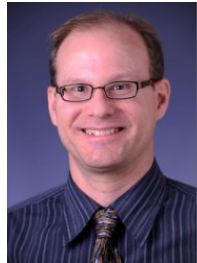


advisory reports to Provincial Governors, Ministers and other leading officials in government agencies including, the Shura Council, municipal administrations and served on high level national and international task forces of strategic and technical importance. Professor Al Mubarak has given speeches and lectures in many public and private symposia and conferences on issues of urban development, higher education, and socio-cultural development issues in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and abroad.

Source: Al-Faisal University Website (2012)

### Alan S. Weber

**Assistant Professor  
Weill Cornell Medical College,  
Doha  
Qatar**



Alan S. Weber received his doctorate in English in 1996 from the State University of New York and has taught in the Premedical Program at the Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar since 2006. He is the author and editor of several books, including an historical reader entitled *Nineteenth Century Science*, and an edition of English Renaissance medical texts written by women. He has taught literature, writing and the history of science and medicine at The Pennsylvania State University, Elmira College, and Cornell University. His current research interests related to the Arabian Gulf include the

sociology and history of medicine, e-learning, and Bedouin culture. Some of his publications include: Folk Medicine in Oman (*International Journal of Arts and Science*, 2011), Bedouin Memory Between City and Desert (*Memory Connection*, 2011), Politics of English in the Arabian Gulf (*Burch University Press*, 2011) Cultural Dimensions of E-learning in Islamic Countries (*IATED*, 2011) The Role of Education in Knowledge Economies in Developing Countries (Bahcesehir University Press, 2011), *The Development and Current Status of Web-Based Learning in Qatar and the GCC States* (CIRS, 2010), and Patient Opinion of the Doctor-Patient Relationship in a Public Hospital in Qatar (*Saudi Medical Journal*, 2010). Because It's There: Classics of Mountaineering Literature (*Cooper Square Press*, 2003). For Alan's impressive publication list please click here [http://qatar-weill.cornell.edu/aboutUs/fa/bios/publications/pdf/Weber\\_PubsWeb\\_2012.pdf](http://qatar-weill.cornell.edu/aboutUs/fa/bios/publications/pdf/Weber_PubsWeb_2012.pdf)

## Tentative Structure (October 2012)

### Foreword(s)

**Prince Turki bin Faisal Al-Saud**

Thought provoking and to challenge the scholarly community into further discourse!

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### Sustainable Tourism in the GCC: Institutional Voices

**Prof. Dr. Taleb D. Rifai**, Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) *confirmed*

**Prince Bander Bin Saud Bin Mohammad Al-Saud**, President of Saudi Wildlife Authority *tbc*

**Sheikh Khalifa Ahmed Al-Khalifa**,

Directorate of Archaeology and Heritage, Ministry of Culture, Bahrain *confirmed*

**Wael Al Lawati**, CEO of Oman Tourism Development Company (Oman) *confirmed*

**Issa bin Mohammed Al-Mohannadi**, Qatar Tourism Authority *tbc*

### Preface

Andy Spiess, Faisal Al-Mubarak, Alan S. Weber

### Part 1: Thematic Rationale

**Tourism Development in the GCC States:**

**Reconciling Economic Growth, Conservation and Sustainable Development**

Andy Spiess, NDRD & University of Hamburg, Germany

### Part 2: Sustainable Tourism Development and Heritage Preservation in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

**A Conceptual Sustainability Approach to Rural & Community-based  
Tourism Planning and Development in the Gulf States**

Andy Spiess & Alan S. Weber

NDRD / University of Hamburg, Germany & Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar, Qatar

**Unanswered Questions:**

**Assessing the Urban Sustainability & Tourism Development in the GCC**

Charles L. Choguill & Faisal Al-Mubarak, Al Faisal University, Saudi Arabia

**The Real Cost of Gulf Tourism: Distractions, Vulnerabilities and the Right to the City**

Samer Bagaeen, St. Mary's, University of Aberdeen, UK

**Tourism Development and Architecture in the Gulf:**

**A Comparative Study of the Abraj al-Bait Towers in Mecca and the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha**

Andreas Jozwiak, Trinity University, USA

**Nature Based Tourism in Protected Areas in the Arabian Peninsula**

Philip Seddon, University of Otago, New Zealand

**Hidden Treasures: The Potential of Geotourism in the GCC**

Andy Spiess & Abdulaziz Al-Bassam

NDRD / University of Hamburg, Germany & King Saud University, Saudi Arabia

**Audiencing YouTube: Exploring Politics of Representation for Tourism in the Gulf**

Massimiliano Fusari, University of Milan, Italy

**Toward a Long-Term Tourism Paradigm for the Gulf**

Arnd N. Bätzner, University of St. Gallen, Switzerland

**Part 3:**

**Country Studies from the Gulf Region**

**Sacred Zoning in Mecca: Necessity, Profitability, Ideology and Piety in Modern Saudi Arabia**

Andrew Winerman, University of Virginia, USA

**The Development of Cultural Heritage Tourism in Saudi Arabia: Bridging the Gap**

Yahya M. Al-Zahrani, Naif Arabic University for Security Science (Nauss), Saudi Arabia

**Archaeological Sites in Wadi Al-Ghayran of the Rub' Al Khali Desert:**

**Spatial Analysis as a Critical Tool for Research, Conservation and**

**Sustainable Tourism Planning in Saudi Arabia**

Ali Madan Al-Ali, Geomatics and Data Management, Saudi Arabia

**Geo-Tourism and Interpretation in the Sultanate of Oman: Values and Linkage**

Ya'qoob Salim Al Busaidi, Sultan Qaboos University, Oman

**Tourism in Bahrain:**

**A Continuous Search for Economic Development and Preservation of Cultural Heritage**

Magdalena Karolak, Prince Mohammad Bin Fahd University, Saudi Arabia

**Conservation and Rehabilitation of Muharraq's Traditional Core, Bahrain:**

**A Holistic Evaluation**

Ali A. Alraouf, University of Qatar, Qatar

**The Price of Branding:**

**Tourism and the Elusive Search for "Culture" among Emiratis in Dubai, UAE**

Akbar Keshodkar, Zayed University, UAE

**Mega-Projects and Microstates, Bedouins and Businessmen:**

**Qatar's Tourism Vision in Revolution**

Alan S. Weber, Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar, Qatar

**Part 4: Future Outlook**

**Contested Relationships:**

**Climate Change, Sustainability and Tourism Development in the GCC (working title)**

Multiple Authors