



**Gulf Research Centre Cambridge**

Knowledge for All

Workshop 13

## **Towards Sustainable Consumption and Production in the Gulf**

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### **Abstract**

While countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) are experiencing rapid economic development, they face many current and potential problems related to sustainability. In the absence of numerous urgent measures, including policy reforms, the populations of these nations are likely to experience in future years a wide array of water, energy, and food-security challenges, which in turn will have extremely negative environmental, economic, and social impacts. With growth of the middle class across large parts of the region, consumption patterns are rapidly evolving and these developments have

significant implications in terms of resource utilization and social equity. This workshop aims to address the current status, progress, and prospective outlook of sustainable consumption and production in GCC countries.

## **Description and Rationale**

### **Background**

Current economic trends in the Gulf region are not sustainable and to a large extent this is a reflection of our society's patterns of consumption and production. There are multiple areas of concern pertaining to energy, water, and food security, especially in the context of a changing climate. The need to modify the way we consume and produce has been recognized for a long time. It is therefore extremely notable that the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development reaffirms the importance of sustainable consumption and production (SCP) and emphasizes efforts to “ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns” as an explicit Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 12).

Research on SCP has to date largely focused on the “over-consuming North,” where consumerist lifestyles are most prevalent and associated practices have given rise to a cycle of economic growth and increasing throughput of energy and materials. At the same time, across most of the global South—including some of the Gulf countries and the MENA region in general—the most pressing problem is insufficient consumption. Nonetheless, an affluent consumer society has achieved extremely visible prominence in several countries in the region and current problematic patterns are becoming more deeply entrenched.

### **Workshop Goals**

The goal of this workshop is to explore the social, economic, political, cultural, and infrastructural challenges of shifting current consumption and production in the Gulf countries and commencing a transition towards more sustainable lifestyles. The aim is to provide a venue for scholars and policy makers to discuss this undertaking in the context of the region, as well as to propose and debate possible interventions that are cognizant of locally specific constraining and enabling factors. We anticipate that the workshop will bridge the gap in research, explore common ground among different stakeholders, and formulate visions of a more sustainable future.

We specifically invite contributions that address key elements of SCP as it relates to the 2030 Agenda and the role that GCC countries can play in realizing its objectives. The workshop will explore in detail the obstacles and opportunities for meaningful transition across the region.

### **Workshop Scope and Proposed Topics**

Possible topics for the workshop include but are not limited to:

- How can the aims and objectives of SDG 12 be achieved in the Gulf region and what are the opportunities for cross-national learning?
- Are there instructive case studies of country-specific analysis of current metrics, including political and socioeconomic drivers for SCP?
- What opportunities exist for fostering social innovation and enhancing well-being in the Gulf region and for encouraging grassroots experiments to facilitate more environmentally sustainable and socially equitable lifestyles?
- What policies have thus far been implemented to enable SCP in the Gulf region (including with reference to climate change)?
- What is the scope for considering strategies that encourage shifts towards a circular economy (regenerative system)? What are the consequences of these developments for lifestyles and human security?
- Is it possible to identify interventions to pursue SCP through sectoral interventions that are oriented towards tourism, water, food, energy, and industry production?
- What are the specific gender-related challenges for SCP policymaking in the Gulf region?
- What roles can education, media, and culture play in promoting SCP in GCC countries?
- What is the current status of the Arab Regional Strategy for Sustainable Consumption and Production?

### **Workshop Outputs**

The main output of the workshop will be an edited book based on an invited selection of papers presented at the workshop. We hope that this volume will fill a knowledge gap pertaining to SCP in the Gulf region.

### **Contributions to Gulf Education, Research, Development, and Innovation**

This workshop will contribute to exploration of SCP in the Gulf region with a specific emphasis on sustainable lifestyles. To advance this field of research, a collaborative and interdisciplinary effort will be required. We hope to facilitate an open, enlivened discussion and a critical exchange of knowledge and ideas. The workshop will be a catalyst for identifying innovative solutions to the complex and multilayered challenges of SCP as it relates to the 2030 Agenda in GCC countries.

## Anticipated Participants

We encourage papers from various disciplines including, but not limited to, political and social science, psychology, economics, and public policy. Applications and case studies from the Gulf region and other regions are highly encouraged.

Researchers with Gulf region experience (both native and non-native) are invited to apply. In addition to academic presentations, the workshop also welcomes representatives of NGOs, government officials, and think tank experts who are willing to conform to the paper guidelines.

## Workshop Director Profiles

**Professor Maurie Cohen** is Professor of Sustainability Studies and Director of the Program in Science, Technology, and Society at the New Jersey Institute of Technology. He is a co-founder of the Sustainable Consumption Research and Action Initiative (SCORAI), a member of the coordinating group for the Future Earth Knowledge-Action Network on Systems of Sustainable Consumption and Production, and Editor of the journal *Sustainability: Science, Practice, and Policy*. His most recent books are *The Future of Consumer Society: Prospects for Sustainability in the New Economy* (Oxford University Press, 2017) and *Social Change and the Coming of Post-Consumer Society: Theoretical Advances and Policy Implications* (Routledge, 2017; with Halina Brown and Philip Vergragt).

**Dr. Robert Mason** is Associate Professor and Director of the Middle East Studies Center at the American University in Cairo. His research focus is on the international relations of the Middle East, with a particular emphasis on the Gulf States. His most recent books include *Reassessing Order and Disorder in the Middle East: Regional Imbalance or Disintegration* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2017) and *Egypt and the Gulf: A Renewed Regional Policy Alliance* (Gerlach Press, 2017).

**Dr. Mohammed Abdelraouf** leads GRC's research program on Sustainability and Environmental Issues. He was the lead author for the West Asia chapters on environmental governance in the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) GEO 5 and GEO 6 reports. He has published various policy papers on environmental issues in the MENA region and authored five books. Dr. Abdelraouf is a part-time lecturer on environmental economics at universities in the MENA region. Since 2010, he has represented the Science and Technology Major Group at UNEP and is currently co-chair of the Major Groups Facilitating Committee (MGFC) at UN Environment.

## Selected Readings

Adnan Badran et al, *Water, Energy and Food Sustainability in the Middle East*, (Berlin: Springer, 2017)

Chris Martenson, *The Crash Course: The Unsustainable Future of our Economy, Energy and Environment*, (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2011)

Elie Azar and Mohamed Abdel Raouf, *Sustainability in the Gulf: Challenges and Opportunities*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017)

Emirates Centre for Strategic Studies, *Water and Food Security in the Arabian Gulf*, (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013); Zahra Babar and Suzi Mirgani eds, *Food Security in the Middle East*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014);

Jean-Pierre Chauffour, *Morocco 2040: Emerging by Investing in Intangible Capital*, (Washington DC: World Bank, 2017)

Mohamed Abdel Raouf and Mari Luomi, *The Green Economy in the Gulf*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015)

Mohamed Behnassi and Katriona McGlade, *Environmental Change and Human Security in Africa and the Middle East*, (Berlin: Springer, 2019)

The World Bank, *Beyond Scarcity: Water Security in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA Development Report)*, (Washington DC, 2017)