

Policy Innovations and Diffusion in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Countries and the Role of US Institutions – *The Specialized Cities Phenomenon*

Dr. Hiba Khodr,
Dr. Danyel Reiche
American University of Beirut (AUB)
Faculty of Arts & Sciences
Department of Political Studies and Public Administration (PSPA)
hk39@aub.edu.lb
dr09@aub.edu.lb

This presentation revolves around a new phenomenon in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) referred to as “specialized cities” (SC) which have the main purpose of implementing policy innovations in selected areas in addition to being new towns. The presentation examines the spread of SC leading to a broader question - what motivates a GCC country to adopt such policy innovation? We will use the case study method as we select Abu Dhabi Masdar City, Dubai Healthcare City, and Qatar Education City. An analysis of each of the cases is done followed by a comparative approach that aims at discovering similarities and differences and generating a preliminary analytical model.

All the selected cases were realized in cooperation with US institutions to adopt the best practices from around the world. However, the question remains what attracted internationally well founded institutions, such as Harvard, MIT, and all the universities in Education City (among them Georgetown University and Cornell University) to be part of these cities. We are not aware of any study that analyzed policy innovation or diffusion in the countries of the GCC.

Based on the findings from our case studies we will propose the development of a theoretical model of government innovation and diffusion policy which takes into account the specific character of resource-rich states governed by ruling elite such as the GCC countries as well as the culture-specific variables in these Muslim majority societies.