



## CALL FOR PAPERS

### 5<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference of the Gulf Studies Center

#### Social Change in the Gulf Societies in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

11–12 November 2020

Gulf Studies Center, Qatar University, Qatar

Over the last few decades, the Gulf countries have undergone profound social changes, affecting almost every aspect of life in the Gulf societies. The main purpose of this conference is to advance the body of knowledge about the factors, directions, and magnitudes of social change in the Gulf societies from an interdisciplinary perspective. Social change is generally understood as changes in human interactions and relationships that transform cultural and social institutions. Changes occur over time and often have profound and long-term consequences for society. Those changes that have significance for all or substantial segments of the population may be considered instances of 'social change'. The conference attempts to close a gap in our understanding of social change in the Gulf societies, providing opportunities for an assessment of the state-of-the-art, and learning from best practices as well as offering practical solutions for policy interventions.

In particular, the conference aims to explore how economic transformation, educational reforms, social media, rapid urbanization, and a growing expatriate population have brought about deep changes in Gulf societies. For instance, the nature and the scope of employment in the Gulf have changed significantly over recent decades; as a result, more and more men and women are joining formal employment. Interestingly, the economic benefits of gender diversity in the workforce constitute a strong case for encouraging female participation across the region. Increasing participation in work liberates males and females from traditional occupations and further provides disposable income that shapes families and enables people to make personal decisions more independently than ever before, leading to significant social change.

In a similar way, the Gulf countries have achieved tremendous success in the education sector as a whole. The Gulf governments have made sincere efforts to reform their education systems to promote greater economic diversification and growth. There is a quiet revolution in female education underway in the Gulf. Despite some conservative attitudes toward female education, female enrolment in higher education is increasing steadily across the Gulf. Recent studies tend to show that female education and employment are improving the social status of women within the family and providing an avenue for the democratization of gender relations across the Gulf. These changes are ushering in an era of significant social transformations in the region.

Technology – as in satellite television and the Internet – has dramatically expanded the exposure to outside views, influenced the capability for communication by means other than physical contact, and accentuated the process of time-space compression. Social media, especially Facebook and Twitter, has surfaced as a powerful force for social transformations in the Gulf. The use of social media is changing the way people discuss, post, and deliver their messages to their communities and ruling

elites. There is a consensus that new media presents a virtual yet vibrant space for social empowerment in the region, which deserves systematic academic treatment. Likewise, the Gulf States now account for the world's largest flow of South–South migration, and indeed by a large margin. The growth of the non-national population has inevitably brought about wide-ranging social changes in the Gulf societies. Migration holds the key to population size and composition, as well as economic growth and the future of the Gulf countries. Population dynamics are raising important questions related to labour market sustainability and migration control, permanent residency and citizenship, and culture and identity. The process of urbanization has also had a profound impact on Gulf society. Gulf city life has disturbed traditional social patterns; more and more families and clans are dispersed throughout cities, changing traditional family residential patterns, and producing new forms of relationships in society, which likewise demand scholarly attention.

With this in mind, this conference aims to explore the role of economic transformation, education, social media, migration, and urbanization in the social changes in the Gulf societies, with a focus on their directions, magnitudes, and relevant policy options. This conference intends to contribute to the growing interdisciplinary approach to understanding social change in the Gulf. The scope of the conference encompasses research on the member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates, in addition to Iran, Iraq, and Yemen. We warmly welcome scholars, including Ph.D. scholars and policymakers, to contribute to this academic event.

Papers in any of the topic areas listed below or related fields are particularly welcomed:

1. Economic transformation and social change
2. Education and social change
3. Social media and social change
4. Migration and social change
5. Urbanization and social change

**Abstract/Paper Proposal submission (May 15, 2020):** Abstract of around 300 words should be sent as an email attachment by *May 15, 2020*, together with the author's biography to the email [GSEvents@qu.edu.qa](mailto:GSEvents@qu.edu.qa). Abstract or paper proposal should include the following: the title, abstract of the paper (250–300 words), name, title, and institutional affiliation of the author(s), email address, and a brief resume focusing on recent research publications (150 words). We will accept both English and Arabic paper proposals. We will acknowledge receipt and respond to all abstracts submitted after the final deadline. However, we will contact only those scholars whose abstracts are finally accepted for presentation.

**Full Paper submission (September 15, 2020):** The full paper should be sent by *September 15, 2020*. The length of the submitted paper should be no less than 5,000 words. We intend to publish selected papers in an edited volume. After the full text of the paper is received and reviewed, an official invitation letter will be sent to the successful overseas participants. We will provide airfare and local hospitality to selected overseas paper presenters.

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