

ABSTRACT

Drivers and Barriers to Change in Desalinated Water Governance in the GCC ***A Comparative Approach to Water Privatisations in Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait city***

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The global water crisis has often been presented as a crisis of governance and attributed to various factors, including the slowness of institutional adjustments to rapid structural challenges such as demographic growth, resource degradation and economic difficulties (UNU-INWEH, 2012). Despite the rapid growth of cities around the world and a fast increase in the use of desalination for freshwater supply (WHO, 2011), the dynamics of institutional change in desalinated urban water governance have never been researched.

This thesis investigates the drivers, barriers and counter-forces to a major institutional change - privatisation - in the desalinated water governance of the coastal cities of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region. Through the cases of public private partnerships (PPPs) in Abu Dhabi and Doha and the failed attempt to implement similar PPPs in Kuwait City, this research investigates the diverse forces that have led to the implementation of this new institutional arrangement in order to question - both empirically and theoretically - the literature's general assumption that privatisation reforms in urban water services in the South arise from structural issues, e.g. a water crisis, an economic crisis and/or a governance crisis.

The three main schools of comparative studies are used systematically to test hypotheses about causal relationships between selected variables. The structural approach is applied to examine the influences of the redistributive rentier state, oil price fluctuations and regional energy integration over the privatisation process. Adopting a Post-colonial perspective, the political culture approach is used to examine critically the contemporary influences of traditional cultural features, key local institutions and foreign cultural influences over the fluctuating roles of both the State and the markets in the local urban water supply since the late 19th century. Finally, the rational agency theory is used to examine the role in the recent privatisation process of key political figures from the ruling families.

This research demonstrates that the privatisation process of desalination units in Abu Dhabi and Doha was not driven by structural factors during the 2000s, a period of high oil prices, but was initiated in the 1990s and driven the following decade by the agency of a reforming elite wanting to privatize the water sector as part of a broader dynamic of construction of a neoliberal post-rentier economy – i.e. an intermediary political economic paradigm that aims to mediate the transition from rentierism to a fully liberalized economy. The political culture approach shows that these privatisations were facilitated by a gradual shift from pure rentierism towards a post-rentier form of neoliberalism in the political philosophy of liberal water technocrats on the one hand, and towards a regional trend of ‘pious neoliberalism’ (Atia, 2011) among practicing Sunni Muslims. Nevertheless, the enduring rentier mentality has constituted a strong counter-force to privatisation dynamics.

The PPPs were implemented in Abu Dhabi and Doha because the local ruling elites situated the political bargaining within the tribal institutional milieus that they mastered completely through the control of the rent and related benefits. In Kuwait however, negotiations between the ruling elites and the leading political forces, the tribes and the opposition, were situated in a parliamentary institutional milieu that the ruling elite could not

control and where the opposition and tribal MPs have opposed all reforms of the rentier ruling bargain.

These findings illustrate that institutional changes in desalinated water governance are not neutrally driven by uncontrollable structural forces, but are the product of political bargaining between and among various rational political actors and their coalitions. This thesis also shows that in non-democratic or semi-democratic settings, the choice of a specific institutional milieu by the authorities is critical to the successful bargaining of institutional reforms, since it determines whether some key actors - along with structural factors (e.g. rent) and cultural factors (e.g. tribal influence) - will support the process or will be able to act against it.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	i
Acknowledgements	v
List of Illustrations	xv
List of Appendices	xvi
Abbreviations, special terms and acronyms	xvii
1 - Rethinking the drivers of change of water governance in the GCC states: multi-dimensional political dynamics and urban water reforms	1
2 - Governance reforms, water services and urban governance: a literature review of the drivers of institutional and policy change	11
I – Governance as reform of the State: understanding the forms and forces of institutional change	13
I.1 - Governance as the ‘hollowing out’ of the Westphalian State?	13
I.2 - Placing the ‘good governance’ discourse into global politics to uncover its drivers of change, the barriers and counter-forces to it	18
I.2.a –Neoliberal governance reforms as the re-invention of politics?	19
I.2.b ‘Good governance’ reforms: ideology and processes of governance in the global South	21
II - Urban water services governance and the drivers of Institutional change	25
II.1 – The International Water Consensus: a driver of change in urban water services	26
II.2 – The market rationale underlying water governance reforms	29
II. 3 – Effective water governance and the deep reforms of the urban water services	31
II.4 - Water services governance and the structural reform of water politics	34

III - Emergence and potential of comparative urban governance studies	37
III.1 – New comparative studies and new approaches to urban models	37
III.2 - An integrated approach to the drivers of change	39
IV – Governance, ruling traditions and change in the Gulf monarchies, a critical review	40
IV.1 A critical approach to the influences of political culture on institutional change, entrepreneurship and the role of the market in Arab countries	40
IV.2 – Rentierism and the states’ historical economic paradigmatic shift	44
IV.2.a – Emergence and hegemony of the rentier paradigm	44
IV.2.b - Rentierism, economic reforms and limited political participation in Arab monarchies	46
V - Influences of Arabian political cultural features on potable water supply governance	51
V.1 - Islam and change in water governance in the Arabian Peninsula	51
V.2 - The agency of tribalism in Arabia’s models of water governance	57
V.3 – Any role for Arabness or oil rentierism on water governance in Arabia?	59
VI - Hydrocarbons, regional energy integration and desalination in the GCC	60
VI.1 - Regional energy cooperation, integration, and economic growth	61
VI. 2 - The debated reform of energy sovereignty and the liberal nature of regional energy integration	62
Conclusion	64
 3 - A theoretical framework for comparative and critical analysis of desalinated water supply governance in the gcc cities	 66
I – Raison d’être and functioning of DiGaetano and Strom’s framework	66
II – A critical reappraisal of DiGaetano and Strom’s integrated framework	69
III - A Post-colonial interpretative approach for critical analysis	72
Conclusion	76

4 - The unique economic, cultural and political setting of the GCC coastal cities' desalinated water governance	77
I - The unique economic and political setting of the GCC coastal cities	78
I.1 – The political diversity of the GCC countries	77
I.2 – Abu Dhabi, Kuwait and Qatar, uniformity and diversity of former city-states	79
I.3 – Diverse local political cultures	83
II – Desalinated urban water supply and the unique environmental setting of the GCC	86
II.1 - The environmental setting of Arabia and the GCC countries	86
II.2 – The critical role of desalination in the coastal GCC cities	87
II.3 - Overview of the organisation of the GCC water sectors	91
III – Common features of the regional political culture and diverse institutional milieus of the urban water politics of Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City	96
III.1 - The long-term influence of tribalism over Arabian politics	96
III.2 - Islam as a tendance lourde in the Eastern Shaykhdoms' political culture	103
III.3 - Arabness: language, identity and politics in Kuwait, Qatar and Abu Dhabi	107
III.4 - Western political influences	110
III.5 - Multiculturalism and different rights to the urban services	113
III.6 - Redistributive rentierism and the Gulf monarchies' modern legitimacy	116
Conclusion	116
 5 - Researching the drivers and barriers to change in urban desalinated water governance: comparative methodological framework and research techniques	117
I - <i>Problématique</i> and comparative methodological framework	118
I.1 - Potential, constraints and calibration of the methodological Framework	119

I.2 - Critical considerations for Post-colonial field and literature	
Investigations	121
II – A case study approach	122
II.1 - Rationale for the use of case studies and the selection of capital cities	122
II.2 - Transversal approach to all case studies	123
III – Fieldworks and research techniques	126
III.1 - Research techniques	126
III.2 - Organisation of the field research in the Gulf region	127
Conclusion	131
6 - rentierism, oil prices and desalinated water governance in ‘petro-monarchies’	133
I – Normative governance paradigms and rentierism in the making and re-making of municipal water governance in Kuwait City, Doha and Abu Dhabi	134
I.1 – Effectiveness and efficiency of the water governance	135
I.1.a – Effectiveness of the local water governance systems	135
I.1.b – Sub-optimal energy strategies in oil-exporting rentier countries	136
I.1.c The issue of human resources efficiency in a rentier setting	140
I.2 - Openness, transparency and participation	142
I.2.a ‘Good governance’ terminology but limited progresses on transparency	142
I.2.b The rentier absence of participation	144
I.2.c. Rentierism, ‘vested depoliticisation’ and knowledge compartmentalisation	146
I.3 - Ethics, equity, inclusiveness and accountability	148
I.3.a The importance of tribal and rentier ethics: generosity and inclusiveness	148
I.3.b – Changes in personal accountability and the fight on corruption	149
I.3.c Rentier welfare for some, water bills for others, and the issue of equity	150
I.4 - Coherence, integrative approach, sustainability and the rentier logic	151

II – Water reforms in the GCC: the failure of the traditional rentier water model or a post-rentier exit strategy?	153
II.1 - The narrative of oil revenues crisis and required reforms	153
II.2 - A diachronic approach to the water PPPs in Abu Dhabi, Qatar and Kuwait	155
Conclusion	158
7 - The influence of regional energy integration on the privatisation process of the desalinated water services in Abu Dhabi, Qatar and Kuwait	161
I – Regional energy liberalisation and the new regional scale of desalinated water governance: the contrasted cases of Abu Dhabi, Kuwait and Qatar	162
I.1 - The Dolphin gas network and the GCC desalination governance: a new era for the participation of private and foreign actors?	162
I.2 - How meaningful in terms of liberalisation of desalination governance is Abu Dhabi's greater overture to new actors through Dolphin?	167
I.3 – Regional policies of gas liberalisation for economic optimization	168
I.4 - The GCC power grid: a “launch-pad” for full energy liberalisation?	171
II - Regional Energy Integration, new energy mixes and the emergence of a new desalination models	173
II.1 - Regional energy integration's influence over national energy mixes	173
II.1.a - The emergence of renewable energies	174
II.1.b - The GCC nuclear programs	175
II.2 - New energy mixes and changes in desalination business models	178
Conclusion	180
8 - A diachronic approach to market forces and institutional change in Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait city's urban water governance	184
I – From tribal customs to Empire-led modernisation to the State water sovereignty: the long evolution towards public water institutions and services	185
I.1 – A note on this chapter's specific methodology	185
I.2 Tribal societies, water and the early settlements of Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait	187
I.2.a Tribal settlements and control of freshwater	187

I.3 - Growth of the settlements, water crisis, and the market initiatives	193
I.4 - British direct influence, modernisation of tribal politics and the water mission	200
I.4.a – The British-led modernisation and deep change in the ruling Bargain	200
I.4.b – The European post-war model of development and the water mission	202
II - Independence, 1973 oil boom and the rentier states' water service	206
II.1 New statist visions and water strategies	207
II.1.a The rise of centralised modern water institutions, and the nationalisation of the resource: the end of water governance?	207
II.1.b The regional Arab nationalist discourse and grandiose initiatives of modernization	208
II.1.c The less apparent European influences	212
II.2 Rentierism, new water allocation, and supply-side strategies	214
II.2.a - The new water allocation	214
II.2.b - Rentierism influence on water fees between 1971 and 1990	215
II.2.c - The supply side water strategie	216
Discussion	218

9 - Political-cultural drivers, counter-forces and barriers to the 1990s-2000s pro-market governance reforms of urban water services **221**

I - Political cultural reasons for the absence of public debates on water governance reforms and privatisations: the consumers as non-actors?	222
I.1 – Desalinated water as a political non-issue	223
I.2 – No debate on water governance and the epistemic issue	226
I.3 – The role of multiculturalism in the absence of debate on water reforms	229
II – New forces of political culture in favour of water privatisation: technocrats' new liberalism and a rising "Market Islam" in the GCC	230
II.1 – Technocratic elites' liberalism	231

II.2 – New Islamic ethics, changes and continuity in time of rationalization	235
II.2.a – Long-term influence of Islam in the urban water governance	236
II.2.b - The rise of a ‘market Islam’ in GCC cities	236
III – With regional changes in political culture, why no PPPs in Kuwait?	242
III.1 – Kuwait’s devastation and the ‘rape of Kuwait’ syndrome	243
III.1.a The idealised pre-invasion Kuwait	243
III.1.b The war burden and resentment	244
III.2. Pro-privatisation cabinets, opposition-led assemblies and the paralysis of the political system	245
III.2.a the rise of a conflicting political culture	245
III.2.b Mixed external influences	247
III.2.c Changes in Al-Sabah politics and the new power of urban tribal politics	249
IV – A possible breakthrough in water privatisation?	253
Conclusion	254

10: Investigating the role and individual agency of the top ruling figures in Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait city’s water governance reforms: initiators, facilitators or reluctant rentier statesmen? 258

I – Is there a correlation between leadership change and public water policies?	260
II – Roles among the top political leadership of the 1990s and 2000s	263
II.1 From where arise propositions for major changes in the urban water sector?	263
II.2 Beyond the official roles, who has driven the water governance reforms?	267
III – Different rationalities of the 1990s and 2000s elites ruling over internal affairs	269
III.1 - The influence of generational change on water governance reforms	269
III.2 Kuwait’s issue of leadership in the 1990s and early 2000s	275
Conclusion	277

Final discussion : reappraising the drivers and barriers to the privatisations of the local desalinated water governance in rentier and tribal monarchies: the contrasted cases of abu dhabi, doha and kuwait city **279**

I – Drivers and barriers to change in the desalinated water governance of Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City: research findings in their conceptual framework **280**

I.1 Drivers and barriers to desalination privatization: the limited influence of foreign structural factors and the politics of rational actors **280**

I.2 – Agency of the local political cultures and major role of the institutional milieus **282**

I.3 - The cyclical nature of the water governance reforms in Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City's freshwater supply governance **284**

I.4 – The paradox of the political nature of desalinated water governance in the GCC region **286**

II – Limitations and shortcomings of this research **287**

III – Theoretical implications and policy applications of the research **289**

III.1 – Theoretical implications **289**

III.2 – Policy applications **291**

IV - New perspectives for theoretical and applied research **292**

REFERENCES **295**

APPENDIX A

Semi-directed interviews with water professionals in Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City **321**

APPENDIX B

List of interviews performed in the Gulf region **324**

APPENDIX C

Terminology issue of governance notions in Arabic **328**

APPENDIX D

Exposing God's blessing and legitimizing the State with water **334**

List of Figures, tables and illustrations

Figure 1	Conceptual map of the thesis	10
Figure 2	An Integrated Model of Urban Governance	68
Figure 3	Abu Dhabi's Complex Government Structure Chart	83
Figure 4	Desalination Capacity in the World, as of 2009	89
Figure 5	Increase of the GCC population between 1997 and 2009	90
Figure 6	Desalination Capacity Increase 1990 – 2009	90
Figure 7	Municipal Water Supply in the GCC countries	91
Figure 8	GCC Population, Nationals and Expatriates (2004-13) in millions, with % and CAGRs	114
Figure 9	Foreign and native components of the labour force across the GCC as of 2011	114
Figure 10	Desalinated water vs. municipal consumption in the GCC countries	125
Figure 11	Northern American Market following NYMEX's Henri Hub (1999-2009) and Estimations for the Subsidised Gulf Domestic Gas Feedstock Prices (2006-2009)	139
Figure 12	Estimations of the subsidised feedstock prices, Jan. 2006 – Jan. 2009	139
Figure 13	Kuwait's main tool for demand-side management	143
Figure 14	Kahramaa's "Case studies for greater participation"	143
Figure 15	Human Development Index for the States of Kuwait, Qatar and the UAE, evolution between 1980 and 2010	155
Figure 16	Timeline of the IWPPs of Abu Dhabi and Doha and oil prices at the same period	157
Figure 17	Monthly and biannual variation of water production in Abu Dhabi emirate in the period 1975-1991	218
Figure 18	Change in political leadership and evolution of the public water governance in Abu Dhabi after WW2	261
Figure 19	Change in political leadership and evolution of the public water governance in Kuwait's metropolitan area after WW2	261
Figure 20	Change in political leadership and evolution of the public water governance in Doha after world war two	262
Figure 21	Boom and bust of the crude oil yearly price average (1970 – 1990), a GCC perspective	270

List of tables

Table 1	Modes of Urban Governance	68
Table 2	Water sources and water uses in Abu Dhabi – 2007	93
Table 3	An overview of the private sector participation in the Gulf coastal area of the GCC, as of 2012	95

Maps

Map 1	The political borders of the GCC region	78
Map 2	Arabian desert eco-regions and political borders	87
Map 3	The Dolphin Gas Network in Eastern Arabia	163

Poster	A Political Ecology of Abu Dhabi: The History of Qasr Al-Hosn	189
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Photos

Photo 1	A culture of contestation and semi-democratic national politics	85
Photo 2	The Dasman palace in Kuwait (ca. 1920s - 1930s)	190
Photo 3	Water boats in Kuwait (1937)	194
Photo 4	Mules carrying imported freshwater in Kuwait harbour	194
Photo 5	A 'Kandari' carries freshwater for sale in Kuwait city (ca. 1950)	195
Photo 6	A group of water towers named 'the Mushrooms' in Kuwait's metropolitan area	210
Photo 7	The Kuwait Towers	210
Photo 8	Kuwait oil wells aflame in early 1991	244

Abbreviations, special terms and acronyms

Arabian Gulf, Gulf and Persian Gulf: all three names refer to the same shallow Gulf waters located in Southwestern Asia. All but one of its riparian states are Arab countries which insist on calling it Arabian, arguing that it constitutes a geological continuation of the Arabian Peninsula, while Iran insists on calling it the Persian Gulf based on historical grounds. This thesis will avoid this nationalist debate and will refer to it simply as ‘the Gulf’.

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC): is a political and economic regional organization created in 1981 in Abu Dhabi (UAE) in order to foster regional integration and provide a defence alliance to its six member countries: the Kingdom of Bahrain, the State of Kuwait, the State of Qatar, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and the Sultanate of Oman.

State and state: The use of the terminology ‘State’ instead of ‘state’ refers to the broader notion of public authority. It goes beyond the sole central state and includes local governments and public authorities that are not autonomous from the central state.

Main acronyms

IWPP: Independent Water & Power Producer.

MP: Member of Parliament.

MSF: Multi-Stage Flash; a thermal desalination technology that requires the combustion of hydrocarbons to produce heat in order to distillate water.

PPP: Public Private Partnership.

RO: Reverse Osmosis; a desalination technology that uses membranes to filtrate seawater. RO units depend on electricity supply (from any source) and do not require hydrocarbons during their industrial processes. RO is significantly more energy-efficient than thermal desalination technologies.

Chapter 1

Rethinking the drivers of change of water governance in the GCC states: multi-dimensional political dynamics and urban water reforms

From Ancient Mesopotamia, to medieval Baghdad, to today's fast-rising Arab Gulf cities, providing sufficient freshwater to most remains a prerequisite to the flourishing of urban centers, human dignity and development. In the most arid countries on Earth, harnessing, managing and governing natural water resources well beyond the city with sophisticated water systems and skilled human resources have represented critically important missions for the State apparatus, as well as a source of legitimacy of their very existence, wealth and power (Wittfogel, 1957; Vidal-Naquet, 1964; Wilkinson, 1974; Moore, 2010). Since the last decade of the 20th century yet, some Arab cities of the Gulf region have followed two trends that go astray from the regional tradition: a total reliance on locally-manufactured water for household purposes and, paradoxically, the partial privatisation of its vital desalination infrastructure.

The term of water privatisation broadly refers to the transfer of ownership of public assets and/or public responsibilities over one or several water activities to private or semi-private actors. In the Arab states of the Gulf region, the water privatisation dynamic has generally been undertaken through local joint-ventures linking a state entity to private companies for the long-term production of desalinated water for urban water supply, on a Build Operate Transfer (BOT) basis as will be further detailed in chapter 4. Against the 1990s background of low oil prices and of a strong privatisation trend of urban water sectors in the Global South, this trend of Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) could simply appear as a normal impact of globalization onto the GCC small states. But a critical investigation of the water services governance models of Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City and their drivers of

change rapidly contradicts this assumption. So the question is: what has led the GCC countries to transform their urban water governance? More precisely, what have been the drivers of change towards a more market-oriented water governance and the development of PPPs for water manufacturing in some GCC cities?

The answer is not simple, for the GCC countries - and particularly the emirates of Abu Dhabi, Qatar and Kuwait that will be studied – represent a set of paradoxes. The GCC countries are some of the most arid countries on Earth, yet they also feature the highest rates of water consumption per capita in the world. They are not liberal or even democratic countries, yet they have some of the world's highest GDP per capita. They are not industrialized countries, nor are they developing countries either.

The states of Kuwait, Qatar and the UAE, have achieved remarkable progresses in terms of human development in only a few decades. Based on the composite measure of three basic dimensions of human development - health, education and income -, they ranked respectively 47th, 38th, 32nd over 169 countries in the 2010 edition of the United Nations Human Development Index. Kuwait belongs to the category of 'high human development', while Qatar and the UAE belong to the category of 'very high human development', along Western countries and a few emerging nations such as Singapore and Hong Kong (UN HDI, 2010). This means that all three GCC states are well above the world average and the Arab regional average. There is no doubt that this would not have been possible without substantial achievements in the urban water services, as it underlies health improvements, income generation and - with regards specifically to sanitation - education of girls.

These countries' local systems of urban water governance belong to a unique category of its own – which rely on heavily subsidised desalination. According to the USGS, the six

GCC countries dispose now of more than 50% of the world's desalination capacity¹, for only 0.5% of the world population². They do not suit foreign models of analysis and they largely remain to be thoroughly analyzed and accurately described, for there is so far no work on the urban water governance of several GCC capital cities. This represents a unique niche of research in the field of water governance, not least for the three above-mentioned paradoxes.

The unique social-economic nature of the under-researched GCC states

With medium to high GDP per capita, these countries cannot be accurately described as developing ones. Yet with only a small part of their GDP coming from their industrial sector, they are not industrialized countries either. They cannot be considered as emerging countries such as Singapore or Taiwan for instance, due to their limited endogenous applied research and innovation, and the large share of their GDP coming from commodity exports (except in Bahrain). Given the constitution of their GDP - which comes mostly from exports of hydrocarbons - they could be categorized as commodity-dependent developing countries. Their very positive macro-economic indicators could then be seen as a temporary manifestation of their high exposure to boom and bust cycles. But states like Kuwait, Qatar or the UAE are arguably not cyclically vulnerable enough - even during the prolonged collapse of the price of oil - to be considered as true commodity-dependent countries, as chapter 6 will illustrate. There is thus no suitable framework to describe these countries that have been mostly researched by specialists of Middle East studies (e.g. Crystal, 1995; 2009; Heard-Bey, 1997; Lienhardt, 2001), but largely neglected by the rest of the social sciences, with the exception of some economists and political scientists working on rentierism (e.g. Anderson, 1991; Beblawi and Luciani, 1987; Matsunaga, 2000).

¹ See the USGS report on this at <http://ga.water.usgs.gov/edu/drinkseawater.html> (last visited on 22/07/2011)

² Based on EIU (2009, p 4) for the GCC population and with a 2011 global population of 7 billion inhabitants.

The unique environmental paradox of the GCC countries

The GCC cities constitute a unique region for research on water governance. All GCC countries rank among the world's 15 most arid countries on Earth, yet most of them have some of the world's highest levels of water consumption per capita as above-mentioned. This was made possible by oil revenues and the massive use of desalination. The GCC coastal cities heavily rely on this manufactured source of potable water supply, which has paradigmatically transformed the water governance of arid coastal cities as will be further developed in chapters 4 and 5. There is thus far very little academic research on the water governance in the Arabian Peninsula, and particularly on the GCC coastal cities, such as Abu Dhabi, Dammam, Doha, Dubai, Kuwait City or Jeddah for instance, where is concentrated most of the GCC population.

The unique political and cultural setting of the GCC urban water governance

The GCC countries are small monarchies that have been benefitting since after world war two from large revenues from their oil exports. This has radically transformed the political economy of the region (Mahdavy, 1970) and deeply transformed the State-society relations (Anderson, 1987; Beblawi, 1990; Crystal, 1995; Luciani, 1988, 1990; Vandewalle, 1998; Matsunaga, 2000), as chapter 4 will explain and chapter 6 will expound in full. This new State/society relations affected all aspects of governance in these polities and particularly their model of urban water governance as this thesis will demonstrate. Rentierism has affected the relations between the private and the public sectors and made their water governance model arguably unique. The reasons of its reforms during the 1990s and 2000s remain yet to be explored.

Main objective and structure of the thesis

The research undertaken for this thesis seeks to respond to the lack of literature on desalinated water governance and its dynamics of structural change, and to explore in

depth the drivers of the market-oriented governance reforms of the GCC cities during the 1990s and 2000s. The overall aim is to critically reappraise the narrative that attributes the governance reforms and privatisation of the desalinated water industry in the GCC states to the direct outcome of the fall in oil revenues in the 1990s, and to establish whether other drivers have also been at play; if so, which ones, how and to which extent were they respectively influential?

To uncover these drivers of change, the thesis is structured into ten chapters and a final discussion. After this introductory first chapter, chapter two presents the dynamics and drivers of governance reforms and especially of water governance reforms that occurred in the global South, particularly in the 1990s. It reviews the influential ideas of ‘effective water governance’ and highlights the pro-market bias of the so-called ‘international water consensus’. This chapter also explains how these ideas stemmed from the powerful and normative notion of ‘good governance’ that has been initiated by the World Bank and supported by several other multilateral development and financial organisations. It particularly explains that the neoliberal (free market) rationale for the privatisation of urban services - which are not limited to water services - articulates the idea that weakened states (overloaded in the North; over-indebted in the South) have to implement market-oriented structural reforms to overcome their grave economic difficulties, attract foreign direct investments and technologies while obtaining economic assistance from multilateral financial and development organisations (Harvery, 2005; Swyngedouw, 2005).

Because there is a regional diversity in how GCC capital cities have developed - or not - PPPs to integrate the private sector into their desalinated water services governance, chapter 2 highlights the relevance of comparative theoretical frameworks for the study of governance. It features more particularly DiGaetano and Strom’s (2003) integrated comparative approach to urban governance, i.e. an approach that adds to the structural analysis both the political

culture and the rational/individual agency approaches for a comprehensive analysis of new governance arrangements, such as PPPs for urban services. The chapter finally explores the drivers of change of freshwater supply governance in the Arabian Peninsula; it underlines the dearth of research on Arabia's desalinated water services, on the political cultural drivers of water governance change in contemporary times (despite a growing literature on the transformations of the GCC political cultures) and on the GCC coastal cities' desalinated water sector. For instance, there has not been any research on the drivers of change of the desalinated urban water governance in the GCC and its dynamics of privatisation.

Chapter 3 develops thus a theoretical framework to investigate what have been the drivers of change of the urban desalinated water governance in the GCC coastal capital cities. It outlines DiGaetano and Strom's (2003) integrated comparative framework, its *raison d'être* and its functioning. It critically reappraises then the sophistication of this theoretical framework, and finally draws attention to the need of a post-colonial critical approach for the analysis of cultural elements in contemporary Middle Eastern cities.

Chapter 4 introduces the GCC region's broad biophysical conditions and geopolitical, economic and social situation, before describing its main features and long-term trends of political culture. It also introduces the main water strategies of the coastal capital cities and describes how they have been increasingly relying on desalinated water for urban drinking water services over the last two decades and the regional trend of privatisation of their water services.

Chapter 5 then proposes a methodology building on the comparative theoretical framework outlined in chapter 3 and the regional specificities introduced in chapter 4. This fifth chapter details the methodological framework and the rationale for using case studies,

and why Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City have been selected³. It then describes the multi-method approach and research techniques employed in investigating the drivers and barriers to change of the urban desalinated water supply governance in the GCC capital cities. Finally, it presents the organisation of the year of field research.

Chapter 6 builds on these field observations, interviews with local water professionals and local informants and the literature on rentierism in the GCC to critically appraise the social-political and economic influence of the rentier paradigm in the functioning, changes and reforms of the desalinated urban water governance in the three polities under investigation. To do so, this chapter first confronts the rentier paradigm to the normative and pro-reform discourses of good governance and effective water governance that had been reviewed in chapter 2, in order to highlight their fundamental differences. It then examines the influence of the rentier state paradigm over Kuwait City, Doha and Abu Dhabi, before and after the 1990s' market-led reforms of the water sector. Finally, it demonstrates that the literature's general assumption that the GCC rentier polities were pushed towards these reforms because of the fall of oil state revenues in the late 1990s is misleading. These states' economic situation was not at all that of a failing state (their development indicators grew during that period) and a diachronic approach shows that the first IWPPs were implemented during a period of increasing oil revenues, and that all others were implemented during a period of high to very high oil prices and state revenues.

Chapter 7 investigates how the regional energy integration in the GCC affects the governance of the indispensable fuel supply for urban desalinated water production in Abu Dhabi, but not in Doha nor in Kuwait City. Then it examines how - by enabling the

³ Our study cannot be limited to Abu Dhabi, Doha or Kuwait City strictly speaking, as due to urban expansion they all have merged with their respective suburbs into metropolitan conurbations with identical water and power services. We will consequently refer to these three larger urban bodies, while using the above-mentioned names.

development of new energy mixes - the regional energy integration in the GCC has begun to change the desalination's technological management and the industry's business models.

Both chapter 8 and chapter 9 show how the desalinated water governance models in the cities of Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City have significantly been framed and reframed by the main political cultural forces and institutions of these cities. Chapter 8 sheds more specifically some light on how the regional events and political cultures' *tendances lourdes* in Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City have produced these cities' respective models of modern urban water services, from the late 18th century to the early 1990s, and how some framing forces of the post-independence (1961/1971 – 1990) models (primarily rentierism and the Statist development model) have also acted as barriers to the reforms more recently.

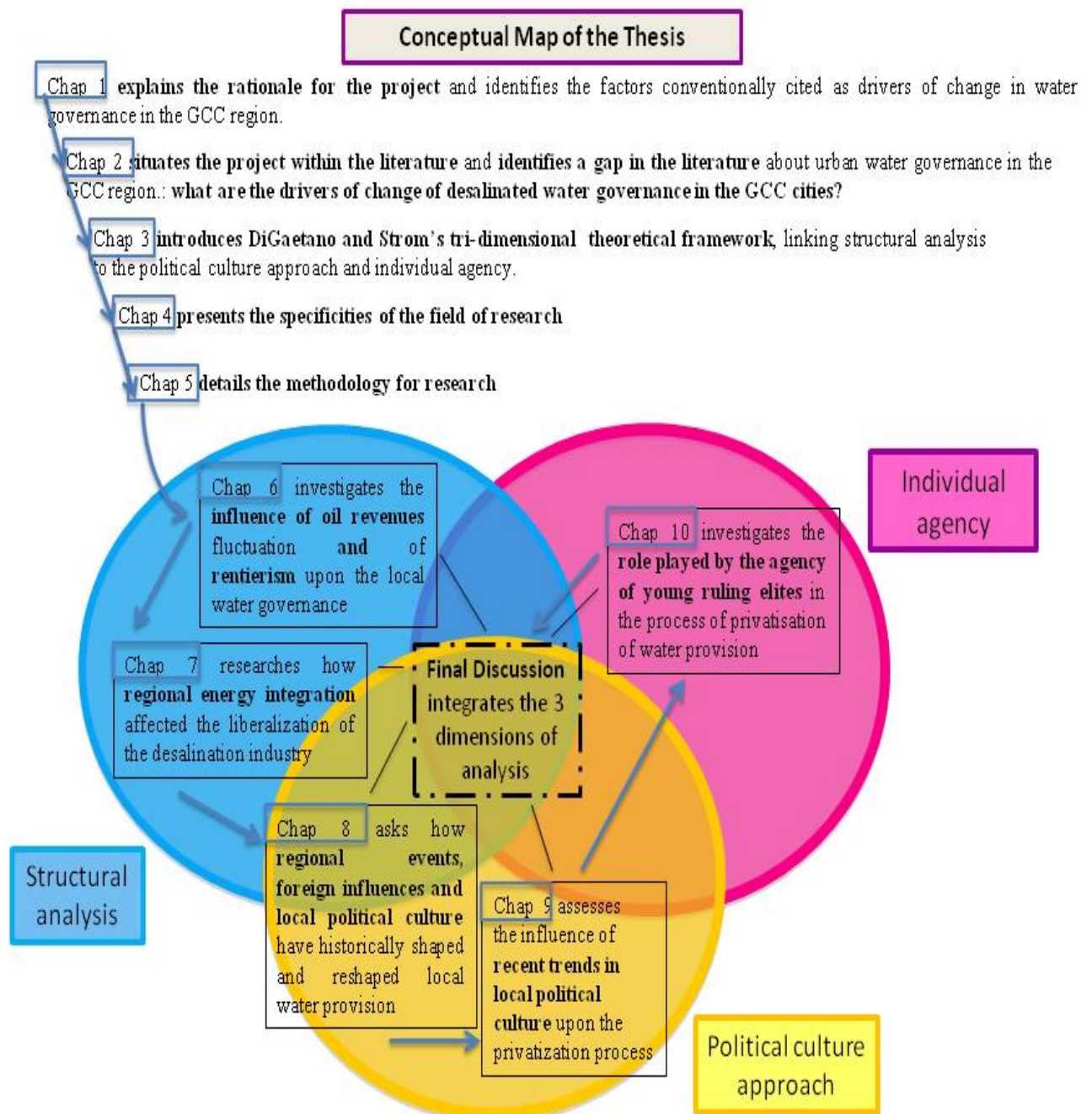
In chapter 9, the political culture approach will expose the reasons why these GCC cities display today a set of features that is specific to them despite global forms of convergence in urban water services described by many social scientists (e.g. Bakker, 2010; Budds, 2005; Harvey, 2005). First, by giving explanation of the local lack of public debate on water governance and water privatisation, mostly due to the absence of public concern in the GCC region, in sharp contrast with the mass mobilizations against water privatisation programs seen across the world over the past two decades. Then this chapter sheds light on the recent cultural influences that have been competing regionally to shape the water governance reforms, i.e. new popular interpretations of Islam more in favor of free markets, new urban tribal politics and the recent liberalism of the state's technocrats. Finally, the comparative approach explicates why Kuwait City - a city-state with a long-established merchant tradition - has never developed any IWPP while it represents today 95% of the desalination capacity of Abu Dhabi.

Chapter 10 critically appraises the role of the rulers' individual agency over the dynamics of water privatisation in their respective capital city. This chapter first investigates through a diachronic approach whether these top ruling elites' access to and/or exercise of power correlates with the significant changes in the urban water supply. It then describes what have been the roles of the top ruling elite (i.e. their internal division of labour) in each of the three polities under study before describing the background of the emerging key political actors of the 1990s and 2000s.

The last section of this thesis is the final discussion whereby the results of all chapters are confronted to provide a comprehensive understanding of what have been the drivers of, barriers and counter-forces to change in each of the three cities. These findings enable us to draw conclusions as to the existence of a coherent GCC model of desalinated water governance and concerning what the drivers of change are in a desalination-dependent water governance model, beyond the usual assertion that oil prices fluctuations have been responsible for the evolutions of the sector. Finally, this final discussion will highlight the limits of this research and propose new perspectives of research to continue the investigation of the dynamics of desalinated water governance, within and without the GCC region.

The conceptual map below summarizes the aim of each of these chapters and how they fit together in a complementary manner to answer the thesis' central problématique.

Figure 1: Conceptual map of the thesis



Chapter 2

Governance reforms, water services and urban governance: a literature review of the drivers of institutional and policy change

In the abundant usages of the word governance, a duality between a form of vernacular usage and a more elaborated notion can be noticed. As Weiss (2000) noted, “*many academics and international practitioners employ 'governance' to connote a complex set of structures and processes, both public and private, while more popular writers tend to use it synonymously with 'government'*” (2000, p. 795). If the latter usage seems to be more widespread, this chapter will consider here the more academic notions of governance because they are more precise and consistent in their meaning. Because it generated over the past 20 years an immense, complex and growing scholarship, reviewing all governance academic works and sub-fields is simply impossible: it is far too diverse in terms of uses and scope of application, in terms of meaning or definition, or in terms of constitutive dimensions. When four researchers of the University of Brisbane made a review of 53 studies on governance selected only from the academic fields of corporate governance and political studies, they identified a total of 40 dimensions to it, ranging from normative elements such as accountability and transparency, to more political notions like structure and power (Ruhanen et al., 2010).

Some authors have argued that a major reason for the extensive use of the notion of governance in the 1990s and early 2000s was this trendy yet vague nature. For them, it was very appealing since it referred to something new and positive (Green, 2007, Hermet and Kazancigil, 2005), and because it celebrated new elements and forms of politics such as “*networks, partnerships, identity politics, regionalism, etc. as the ways of the future*” (Baldersheim and Dalloz, 2003, p.3). Meanwhile there was actually no real consensus on -

and as such no limitation to - what governance could mean. This does not signify at all that there is no definition of governance, but precisely that governance exists as a “*multiform phenomenon*” (Hermet et Kazancigil, 2005), that numerous definitions can be found, and that new ones continuously emerge within a variety of sub-fields and diverse epistemic communities. As a consequence, Castro (2007) noted, “*although the use of the concept of “governance” often assumes a shared understanding, in fact there exist underlying confrontations between rival theoretical bodies of knowledge and political and cultural traditions for which governance has entirely different meanings* (Castro, 2007, p.103). So there is a great need to be precise and highly selective in terms of object and framework of study, and to restrict the following literature review to the issue of the drivers of change of desalinated water services governance in capital cities of the GCC.

To do so, this chapter first discusses the notions of governance and good governance reforms with a perspective centred on institutional change, the reform of the State and the integration of networks of actors in policy-making. Then urban water services and the drivers of institutional change in an urban context are examined. The third section reviews the comparative literature on urban governance and highlights the need for an integrated approach to its drivers of change. Section four sheds some light on governance and governing traditions in the Gulf Arab countries while section five investigates the influences of the Arabian political cultural features on potable water supply and its governance. Finally, section six explores how the governance of the energy-intensive desalination in the GCC States may have been affected by the dynamics of regional energy integration.

I – Governance as reform of the State: understanding the forms and forces of institutional change

The debates on governance describing deep mutations in and around the State will now be reviewed, as well as the developmentalist discourse on governance and especially on ‘good governance’.

I.1 - Governance as the ‘hollowing out’ of the Westphalian State?

The concept of governance was first used by European social scientists in the late 1980s and 1990s to describe some major evolutions of the public government, generally broadly termed in the literature as ‘the state’. Because of the unique influence that British politics has had on the making of modern politics of the Gulf States (Chrystal, 1995; Heard-Bey, 1999; Lienhardt, 2001) and on their evolution since independence in both foreign and domestic politics (Hollis, 2010; Ismail and Ismail, 1991; Schoffield, 2009)⁴, the British experience and understanding of governance reforms, especially that of recent decades, will be particularly reviewed.

According to authors as diverse as Harvey (1989), Kooiman (1993), Rhodes (1994) and Swyngedouw (1997), the governance process of structural transformation of politics was characterized by a form of gradual dissolution or transfer of the public authority’s sovereignty over several sectors of activity (e.g. urban services, education, regulation processes) in which networks of actors (communities, corporatist and/or non-profit organizations, private sector, local administrations and hybrid entities) have increasingly been invited to integrate the policy-making processes. Meanwhile, a fragmentation of some of the State’s institutions into more or less autonomous bodies (such as sector agencies), as well as an increasing delegation

⁴ The enduring British influence, though fluctuating over time and despite competition with other Western countries, can mainly be attributed to the training in the United Kingdom of the local elites, to the defence and trade ‘special relationship’ diplomacy vis à vis the GCC countries and, last but not least, to the significant presence of British advisors and highly skilled expatriates in the main cities.

of the traditional welfare State responsibilities to local scale entities - be they public, private or mixed actors - have been observed (Marinetto, 2007).

In his influential article *From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation in Urban Governance in Late Capitalism*, Harvey (1989) had described this political reconfiguration process and helped draw a clear distinction between urban government and the broader concept of urban governance he describes. Harvey argued that the “*real power to reorganise urban life so often lies elsewhere or at least within a broader coalition of forces within which urban government and administration have only a facilitative and coordinating role to play. The power to organise space derives from a whole complex of forces mobilised by diverse social agents.*” (1989, p. 6). Sharing this idea of a fundamental transformation of the role of the public authorities - or responsibility shift - to the benefit of new and increasingly powerful actors, the authors of the “*Anglo-governance School*” (Marinetto, 2003; 2007) have investigated the evolutions of the institutions, actors and processes within and along the central State.

After working in the 1980s on the changing relationships between central and local governments, Rhodes (1988) argued that the State has been experiencing a transition from a hierarchical bureaucratic organisation to a fragmented and increasingly decentralised body. Rhodes further developed this theory of a State in transition in the early 1990s, where governing structures evolved and where policy networks -made of public, private, mixed or non-profit actors- became increasingly influential. For Rhodes, governance refers to “*self-organizing, inter-organisational networks*”, generally in a state of interdependence among themselves, and with some autonomy vis-à-vis the State (Rhodes, 1997, p. 15).

The State itself is perceived to be less static. It is not a central and hegemonic actor anymore, it is the product of an iterative process of construction and reconstruction (Rhodes

2007), as governance increasingly involves networks of actors to both design and implement policy: this is 'network governance' (Jones et al., 1997). Although these policy networks are interdependent, Marin and Mayntz (1991) have shown that they are not harmonious and cooperative at all times. With a Marxist perspective, Harvey considers their relations as "*a conflictual process*" (1989, p. 6).

The networks working around functional departments grew significantly with the progressive integration of new policy actors from both the private and non-for-profit sectors. The growth, complexity and relative independence of these integrated networks have caused a new configuration of "*decentred*" government (Bevir and Rhodes 2001). The central State is arguably weakened in its capacity to define, conduct and control policy and the central government has progressively become dependent upon governance.

The growing participation of new networks of actors in specific activities of the State's 'core executive' has been interpreted as a hollowing-out of the traditionally centralized and sovereign State (Rhodes and March, 1992; Rhodes, 1997). The notion of core executive designates diverse formal institutions, such as the Cabinet and related offices, but also inter-organizational networks as well as more informal practices, all participating to the policy-making and -implementing processes (Dunleavy and Rhodes, 1990). Smith (1999) described how the internal and external forces are responsible for the movement towards this situation of hollowing-out, with the internal forces of the core executive being mainly related to market-led dynamics (corporatisations, privatisations, public private partnerships, etc.) and the external forces being chiefly the product of globalization processes (greater international mobility of production, internationalisation of finance, etc.)

The governance literature often refers to the dynamics of a double shift towards a local scale on the one hand (e.g. the devolution of some urban services from ministries to

municipalities), and a supra-national scale on the other (e.g. regional regulating bodies for trade and standards like the European Parliament for instance). This double process, often referred to as “*glocalization*” (see Swyngedouw 1997, 2000, 2004), has been accused of taking away responsibilities and power from the political entities thus far in charge of most public affairs, the Westphalian nation-states.

The idea of the hollowing-out of the central State and core executive is at the heart of the Anglo-governance model, but it has been the object of intense debates. According to this theory, a new governing configuration has made the previously British central State, which exercised a monopoly of executive power in the name of the State’s sovereignty, a now dependent and weakened actor operating among networks of inter-organisational actors, to steer and implement policy (Rhodes, 1994). A case in point is the water sector. After the ten state-owned regional companies were privatised under the Thatcher administration in 1989, the water sector in England and Wales became significantly more governed by private actors than by the State (see Hall and Lobina, 2013, p.114). Subsequently, the Major government initiated the development of PPPs in UK for diverse sectors through the Private Finance Initiative, but it became more widely used in the second half of the 1990s and early 2000s, under the economic leadership of Anthony Blair and Gordon Brown (Gulf One, 2012).

Prior to this and disregarding specific sectors’ dynamics, Holliday (2000) highlighted that during the thirty years surveyed by Rhodes the central core had not been reduced in terms of financial and human resources. Giving empirical arguments of a quantitative nature, he demonstrated for instance that the number of employees of the Prime Minister’s Office increased by 40% between the governments of John Major and Tony Blair, and that the Cabinet Office grew from 600 staff members in 1974, to some 2 467 civil servants in 1999

(Holliday, 2000, p. 173)⁵. For him, not only the central state has not been weakened as the Anglo-governance School claims, but all in all, its capacity grew significantly: *“In the thirty years Rhodes surveys in tracing the hollowing out of the British State, enhancement of core executive capacity has been considerable”* (Holliday, 2000, p. 16). Rhodes (1997) had previously conceded to early detractors that the State is not hollowed out to the point of total powerlessness and Smith (1999) had also recognized that the core executive is *“more highly resourced in terms of authority, finance and control over coercion than any other domestic institution”*. But Rhodes and the majority of his colleagues maintained nevertheless that the role of the State has overall been severely diminished since the 1970s and that this situation, in *qualitative* term, is of great consequence and probably irreversible: *“hands-off controls may not provide enough leverage for the centre to steer the network”* (1997, p 16).

For Marinetto (2003; 2007) however, a meticulous examination of the central architecture shows also some centralisation dynamics. He cites the efforts of the New Labour administrations to bolster the Cabinet Office to coordinate policy, while it is already responsible for managing the Civil Service and that its influence has become notable over the legislature, citing purposefully the Parliamentary Business Support team whose action is *“under the Cabinet Office’s sphere of influence”* (Marinetto, 2007, pp. 64-65). Citing Taylor’s (2000) words, Marinetto (2007) concluded in the mid-2000s that the developments within the Cabinet Office *“intimate that the trend is more towards ‘filling in’ than ‘hollowing out’”*.

Acknowledging these apparently contradictory trends and working on a longer time-scale, Lowe and Rollings (2000) reach an illuminating conclusion. There is *“no unilinear increase in State intervention after 1900 or in the hollowing out of the State after 1945”* (2000, p. 117); there has been a *“longstanding tension in Britain between centralisation and*

⁵ The political reasons behind the overall increase in jobs will not be debated here. Holliday’s (2000) point is that the central state has not been irreversibly weakened during the ‘hollowing out’ period that characterized the Thatcher premiership, and overall increased despite this period.

fragmentation, or between rival concepts of “government” and “governance” (2000, p. 100).

During periods of war or directly after it, there were increases, expansions of the State and centralisation; while tendencies to reduction have been known subsequently. The context-dependent trends of “*hollowing out*” are non-definitive political evolutions that can follow – as well as been followed - by periods of “*hollowing in*”. Since 2010, the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition has endeavored to stop the previous trend and reverse it⁶.

The Anglo-governance School as well as the Erasmus University School (e.g. Kooiman, 2003; 2007), have placed the governance debates within the context of the European democratic states considered both ‘overloaded’ (by increases and complexification of demands to the welfare state), and sub-optimally functioning, when not simply failing, since they are not adapted to increasingly complex and dynamic societies⁷. But a limitation with these schools’ analyses is that the changes related to new configurations of the political governing systems as well as the delegation of the public authority’s traditionally sovereign activities to new and/or empowered actors are not observable only in increasingly complex industrialized and democratic countries. The process of governance generally appears in countries of the global South for different reasons and in notably different forms.

I.2 - Placing the ‘good governance’ discourse into global politics to uncover its drivers of change, the barriers and counter-forces to it

Green (2007) reviewed many of the ideas generally associated with governance and explained that it is often considered as meaning ‘change’, and particularly change for the better. To be able to understand the prospects for governance change in the Global South,

⁶ See for instance the text of the deal of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition at ‘Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition deal: full text’, The Guardian, Wednesday 12 May 2010. Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2010/may/12/lib-dem-tory-deal-coalition> (last accessed 16/12/2012)

⁷ In the early 1990s the political scientists of the Erasmus University attributed the widely decried ‘crisis of the State’ in modern democracies to the evolutions of democratic societies, which have been evolving “*towards more dynamics, towards higher complexity and towards greater diversity*” (Kooiman et al., 1993), while the states had not anticipated the necessary deep structural transformations.

Najem (2003) calls for investigating the drivers of such changes: *“it is crucially important to identify and assess the relative strengths of the different forces that have been pushing states to acquiesce to reforms”* (2003, p. 8). However, until now the drivers of governance change in a number of countries and even in several regions of the world, like the Caucasus, Central Asia or the Gulf region, have been little investigated, if at all. To eventually be able to unveil and critically appraise the forces that led to governance reforms in such regions, some key aspects of the debates on this topic need to be reviewed.

I.2.a –Neoliberal governance reforms as the re-invention of politics?

To explain the rapid rise of ‘governance’ from a quasi-unknown notion twenty years ago to a cornerstone of development policies for most international development agencies and many developing countries a decade after, Najem (2003) considers that it needs to be placed into a historical perspective. From the 1950s to the second half of the 1970s, many developing countries were in a post-colonial period, which was often characterized by a statist development process, generally accompanied by large controls over the means of production and by protectionist policies to secure the national sovereignty and minimise foreign influences. But a developmental paradigmatic shift occurred in the 1970s, when Western economists (especially the Chicago School) and Governments (particularly conservative ones) began stressing in their research the need for market-led mechanisms and free trade to steer economic development. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, acceptance of this new ideological orientation was accelerated through the conjunction of four elements: an unprecedented level of external indebtedness of non-oil developing countries; the general failure of Statist forms of economic development in the South; the decline and collapse of the Soviet Union and European communist regimes accompanied with the Fukuyama-inspired discourse of triumph of the Western liberal and democratic model as the ultimate form of society. These elements led to the expansion of the initial (developmentalist) notion of governance. It focussed on

economic reforms (as in World Bank, 1989), to become a set of ideas for political reforms that would bring developing countries the democracy, rule of law, human rights and liberal society, hand in hand with a (liberal) economic development. Najem concluded from his diachronic explanation of the exceptional rise of the notion of governance that its pre-eminence is indeed very much linked to the “*current predominance of global capitalism*” (Najem, 2003, p. 6).

From case study analysis in developing countries (e.g. Abrahamsen 2001; Owen, 2003) it is argued that governance reforms pushed through during conditions of economic difficulties and the concomitant influence of international financial institutions will not necessarily improve their economic or democratic condition, and can be detrimental to their political systems. Abrahamsen (2001) asserts that the ‘good governance’ agenda creates administrations theoretically beholden to their domestic constituencies with increasing demands, e.g. for civil infrastructures and affordable services, while they are actually powerfully held accountable to unelected foreign creditors and donors who have other interests, e.g. the reduction of the public debt, privatisations of state-owned companies and cost recovery schemes for urban services.

In two settings of very limited democracy, the cases of pre-‘Arab Spring’ Syria and Egypt, Owen (2003) showed that neoliberal influences from the World Bank, IMF and GATT/WTO had led to the partial liberalisation of the economic sphere with a greater overture to private actors and foreign investments, increased regional economic integration, reduced State interventionism and some measures against corruption. But these economic dynamics have not been accompanied by a political liberalisation. In other words, the Arab world until the recent revolutionary Arab Spring had managed some ‘good governance’ reforms in a way that decoupled the liberalisation of the economic and political spheres, the latter remaining overall undemocratic, while the whole could appear as modernizing along the

latest political standards of modernity. Hypothetically, this may have constituted the principal interest in the good governance paradigm for Arab decision-makers. Albeit in another regional context, that of Western Europe, Baldersheim and Dalloz (2003) have indeed proposed a disenchanted view of the governance reforms discourse that could support this theory.

“Post-modern governance terminology celebrates networks, partnerships, identity politics, regionalism, etc as the ways of the future. The common denominator of these modes of governance is a reliance on old-fashioned leadership dressed up in the garbs of the media and the computer age”

Source: Baldersheim and Dalloz (2003, p.3)

I.2.b ‘Good governance’ reforms: ideology and processes of governance in the global South

The dynamics of governance reforms in developing countries are characterized by market-led processes (e.g. gradual deregulation, corporatizations, privatisations, public private partnerships), generally promoted by both donor countries and international organizations like the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This reform process is promoted under the banner of ‘good governance’.

This is probably the most influential conceptualization of the notion: governance as a normative tool, or a “*means*”, with ambitions to “*achieve sustainable human development*” according to the UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States (UNDP, 1999). Appearing for the first time in a World Bank (1989) report entitled Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth, the term ‘good governance’ has since been gradually conceptualized – some would argue too superficially though - and could be seen as the “*predominant development paradigm of the last decade*” (Najem, 2003). The World Bank’s 1989 document could be perceived as promoting a ‘good governance’ tightly linked to the neoliberal

structural adjustments that the World Bank and IMF had been advocating for several years: *“reduced state intervention in economic decision-making; reduced public sectors and more efficient and transparent public sector administration; freer markets and the elimination of unnecessary public subsidies; and increased integration into the world economy”* (Najem, 2003, p. 2). By 1992, the World Bank made the concept of ‘good governance’ one of its criteria for its allocation of loans, thus directly supporting public sector reforms along new public management, privatisation and ‘marketization’ lines in order to increase the efficiency of the public services (Bevir and Rhodes, 2001). Initially the World Bank wanted to specifically focus the reform agenda on the economic domain. But the concept rapidly evolved from *“a set of fairly specific policy recommendations for economic reform”* to a *“broad range of related ideas and sets of policy”* (Najem, 2003, pp. 23-24). Good governance today - sometimes only referred to as ‘governance’ - generally refers to the following set of 8 characteristics:

- | | |
|------------------|--------------------------------|
| - participation | - equity and inclusiveness |
| - rule of law | - effectiveness and efficiency |
| - transparency | - accountability |
| - responsiveness | - consensus orientation |

These constitutive elements, sometimes with different terms, were the object of critical debate and scholarship amongst development agencies, their critics and academics (e.g. Abrahamsen, 2001; Hermet and Kazancigil, 2005). Najem (2003), whose study focused on the GCC states, proposed a list of the 6 main drivers of good governance reforms in developing countries. Two forces of change can be considered as internal factors: the authorities’ crisis of legitimacy and an emerging endogenous civil society; while four are more external ones: international trade; issue-based international NGOs; the transmission of western values and international aid donors (Najem, 2003, pp.8-13). The latter has been the most investigated one.

Many consider that in the name of ‘good governance’, the World Bank and the IMF have supported ideological reforms on neo-liberal lines (e.g. Abrahamsen, 2001; Cassen, 2001; Harvey), that do not follow a neutral or purely pro-development agenda (2005; Kapur and Weber, 2000; Smouts, 1998; Stiglitz, 2002). Former World Bank’s Chief economist Joseph Stiglitz acknowledged that the Bretton Woods institutions were not ideologically-neutral or non-partisan, but “*dominated not just by the wealthiest industrial countries but by (private) commercial and financial interests in those countries*” (Stiglitz, 2002, pp. 18-19).

For Harvey (2005) the passage from neoclassical economics to neoliberal doctrine emerged in developing countries when neoliberal conditionalities have been attached to their financial assistance by donor countries and the Bretton Woods organisations; with the emphasis unambiguously put on economic liberalisation and structural adjustment (Stokke et al., 1996; Crawford, 2001). The official aims of these reforms in the name of good governance were, according to Najem: “*debt reduction, privatisation of inefficient public sector industries, reform of inefficient and bureaucratic institutions, the elimination of protectionist trade practices; the reduction of public subsidies and spending commitments; and the introduction of greater transparency with respect to economic decision-making*” (2003, p.8). Good governance reforms have thus been linked to Williamson’s (1989) ‘Washington consensus’. This referred originally to a set of market-oriented reforms for Latin America as generally promoted by Washington-based financial institutions (namely the Bretton Woods ones and the US treasury department). It became however synonym with the paradigmatic change in economic philosophy from the post-world war II period, characterized by Keynesian-influenced welfare state models, towards a more neoliberal paradigm promoting free trade policies, deregulations and a major role being attributed to the private sector, both domestic and international.

The rise of neoliberal ideas as a driver of governance change?

During the economic crisis of the early 1970s, an increasing number of thinkers, institutions and governments in the West began stressing the need for market-led mechanisms and free trade to steer economic growth and development. Subsequently in the Global South, these ideas began to gradually take over the post-colonial statist development models of sovereign control of the production means and of the protectionist policies (see Harvey, 2005). By the late 1980s and early 1990s, the wide acceptance of this new ideological neoliberal development paradigm was accelerated by the conjunction of four elements, according to Najem (2003):

- (1) an unprecedented level of external indebtedness of most developing countries;
- (2) the general failure of Statist forms of economic development in the global South;
- (3) the collapse of the Soviet Union and European communist regimes;
- (4) a Fukuyama-inspired discourse of triumph of the Western liberal economic and democratic model, seen by many as the ultimate form of society.

But it has also been argued that by attaching good governance-related conditionalities to their loans, this developmentalist paradigm has become a tool for standardized neoliberalisation of the economies (e.g. Kapur et Weber, 2000; Cassen, 2001; Owen, 2004, p.114; Swyngedouw, 2005), disregarding the specific national capacities, cultures or needs. As this change in developing countries is not a process originating from endogenous communities, at least on the conceptual plan, these reforms lead to ideas of non-genuine and non-legitimate political evolutions, of governance reforms appearing as the “*pre-manufacturing*” of new politics (Hermet and Kazancigil, 2005). Consequently, instead of being politically and culturally neutral as originally conceived by the World Bank (1989), the notion of good governance has become extremely politicized, culturally-marked and seen by

many as semi- or even anti-democratic (Abrahamsen, 2001; Cassen, 2001; Hermet et al., 2005; Swyngedouw, 2005).

In the case of urban water services governance reforms - the effectiveness of which is theoretically linked to broader governance reforms (Overseas Development Institute, 2007) - it was not only a certain lack of legitimacy but also the lack of effectiveness of reforms that led to a series of political crises in the global South. However, the normative power of the international discourse promoting market-oriented water reforms has led to many privatisations.

II - Urban water services governance and the drivers of institutional change

Like the notion of governance, water governance suffers from having no universally agreed definition. Its semi-vernacular usage refers to the way water affairs are collectively governed. For instance, Gupta (2008) considers that “*water governance has a very long history going back at least five thousand years*” (2008, p.2). This of course does not refer to the structural and cultural dynamic of transformation of the boundaries between and among public, private and voluntary sectors. This does not refer either to the political conceptualizations developed above. But this semi-vernacular usage of water governance refers to a double notion that lies at the heart of governance theories: the absence of a sovereign State monopoly of power and control over water affairs, and the participation of stakeholders, in Gupta’s case community members.

Significant efforts were made over the past decade to conceptualize the notion of water governance, most often by integrating the social sciences literature on governance (e.g. on the privatisations of public services and civil society participation), the mainstream development discourse (e.g. calls for more transparency and increase in minorities’ participation) to existing ideas of holistic approaches to water management, primarily the

Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM). From these emerged a vast scholarship on water governance, now constituted of many subfields: trans-boundary and international rivers water governance, pro-poor water governance, aquifer governance, even global water governance, etc. For the purpose of a study focussing on the GCC cities, which mostly rely on desalination for urban water supplies, and where the water authorities attribute major importance to increasing efficiency as observed during the field researches, this section will expose the ideas of the ‘effective water governance’ concept, and prior to it, the role of the international water consensus in the reforms of urban water services.

II.1 – The International Water Consensus: a driver of change in urban water services?

Ideas centred on a “*water crisis narrative*” developed through successive international water conferences that followed the 1977 Mar del Plata conference (Hope and Gowing, 2003). Two recurrent aims of the last two decades’ milestone UN conferences and related high level meetings on water have been to form a common vision and to define a global consensus on how to efficiently engage this strategic issue. This led to common declarations such as the *Bonn Conference on Freshwater* in 2001 or Mexico’s *Local Government Declaration on Water* during the Fourth World Water Forum in 2006, as well as the drafting of international strategies and roadmaps in order to achieve the water-related objectives of the Millennium Development Goals (see Istanbul Consensus Declaration, 2009, p.3). This international vision and related principles for improved water management form what is generally called the “international (water) consensus” (Franks and Cleaver, 2004⁸).

This ‘consensus’ is significantly rooted in the guiding principles of the 1992 UN-backed Dublin Statement on Water and Sustainable Development (Nicol et al., 2011). The

⁸ See Cleaver’ and Franks’ introduction to their seminar series ‘The Water Consensus’ held at Bradford University between 2004 and 2006 and available at www.brad.ac.uk/acad/des/seminar/water/ (Last visited on 27th May 2011)

Dublin principles for water management promote a set of ideas, among which were highlighted the empowerment and participation of the civil society and especially women, the subsidiarity principle, water as a “*basic right of all human beings*” (but not a ‘basic human right’), and last but not least, water as an economic good.

The Dublin Statement pushed on the international stage the idea that “*wasteful and environmentally damaging uses of the resource*” were due to a “*past failure to recognize the economic value of water*”, and eventually enshrined the idea that “*managing water as an economic good is an important way of achieving efficient and equitable use, and of encouraging conservation and protection of water resources*”⁹. This short but influential *plaidoyer* for the commodification of water ended with recommendations “*to involve private institutions*” and for follow ups to be monitored by an international body, a World Water Forum or Council. Both were eventually created and have been, to varying degrees, lobbyists for public private partnerships (PPPs) and privatisation initiatives in the delivery of water services.

Articulated with the ideas and vocabulary of good governance (e.g. ‘participatory approach’ for all stakeholders, ‘integrated approach’ or ‘subsidiarity’), these elements have been regularly referred to by the largest intergovernmental development organizations (chiefly the UN agencies and Bretton Woods institutions), international NGOs, States and regional bodies for whom the water issues have long been on their agenda, such as the European Commission (E.C.,) or the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and especially the Dublin principle of water as a commodity (i.e. an “*economic good*”) has been put forward since and defended (e.g. World Bank, 2003; Istanbul Water Consensus, 2009).

⁹ The official text of the Dublin Statement on Water and Sustainable Development can be found at: www.wmo.int/pages/prog/hwrp/documents/english/icwedece.html (last checked 12/04/2011)

Meanwhile, the sovereign role of central States over local water management has been reduced or abolished in some cases. At the beginning of the 2000s, Megginson and Netter (2001) had assessed that low-income countries had reduced through privatisation their share of total State ownership by more than half over 25 years. The proportion of water privatisations had initially remained in modest proportions (World Bank, 2002), but increased over the 1990s and gained momentum among high political decision-makers in the early 2000s (Solanes, 2006, pp. 7-8). Between 1991 and 2000, the population served by private or mixed operators in developing countries (emerging countries included) grew steadily from 6 million to 94 million (Marin, 2009, p.2). Since then however, a series of highly mediatised failures of and popular opposition to privatisation of water services - e.g. in Cochabamba (Bolivia) or in Dar es-Salaam (Tanzania) - have been followed by a deceleration of the increase in new PPPs in the water sector and the termination of contracts. Out of the more than 260 contracts awarded to the private sector since 1990, 9 % were terminated at the end of 2007 (Marin, 2009, p.2). Meanwhile a trend of re-municipalisation policies (i.e. the transfer of water assets and/or services from the private companies to a municipality) has appeared and has kept on growing to this day (Hall and Lobina, 2013). But the global privatisation dynamic has overall continued, particularly through public private partnerships (Pigeon, McDonald, Hoedeman et al., 2012). The customers being served by private or mixed operators kept on increasing from 94 million in 2000 to more than 160 million by the end of 2007, with most of the growth coming from emerging countries such as Algeria, China, the Gulf states, Malaysia, and the Russian Federation (Marin, 2009, p.2).

Given the heavy role attributed to the private sector in the 'consensus', and given the instrumental role played by Michel Camdessus - longest serving Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (1987-2000) - in its elaboration, fears have only been reinforced

that this sanctioned discourse forms a path towards the neo-liberalisation of water activities¹⁰. Furthermore the validity of the 'consensus' is seriously challenged, not least on its postulates. For instance Cleaver and Franks (2005, p. 1) explain that *"insights emerging from research and practice critique international water policy for being narrowly under-pinned by neo-liberal principles, dominated by technical and managerial concerns and informed by limited methodologies and empirical data"*.

The main empirical reason for scepticism or even blunt rejection among militants of a market-oriented 'consensus' is the number of privatisations of water services which failed to deliver the promised outcomes in many cities of the Global South, as in Bamako, Buenos Aires, Cochabamba or Manila (see e.g. World Development Movement, 2006; Bayliss, 2001; Hall and Corral, 2003; Mulreany et al., 2006). Some privatisations in the urban water services brought significant perverse effects, e.g. in terms of water tariffs increase after privatisation, of water supply termination after unpaid bills, or of health issues related to the poorest populations' alternative strategies to collect water. More importantly maybe, despite some market-oriented reforms on all continents, the water situation has remained catastrophic in the global South. So what is the rationale behind the development of market-oriented water services reforms?

II.2 – The market rationale underlying water governance reforms

The main reasons generally evoked to support market-led policies for water governance is that pricing water - which most often accompanies water privatisation - will ensure that resource is used for its most productive uses, that wastes are reduced and that it triggers greater efficiency (Productivity Commission, 2006). Analyzing the international discourse on water services privatisation, Harris and Gantt (2007) argue that *"privatisation is*

¹⁰ After being Manager Director of the IMF, Michel Camdessus became the Chairman of the United Nations' World Panel on Water Infrastructure Financing (2001-2003) which made influential recommendations for the International Water Consensus concerning the financial and economic reforms needed for water works and services in the South.

simultaneously envisioned as a remedy for the State's historical mismanagement and poor service provision, and for financial challenges associated with dwindling state resources" (Harris and Gantt, 2007, p. 5). There is a need here to clearly distinguish between privatisation (i.e. the transfer of ownership or management from public to private or mixed entities) and commodification (i.e. the use of market mechanisms for water like any other commodity such as iron, oil or wood). These two ideas are based upon the neoclassical economic assumption that the market's virtues will help better manage the water sector. In concrete terms for the water services of developing countries, Harris and Gantt (2007) explain that it has led States to decreased water services provision and water subsidies, to reinforce commodification and privatisation trends and, last but not least, to *"separate off 'profitable' urban sectors from 'unprofitable' rural water provision in order to pave the way for private takeover of the profitable elements"* (2007, p. 5).

The 'privatisation of water', as the market-led reforms are often dubbed, has generally not privatised the resource itself, but involved the private sector into prominent roles in the production and delivery of water services. From water treatment and distribution (the most privatised segments of the sector), to water retreatment, billing or more recently desalination for urban water services.

In developing countries plagued by corruption and weak political institutions, there is also the idea that the private sector – theoretically characterized by pure market rationality - can alleviate the corruption burden. International organizations have widely supported these ideas in developing countries. UNICEF Somalia (2004) for instance articulates this opinion, albeit cautiously, in the following manner:

"That private management is usually better than public management is widely believed to be correct. UNICEF Somalia therefore aims to facilitate sustainable private management structures (...).

Public oversight ensures reasonable and socially acceptable service delivery and

cost. The operator can, but does not have to be a private company; a public enterprise that is run under market conditions can be equally successful.

Arguably, private sector participation or public-private partnerships offer the best chance for transparent and accountable management of public utilities.

Source: Unicef Somalia (2004)

Castro (2008) however criticizes this and highlights the lack of empirical evidence to support neoliberal assumptions that participation by the private sector provides the financial resources required to improve water and sanitation services in failing countries. Indeed, few examples of successful PPPs for urban water services in developing countries have been documented (for exceptions, see e.g. Dumol, 2000; UNICEF, 2004; 2009; 2011). By the early 2000s, the disappointing general outcomes of the privatisation solution have led to the emergence of a more elaborate, arguably complementary, development paradigm.

II. 3 – Effective water governance and the deep reforms of the urban water services

Similar to the ideas of good governance, the notion of ‘effective water governance’ has been elaborated upon through the discourse of international aid and development organizations as a response to the ‘global water crisis’. According to various international organizations such as the Global Water Partnership (GWP), the World Water Council, UNDP Water and UNESCO-IHE, the *ensemble* of all current water crises over the world should be conceived as a single situation of “*global water crisis*” (see for instance UNDP, 2006 or WDM, 2006) which should be attributed to a large extent to a “*crisis of governance*” (e.g. GWP, 2000, p.17; UNESCO, 2003, p. 370; 2006, p. 45; 2009, p. vii¹¹; DFID, 2006; UNDP, 2006, p.89; 2011¹²; UNU-INWEH, 2012). Accordingly, these powerful international

¹¹ It is worth noting that in the third World Water Assessment Report, the UN agencies led by the UNESCO have been more cautious in their discourse of a “*world water crisis*”. They evoke it now more as a looming threat to avoid (see for instance UNESCO, 2009, p.vii), rather than an accurate description of the present global situation.

¹² See the UNDP’s Website concerning Water Supply and Sanitation: www.undp.org/water/priorityareas/supply.html (Last checked on the 23/01/2011)

organizations represent the good governance of water as a key element for achieving human development. To do so in a modern social and political setting, a deep restructuration of water politics is needed.

When in 2000 the notion of ‘water governance’ was still to be conceived *per se*, the GWP - an international NGO which promotes integrated water resources management (IWRM) - presented during the Second Global Water Forum a report entitled “*Towards water security: a framework for action*” (GWP¹³, 2000). It featured, among its themes for action, “*making water governance effective*”. This chapter deals mainly with the implementation of the IWRM and the neoliberal aim of “*realigning economic and financial practices*” (GWP, 2000, p. 23-40). This latter point was well received by international organizations and donor countries that had begun to advocate for such reforms since the agreement in Dublin. At the end of Bonn’s International Fresh Water Conference in 2001, the participating Ministers recommended that “*each country should have in place applicable arrangements for governance of water affairs at all levels and, where appropriate, accelerate water sector reforms*”¹⁴.

Recognizing the general will to work with the (good) governance paradigm for water affairs, Rogers and Hall (2003) gave to the recently-elaborated notion of water governance its first conceptual framework in a report entitled *Effective Water Governance*. To this date, this work - and especially its definition of water governance - has been a reference for most international organizations and development agencies¹⁵; the most referred to by academic

¹³ The Global Water Partnership was founded in 1996 by the World Bank, the UNDP and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). It is opened to States and subsidiary government institutions, companies, service providers, intergovernmental organizations, NGOs and scientific institutions.

¹⁴ For a more detailed overview of the rapid rise of “*governance as applied to water*” among top decision-makers, see Solanes (2006, pp.7-8).

¹⁵ A few other authors also produced some early definitions of water governance, but none had the same sophistication nor obtained a comparable success than Rogers and Hall’s (2003). O’Brien et al. (2002) for instance, limited governance as applied to water to a “*process of decision making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented)*”

researchers (e.g. Bakker, 2010; Cleaver et al., 2005; Singh, 2006; Godfrey, 2007; Suleiman et al., 2008; Wade, 2012), international scientific and development organizations (e.g. UNESCO-IHE, 2006; UNDP, 2007); bilateral aid agencies and think-tanks (e.g. DFID, 2006; ODI, 2007; USAID, 2005) and specialized water organizations such as the International Water Management Institute or the World Bank's Water & Sanitation Program (IWMI, 2003 or the WSP's website¹⁶). These academic and development epistemic communities created a snowball effect through international conferences, NGOs and aid recipient countries. Because of this lasting and as yet unequalled broad influence through many authoritative actors on the one hand, and because of its flexible nature on the other, this work can help as a theoretical reference for analysing and comparing between and among different polities' water services governance.

Rogers and Hall (2003) highlight the systemic, multi-scale and integrated nature of the water governance concept. They define water governance as *“the range of political, social, economic and administrative systems that are in place to develop and manage water resources, and the delivery of water services, at different levels of society”* (GWP, 2002; Rogers and Hall, 2003, p.7).

To name their concept, Rogers and Hall use the term *“effective water governance”* in order to emphasize the outcome-directed character of their approach. For them, *“governance systems should facilitate action”* (2003, p. 9), and bring effective solutions to concrete water problems. Building on Kooiman's (1993) idea that governance is context-specific, they consider that achieving effective water governance implies merging international best practices with local needs, capacities and expectations, and must not be made superficially by

¹⁶ The World Bank's WSP, a key lending institution for water projects in developing countries, refers only to Rogers and Hall's (2003) definition for water governance, as can be seen on their official webpage: www.wsp.org/wsp/featuresevents/features/boosting-regional-dialogue-effective-water-governance (last accessed 12/04/2011)

using imported blueprints. This does not mean at all that they reject the general development paradigm of ‘good governance’; a whole chapter of their work is entitled “*good governance matters*”. In this normative perspective, they propose some general principles for effective water governance that are similar to the ones of good governance. For them, water governance should be:

- open and transparent
- inclusive and communicative (sic)
- coherent and integrative
- equitable and ethical

In its performance and operation it should be:

- accountable
- efficient
- responsive and sustainable.

There is here a difference in terms of scope of application between the ‘effective water governance’ and ‘good governance’ as applied to water, since Rogers and Hall (2003) do not address what they called the “*wider areas of ‘good governance’*”, such as press freedom or democracy for instance. This is not because they reject the political dimension of water governance in favour of a purely technocratic approach to it. To the contrary, they clearly state that there is a “*profoundly political element to governance, which involves balancing various interests and facing political realities*” (2003, p. 8) and that governance brings changes and reforms, and will consequently generate resistance and political debate.

II.4 - Water services governance and the structural reform of water politics

Rogers and Hall’s (2003) approach goes beyond the simple issue of doing things right in accordance with generally-accepted norms of good governance. They explain that the modern State no longer exercises a sovereign power nor does it enjoy the “*monopoly on the*

orchestration of governance” it used to. States now search for means by which society can manage itself via formal and informal state-society interactions and civil society networks: this is distributed governance (Kooiman, 1993). They consider that these changes and related political debates should bring more open competition, accountability and transparency in public administrations and processes, and eventually address the issue of corruption. Franks (2004) considers Rogers and Hall’s (2003) approach shows a wider interest in the way water is politically governed, against a general background where water professionals have traditionally tried to keep a distance from the political. Castro (2007) noted indeed that “(d)espite rhetorical recognition to the contrary, in the water policy literature governance is often understood instrumentally, as a mean to achieve certain objectives, as a policy strategy” (2007, p.103).

Most accepted definitions of water governance include references to economic and administrative systems, giving a greater role to diverse stakeholders and advancing normative guidelines as already highlighted. But Rogers and Hall (2003) and a number of social scientists have argued for a political approach to water governance and for understanding water governance as decision-making (e.g. Bakker, 2010; Castro, 2007; Norman and Bakker, 2009; Reis, 2008); Franks even considered that its critical value “*lies in the sharper focus on the political nature of water allocation and management*” (2004, p. 11). Interestingly, these approaches to water governance as decision-making are especially focussed on allocation since they implicitly place water governance in a zero-sum game framework. But what if in a specific environment water allocation is not a problem? Would a political approach to water governance be totally irrelevant to understand such a model and its dynamics? Can water governance be depoliticized if freshwater is supplied to all consumers in sufficient quantities? The literature has not addressed this issue and has addressed instead problematic situations.

Rogers and Halls (2003) detail the diversity of usual water governance failures: counterproductive subsidies, inappropriate price regulation and tax incentives, absence of entrepreneurial incentives for internal efficiency, conflicting regulatory regimes, poor reflection of consumer preferences, monopoly provision, non-payment for services, bureaucratic inaction, ill-defined property rights, lack of information and unpredictability about water markets. They acknowledge that weak regulation of utility providers (both public and private) is likely to generate disillusion, particularly if private utility owners have the possibility to negotiate or impose provisions that jeopardise required investments and public benefits, and permit disproportionate guaranteed returns. The authors finally propose a range of instruments and requirements needed to tackle governance failures: developing an enabling environment for IWRM, conflict-solving mechanisms, efficient private and public sector initiatives with proper sequencing, long time-frames and a coherent legal framework with a strong and autonomous regulatory regime.

In Rogers and Hall (2003) and in the UN World Water Development Reports (WWDR) that it influenced (WWDR, 2003; 2006; 2009), there is an emphasis on the role of various and complex networks, of different natures and at diverse scales, over the policy-making processes. Rogers and Halls (2003) also refer to Kooiman's idea of close relations between "*effective governance*" and the "*enabling*" of actors and networks to participate and perform effectively. For Rogers and Hall, "*(t)o achieve more effective water governance it is necessary to create an enabling environment, which facilitates efficient private and public sector initiatives and stakeholder involvement in articulating needs.*" (2003, p.7). But this leads to an important debate. What is exactly an "*enabling environment*"? Is it an economically liberal one? For the likes of the GWP, UN agencies and the World Bank, an enabling environment has long been one that allows private actors to participate to the water governance as equals to the public actors, yet in recent years, the discourse of these

organizations has been significantly more nuanced (see e.g. Marin, 2009). Does this ‘enabling environment’ require liberalisation policies of the legal and economic dimensions of the water sector? If so, to which degree?

Among a number of gaps on freshwater supply governance and its reforms, the dearth of studies on desalinated water governance (an important solution for a growing number of coastal cities) and the total absence of comparative studies of local water governance models relying on desalination constitute a major gap in the urban water governance literature and water development scholarship. It is all the more regrettable since the double dynamic of world population growth on the one hand and increased pressures on freshwaters on the other only make the need for researching desalinated urban water governance and its drivers of change all the more urgent. The emergence in recent years of a literature on comparative urban governance provides nevertheless valuable tools to frame such an academic research.

III - Emergence and potential of integrated comparative studies of urban governance

III.1 – New comparative studies and new approaches to urban models

Over the past decade and a half, a new wave of comparative scholarship emerged, that DiGaetano and Strom (2003) and Pierre (2005) simply named ‘*comparative urban governance*’ (e.g. Brenner, 2004; DiGaetano and Klemansky, 1999; Kantor and Savitch, 2005; Kloosterman and Lambregts, 2007; Pierre, 1999; 2005; Sellers, 2005). Instead of the traditional structural comparative approach to politics, Lichbach and Zucherman (1997) highlighted the advantages and complementarity of the three main schools of comparative studies: i.e. structuralism, political culture, and rational agency/choice theory. The cultural approach builds on Geertz’s (1973) “*thick descriptions*”¹⁷ that attributes a major role to the beliefs and traditions of local contexts (further information is given in chapters 3 and 9).

¹⁷ Geertz’s thick description aims at making meaningful to an outsider the behaviour of a given cultural group by explaining not only its behaviour, but also its context (See Geertz, 1973).

Rational choice theory however, investigates the micro-scale and gives a prominent role to the individual agency of key actors, their strategies and coalitions (Lichbach and Zucherman, 1997, pp.5-8 and 12-14; chapter 9 and 10). McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (1997) also synthesized these three comparative approaches and applied their hybrid approach to the study of revolution and social movements, using a political process to provide a suitable “*terrain*” for their integration (1997, p. 142-174).

Since then, several hybrid comparative approaches referring to two of the three above-mentioned schools have been elaborated to compare urban governance dynamics (e.g. Stoker and Mossberger, 1994; John and Cole, 2000; or DiGaetano and Strom, 1999). Building on Lichbach and Zucherman’s (1997) call for integration of the three dominant schools and on McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly’s (1997) experiment, DiGaetano and Strom (2003) developed their own “*integrated approach*” for urban governance, i.e. a framework for cross-country political analysis combining the three main comparative approaches. They explained the rationale of their approach in the following terms:

“Each level of analysis has explanatory value, and each generates a different set of data. Structure sets the parameters of urban governance: Market forces and economic structures; national, regional, and international governing arrangements; and population migrations and demographic structures all establish the context of a city’s politics. But explaining differences among otherwise structurally similarly situated cities requires an appreciation of cultural factors, which may vary even from city to city. And explaining change within cities requires an understanding of agency, how and why individuals act as they do, and what institutional and policy consequences follow from their actions. Therefore, it is our intention to incorporate all three levels into a single conceptual framework for comparative analysis, one that captures the dynamic relationships among the three levels.” (2003, p. 362)

A major advantage of this integrated comparative approach is to go beyond the usual structural drivers of change to explain governance reforms. It remains yet to be used to analyze the reforms of urban water services among cities with similar structural characteristics.

III.2 - An integrated approach to the drivers of change

Booth, Cammack et al. (2006) have noted that the drivers of change approach may sometimes erroneously imply that change is the product of “*a limited set of identifiable factors or forces*”, and that “*the search for ‘drivers’, in this context, can easily contribute to the tendency to believe in simple, once-and-for-all solutions to development problems*” (2006, p1). These are over-simplifying assumptions that should be discarded. The term ‘drivers of change’ in this research does not refer to the DFID’s (2004) specific method of analysis for donor countries. This research is not investigating a relationship between a donor institution and an aid recipient country, nor the eventual reasons for failure in such situations at all, as does the DFID.

The literature generally lists the main drivers of change that can lead to good governance reforms and water services reforms as following: a failed or fragile state, a severe financial crisis, population growth, a resource crisis, climate change, urban expansion, international organizations’ authoritative discourse, donor countries and aid agencies’ governance conditionalities, inter alia (DFID, 2004; ODI, 2007; Tortajada, 2010).

It should be highlighted that all these main drivers of change are structural ones. Elements related to local political culture or the rational agency of the actors is either ignored or ‘structuralized’ in their approach and under names like “*economic and social structures*”, “*history of state formation*” or “*state-market relations*” (ODI, 2007). But in the case of the Gulf monarchies for instance, where power is so personalized (Al-Dhahiri, 2005), can a

research afford to neglect the agency of key actors such as the ruler or the Crown Prince? Furthermore the recent comparative governance literature has shown that cultural practices and traditions are at the core of the making of governance (Bevir and Rhodes, 2010; DiGaetano and Strom, 2003; Pierre, 2005) and, this thesis argues, of its remaking by reforms. Bevir and Rhodes (2006; 2010) even argued that studies on governance should focus on the practices of governance, because they originate from actions that express beliefs shaped by traditions (2010, pp. 20-21 and 157-158).

IV – Governance, ruling traditions and change in the Gulf monarchies, a critical review

This section will review complementary bodies of literature on the influences of the political culture in the GCC region, identify clear gaps and orient the thesis' general research. Because there is relatively little literature investigating these elements in the Gulf monarchies compared to the rest of the Arab and Islamic world, particularly Egypt, Jordan and Syria, this section has a broad geographic scope but focuses on the changing popular views on economic liberalism and the role of the market and on how culture and rentierism affect institutional change.

IV.1 A critical approach to the influences of political culture on institutional change, entrepreneurship and the role of the market in Arab countries

Working on long-term political trends and traditions, medieval historian Lewis (2002) argued that Islamic countries were generally backward in modern times due to their incapacity to reform politically, legally and culturally. More generally Islamic religiosity, Lewis states, impedes Muslims to absorb new ideas and concepts or to innovate. Innovation itself, *bid'a* in Arabic, is seen by Islamic orthodoxy as a major sin (Lewis, 2002). This idea of an Islamic cultural burden deterring reforms and change gained much recognition among influential authors, such as Huntington (1996) or – in a different manner – Fukuyama (2011), who

argued that tribalism and sectarianism in Islamic countries are an obstacle to the rule of law and accountability.

There is a consensus in the Islamic Work Ethic (IWE) literature that time-honored Islamic interpretations and Arab traditions place emphasis on group loyalty and respect for the family (e.g. Ali, 1988; Chapra, 1983; Carney, 1983; Nasr, 1984). But with few ethical provisions, the Shariah and its interpretations are not against innovative entrepreneurship, risk-taking and economic liberalism. Research on the role and influences of work ethics over economic change have been initiated in the West by Weber at the beginning of the 20th C., and gave birth to the concept of ‘Protestant Work Ethics’ (PWE). In the second half of the 20th C., a number of studies explored the significance of the Islamic work ethic (IWE), first theoretically (e.g. Ali, 1988; Carney, 1983; Chapra, 1983; Nasr, 1984)¹⁸, more recently in empirical research, for instance on organizational change (e.g. Yousef, 2000; Rees and Althakhri, 2008) or through Muslims’ new and more opened attitudes *vis à vis* entrepreneurship and the markets (e.g. Adaş, 2008; Haenni, 2004; Husam and Haenni, 2003; 2007; Madoui, 2012; Rudnyckyj, 2009).

Scholars from fields as diverse as religious anthropology, political economy or Post-colonial studies have participated in the deconstruction and critique of the Orientalist political culture approach. Clifford Geertz (1974), Edward Said (1978; 2001; 2004b), Noam Chomsky (2005) and Lisa Anderson (1987; 1991) to name but a few, have significantly delegitimized this scholarship, demonstrating how Lewis’ (e.g. 2002; 2004) and Huntington’s (e.g. 1994; 1998) assumptions and theories are generalizing, ethnocentric, teleological and deterministic in their approach to culture. There is moreover a significant literature demonstrating that Islamic thought has not stopped developing during the European Renaissance (Bektovic,

¹⁸ Theoretical works on IWE extract from the religious primary sources (the Quran and sunnah) and from religious scholars’ teaching a set values – some general, others explicitly work-related – to construct a normative and inspirational system of conduct for Muslims *vis à vis* working.

2012; Bouamrane et Gardet [1984], 2002; Kamrava et al., 2006; 2011; Nasr, 1968; Roy, 1998), and a growing literature on the integration into the economic structures of new tools and ideas. For instance Kuran (2011) - though a notable critic of *Shariah* in modern times¹⁹ - noted that Islamic scholars had not necessarily been against innovation in business historically. He argued that “*once borrowed from abroad along with supporting institutions, [foreign business concepts were] absorbed into local legal systems without notable resistance*” (2011, p. 142). This is confirmed by Owen’s (2004) work on contemporary history of the neoliberal reforms in the Near-East (but not in the Gulf region) which began in the mid-1970s, during which Al-Azhar and other Islamic universities did not oppose the Chicago School’s ideas. The problem, Kuran (2011) contended, was not Islam’s incapacity to absorb European concepts or to replicate modern institutions, but a lack of capital accumulation due to the Muslim egalitarian heritage law and the relative delay in adopting Western economic tools and institutions due to the structures of Muslims’ commercial enterprises: predominantly family ones²⁰.

Over the past two decades, a number of factors have produced deep transformations in terms of interpretations of Islam in the Middle East, and consequently in the approach to Islamic work ethics and the role of the markets in the national economies. Against a background of revival of Islamic religiosity in the Arab world (Abdo, 2000; Owen, 2004, chapter 9), the multiplication of Islam-related TV channels broadcasting over the Arab world popular preachers with managerial backgrounds, ideas and market-oriented values (such as Amr Khaled in Egypt or Tariq Swaydan in Kuwait) have participated in the transformation of the IWE and popular views on economic orientations (Haenni and Tammam, 2003; Haenni,

¹⁹ Timur Kuran’s main work to explain Muslim countries’ economic underperformance in modern time is entitled ‘*The Long Divergence: How Islamic Law Held Back the Middle East*’, Princeton University Press, 2011.

²⁰ Kuran (2011) explains that this delay owed much to Muslim enterprises’ family structure since it led to lesser capacities to compete with Western companies in terms of investments, innovation and commercial expansion.

2005). There has been a gradual shift away from an Islamic militancy in conflict with state politics²¹ (Abdo, 2000; Lauzière, 2005), towards a more self-centred and market-oriented Islamic culture (Haenni and Tammam, 2003; Haenni, 2005). While Arab socialism and post-independence national ideologies advocated for a strong modern state and state-centred modernization (Owen, 2004), the new paradigm of ‘market Islam’ advocates for something radically opposed to it.

Haenni (2005) described and conceptualized a new massive cultural phenomenon, also observed in Turkey and Southeast Asia, that he called “*Islam de marché*”. He concisely defined it as:

“A new value system which is taking place in the Muslim world around three elements: overture to the market culture (which calls for self-realization and spreads an ethics of winner in the religious consciences), moral rigor and, finally, mistrust, maybe hostility towards the Welfare state.”²²

In the Indonesian context, Rudnycky (2009) argued that Market Islam was even purposefully “*designed to merge Muslim religious practice and capitalist ethics*” by the most influential preachers, thus “*eliciting the ethical dispositions conducive to economic liberalism*”. Atia (2011) goes further than the idea of reconciling or facilitating the encounter of liberal market economy and Islam. Evocating a ‘pious neoliberalism’, she demonstrated with case studies in Cairo how this religious nonviolent ideology “*promote(s) financial*

²¹ Over a decade before the Arab spring, prior to the election of the AK Party in Turkey, a significant literature on the theme of post-Islamism in diverse Islamic contexts was produced, see for instance Kepel, 2000; Roy, 1998; 2002; Roy et Haenni, 1999; Roy et Khosrokhavar, 1999; Shadid, 2000). These authors acknowledge however that some Islamists can choose violent means - rather than post-Islamism’s compromises - as a reaction to the failures of the 1980s’ and 1990s’ islamist revolutionary attempts.

²² As translated from “(...) *un nouveau système de valeurs qui se met en place dans le monde musulman autour de trois éléments: l’ouverture à la culture de marché (qui appelle à la réalisation de soi et distille une éthique de battant dans les consciences religieuses), la rigueur morale et, enfin, la méfiance, voire l’hostilité, à l’égard de l’Etat-providence*”. Extract from ‘L’islam et le nouvel esprit du capitalisme, entretien avec Patrick Haenni’, François Lantz, 2006, Alternatives Economiques n° 243 - January 2006.

investment, entrepreneurship, and business skills as important components of religiosity” (Atia, 2011).

Haenni (2005) and Husam and Haenni (2007) argued that these market-oriented interpretations of Islam stemmed from interactions between Islam and the “*new spirit of capitalism*” (see Boltanski et al., 2000; Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005) and that it has been extensively drawing from the Anglophone management literature and from the economic paradigm known as neoliberalism.

Religiosity in Muslim countries is a factor that has affected values towards entrepreneurship and the role of the markets, in ways that have significantly evolved in recent decades. A more structural factor is often articulated to explain the gap between the Western forms of modernity, characterized by economic liberalism and democratic participation, and the Gulf political and economic realities.

IV.2 – Rentierism and the states’ historical economic paradigmatic shift

IV.2.a – Emergence and hegemony of the rentier paradigm

Since the 1970s, social scientists have increasingly attributed the Arab countries’ main economic and political issues to a structural factor, the rentier nature of their political and economic systems. Rentier states are generally defined as polities that receive most of the State’s revenues from abroad, on a regular basis, for the exploitation of a national resource, such as uranium in Niger or natural gas in Bolivia, or for a service, like shipping passage through Panama’s canal or the accommodation of foreign troops in Djibouti. The concept was originally crafted by political economists (e.g. Mabro, 1969; Mahdavy 1970) analyzing Northern African and Middle Eastern states whose revenues were largely coming from oil exportations.

In the post-independence context of the 1950s and 1960s, several countries of the MENA region benefitted from increasingly large revenues from oil concessions and nationalized oil companies. Mahdavy considered the 1950s as a period of paradigmatic change in the economic history of the region. Building on the Iranian case of fast-paced modernization through State expansion, Mahdavy (1970) generalized this political pattern of “*fortuitus Etatism*” financed by oil revenues to the whole region. Like many scholars at that time, Mahdavy did not consider the small polities of Abu Dhabi, Kuwait and Qatar deserved academic attention. But their full independence (1961 for Kuwait, 1971 for Abu Dhabi and Qatar) and the oil shocks of 1973 and 1979 led to a change of the general academic opinion. Over the decades, these countries have grown and gained much strategic importance on the international energy stage. A point clearly illustrated by the 1990 world mobilization over the fate of invaded Kuwait.

Beblawi (1990) proposed four criteria to define a rentier state that perfectly reflect the conditions of Kuwait, Qatar and Abu Dhabi. Beblawi’s (1990, pp. 87-88) criteria are as follows:

- The oil and gas rent situation clearly predominates the economy;
- The origin of the rent revenues is foreign;
- Only few of the active population is involved in the generation of this rent, while most work in the distribution or utilization of it;
- The State is the main recipient of the external rent.

Though oil revenues have financed impressive development achievements in most Gulf countries, such as universal water connection and electricity supply, modern education and modern hospitals, the notion of rentierism in the Arab Middle East also refers to poor economic efficiency and authoritarian political governance.

IV.2.b - Rentierism, economic reforms and limited political participation in Arab monarchies

The political literature on the Arab world explains most often the absence of democracy in the region by their political economy, and primarily the rentier state paradigm (e.g. Anderson, 1987; Beblawi, 1990; Crystal, 1995; Gray, 2011; Luciani, 1988, 1990; Vandewalle, 1998). Matsunaga (2000) underlined two key features of the rentier literature which are used to explain this situation: as the rentier state does not need to tax its population - due to sufficient rent revenues – it is consequently under no obligation nor even supposed to be accountable to its citizens (e.g. Anderson, 1987; Luciani, 1994; 1995; Chaudry, 1997). In other words, from its fiscal autonomy structurally stems its political autonomy. The second theoretical point is that the rentier state is protected from democratic aspirations from its society because the redistribution policy tends to depoliticize it (e.g. Najmabadi, 1987; 1993; Crystal, 1994; 1995; Gause, 1997).

Often summed up by reversing the American revolutionary motto “*no representation without taxation*”, this literature essentially relies on the idea that the redistribution of the rent revenues and the absence of taxes are trade-offs that enable the authorities to rule without real popular demand for participation. This literature generally concludes that rentier states will not liberalize nor democratize as long as their political economy remains characterized by rentierism, unless, argued Luciani (1994, pp. 131-132), a durable budgetary crisis – due to very low rent revenues - forces the state to deeply reform.

The Arab countries of the Middle East, including the oil exporting rentier states, have undergone various economic reforms since the 1970s, 1980s or 1990s, varying across different countries. Owen (2004) shed light on the region’s liberalisation dichotomy and underlined that all these state policies of liberal overture were noticeably confined to the economic sector (with privatisations of state assets and public private partnerships in many

fields), while the governments remained characterized by autocratic practices. The interpretations of the political elites' ambitions behind this regional wave of economic liberalisations are diverse.

These economic and trade reforms, generally referred to as '*Infitah*' (overture in Arabic), had their roots in the Egyptian departure from the State-centered 'Arab socialism'. This radical shift under Sadat in 1974, aimed to trigger foreign investments and generate greater economic outcomes, according to Springborg (1986). Despite disappointing results in Egypt, it has gradually reached the whole Arab region. During a period of depressed oil prices, some authors, like Moore (1986), had argued that the market-oriented reforms were not meant to free entrepreneurship and stimulate the markets first and foremost, but could be perceived as "*primarily a political tactic for sustaining authoritarian regimes*" (1986, p.634) during difficult times. Some authors however consider that the Arab rentier regimes have been struggling to reform their poorly efficient rentier economies with continuing liberalization reforms. For instance Gray (2011) explains that the GCC rentier state is "*more entrepreneurial, supportive of development, and responsive than it was previously*" (2011, p.23), because there is an awareness, particularly in the UAE, Kuwait and Qatar, "*that more active and entrepreneurial state capitalism can assist in providing state longevity, both through the derivation of new forms of wealth and as an alternative to politically-risky neoliberal economic liberalization*" (Gray, 2011, p.21).

By 2000, Moore and Springborg (2000) had already described them as 'globalizing monarchies' that had to be differentiated from the rest of the Arab world, because of the sustained and growing role attributed to the market forces. But because of the impact of the GCC's overture to globalization in recent decades, of the fast demographic growth, of the ambition to duplicate the Dubai model and of "*a maturing of the state and its view of rents*" (2011, p.19), Gray (2011) considers that the GCC monarchies' experience a new political

economic paradigm that he calls ‘late rentierism’. This theory features however a number of fundamental flaws. First, the small Gulf states have always been shaped by globalisation. Established as small ports along the Gulf, they were by the late 19th century trading nodes between the Indian Ocean, Iraq, central Arabia, the Red Sea and Eastern Africa. They have always faced positive and negative impacts of globalization: e.g. the destruction of the local pearl industry in the 1930s due to Japan’s new pearls of culture; the end of oil development during World War II; the Cold War being waged in Southern and Southeastern Arabia; the 1973 boom in oil revenues, etc. The Gulf states’ political history and economic development have been produced by globalization for over a century and there is no radical ‘new overture’ since the 1990s.

Moreover, and despite Dubai’s development of a post-oil economy, the ‘Dubai model’ is not so attractive among the ruling elites of Doha, Abu Dhabi and Kuwait. Dubai is seen as a vulnerable entity – particularly after the 2009 collapse of its real estate market – where more than 90% of the population is foreign, where there is no food security, no army and a notion of sovereignty shared de facto and de jure with the richer emirate of Abu Dhabi; a situation that no GCC state can find appealing.

Concerning state capitalism, a broad if not vague notion, it has always been known in the Gulf. The ruling elites of the GCC small states have always supported the development of private businesses - including foreign ones in a number of sectors - with which they often shared the benefits (see e.g. Head Bey, 1999; Lienhardt, 2001). Only some sectors, such as electricity and water production, were considered as strategic and thus restricted to public economic actors, particularly during the post-independence period (I.e. 1960s- 1980s).

Last but not least, Gray’s (2011) idea of a ‘late rentierism’ assumes that these economic reforms precede the end of rentierism. But this is pure speculation. In the 1960s,

Samuel Huntington already predicted that the oil exporting Arab monarchies were to disappear, since their monarchical nature made them anachronistic features ready to collapse in modern times (see Herb, 1999, Introduction). Half a century later, the small Arab (and rentier) monarchies of the Gulf constitute some of the richest countries in the world. And it can be reasonably doubted that the populations of Kuwait, Qatar or the UAE are eager to pay taxes anytime soon. In reality, the Gulf countries are more likely to experience an iterative process of adaptation of their rentier system to new circumstances than to abandon it completely in a few years or even a few decades.

Matsunaga (2000) demonstrated that the whole literature on rentierism and authoritarianism was based on fragile assumptions. It generally argues that the rentier State remains autonomous and distant from its society, but Matsunaga explained that the needs of rent redistribution (through state jobs, welfare services and subsidies) actually made the state increasingly implicated in social affairs. Furthermore, the literature's state-centered and non-interactive approaches did not integrate the agency of civil society and related actors while, Matsunaga argued a decade ago, citizens could articulate democratic demands from a variety of motivations, despite the powerful state's resource allocation strategies and coercion capacities (2000, p.54). A decade after, the recent Arab spring revolutions demonstrated the validity of this argument. Even in Kuwait, there were strikes for salary increases and demands for extended parliamentary powers, but there were not slogans calling for "*isqât al-nidhâm*" ("*the fall of the regime*") as chanted by demonstrators from the streets of Tunis in 2010 to those of Syria today. Interestingly, these revolutions have left essentially unaffected the political structures of the rentier polities of Abu Dhabi and Qatar. Is it because their comprehensive welfare states can 'buy' political stability?

Among other essential urban services, these polities have managed to continuously deliver drinking water to all their inhabitants at good-quality standards, very low cost in

Kuwait, even for free to the Nationals of Qatar and Abu Dhabi. These undeniable achievements are all the more remarkable for they happened against an environmental background of aridity and absence of surface water, and the global background that most international development organizations characterized as a “*world water crisis*”, generally attributed to a “*problem of governance*” (e.g. GWP, 2000, p. 17; UNESCO, 2003, p. 370; 2006, p. 45; DFID, 2006; UNDP, 2006, p. 89).

Despite their success achievements in their “*hydraulic mission*”, the GCC countries began in the second half of the 1990s to change their approach to the water sector, attributing a growing role to the private sector, essentially through PPPs (Dumortier and Lambert, 2007; NCBC, 2009) and project financing (Danoffre, 2004). But no literature has empirically researched the underlying reasons of these market-oriented reforms in the GCC countries.

From 1982 to 1999, overall low to very low oil revenues challenged the GCC rentier states to sustain their redistributive model developed in the 1970s. A significant number of Structuralists articulated the idea that a fall in oil revenues creates a budget crisis which, in the medium to long term, dangerously affects the functioning, legitimacy and stability of the rentier system (e.g. Al-Rumaihi, 1996; Hunter, 1986; Karl, 1997; Najem, 2003; Roberts, 1987; Sick, 1998). By 1995, economist Jasim Al-Saadun had estimated that the budget deficit of the six GCC governments in 1989-93 had reached \$135.3 billion²³. The worst was yet to come. Oil prices declined until they reached in August 1998 their lowest level of the post-1973 oil era, at only 10 US dollars per barrel. The literature generally argued that the rentier states - in order to avoid any dramatic fallout during that period – were pushed towards the liberalisation of their rentier political and economic systems they could not finance anymore (Brynen, 1992; Ehteshami, 2003; Gause, 2002; Lucciani, 1994; Quilliam, 2003). But is it

²³ Al-Saadun, Jasim, 1995, Gulf Development Forum, 15th annual conference, Dubai, Jan. 19-20, 1995. Cited in Al-Rumaihi, 1996.

what has driven the process of water privatisation in the small GCC polities such as Qatar, Kuwait or the UAE? In this privatisation process, what was the role of their respective local political cultures? What is the general influence of the political culture on the drinking water supply governance in the GCC?

V - Influences of Arabian political cultural features on potable water supply governance

Some social scientists have investigated, more or less directly, the broad nexus between culture, societal organization and water management in modern time Arabia²⁴ (e.g. Brunner, 2000; Dresch, 1993; Lancaster and Lancaster, 1999; Lichtenthäler, 2003; Al-Sulaimani et al., 2007; Al-Tikriti, 2002; Wilkinson, 1977). On the other hand the modern water governance in urban areas - where is concentrated the majority of the GCC populations - suffers from a dearth of research which has left particularly under-explored the relations between GCC political culture and water services governance.

In the following sub-sections some elements of the literature on Islam's influence over water management and water governance will be briefly presented along complementary insights from religious figures from the GCC. Observations on the literature of rentierism and Arabness will be made, prior to reviewing the main debates on the nexus linking tribalism, societal organization and water governance in modern Arabia.

V.1 - Islam and change in water governance in the Arabian Peninsula

In the 1990s, several major IOs such as the World Bank, the FAO and national development institutions such as the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) began to integrate spiritual and religious dimensions, including Islamic ones, into their development projects on water

²⁴ Since Kuwait (City), Doha and the island of Abu Dhabi have not known any continuous settlement prior to the 17th century, we will review here only the literature addressing Arabia's modern times, beginning for Kuwait around 1750 as defined by Abu Hakima (2004). The focus will particularly be on the most documented late 19th and 20th century and all archeological debates will be avoided if they are not directly useful to the research on the drivers of change in water governance in Kuwait City, Doha and Abu Dhabi in 1990s and early 2000s.

management (Faruqui, 2001). The idea was to go beyond the mere description and analysis of the water usages in Muslim countries, as had been undertaken by the FAO in the 1970s.²⁵ The ambition was to understand the cultural specificities and avoid the repeated under-achievements and failures of the one-size-fits-all approach to water development of the previous decades. As will be shown in this first section, the Islamic element of the GCC cultures has played a role in the definition and redefinition of the water governance models that needs to be acknowledged, as well as its clear limitations.

Religious figures interviewed in Abu Dhabi and Doha explained that all Islamic treaties of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence and positive law) refer at a moment or another to water. The role of water is important in Islamic beliefs and rituals, as well as to the poetry, literature, architecture, arts and technologies of the major civilizations that it has deeply inspired, from Moorish Spain to Moghol India, including the Abbasids of Mesopotamia and Safavid Persia (see also Blair, Bloom et al. 2009; Faruqui, Biswas and Bino, 2001). The Quran itself attributes to water a life-giving function. For instance the Islamic revelation states that “(...) *We have made of water everything living, will they not then believe?*” (Quran 21:30), or also: “*and Allah has sent down water from the cloud and therewith given life to the earth after its death; most surely there is a sign in this for a people who would listen*” (Quran 16:65). The words water, gardens and rivers appear many times in the Holy Book and present water as the Almighty’s gift and mercy towards mankind (Lings, 1968, pp.1-5).

Orientalism (most Western scholarship on Arabia until the development of Post-colonial studies) conventionally attributed this important presence of water in religious texts to the “*desert*” origins of the Islamic revelation, as can still be found in some writings (e.g. Caponera, 2001; De Chatel, 2002). According to this tradition, the geographic determinism produced a fatalistic Arab perspective towards water, since only Allah’s unpredictable wish

²⁵ The FAO published two volumes entitled *Water Laws in Moslem Countries* in 1973 and 1976, under the direction of Dante Caponera.

could provide it or not (see for instance Meschin, 1954, chapter 1). But this discourse proves erroneous on several factual grounds that are of importance for this research. As to the idea of water fatalism of Arabs, recent studies prove that this was true for the destitute pastoralist nomads, but only as long as they remained pastoralists²⁶. Town dwellers (today over 95% of the six GCC nations), experiencing different conditions, have always actively worked on developing water works of diverse technological complexities for a continuous urban supply to satisfy both physiological needs and religious demand, with no passive reliance on God's mercy as argued by nomads-centered orientalists.

The orientalists' claim of "*Islam's desert origins*" is also erroneous since the revelation of Islam came out of the city of Mecca, in the mountainous region of Hedjaz, where water is not as scarce as in the central plateaux and desert steppes. The continuous local presence of water has enabled the fulfilment in Mecca of a religious requirement of freshwater for Islamic rituals that has since spread across the world. This constituted a driver to the development of urban water supplies: the daily requirement of sufficient freshwater for ritual ablutions and hygiene, with the minimum of one minor ablution per day for all adults and a complete bath per week (literally head to toe) on all Fridays. In a medieval city like Baghdad, which reached over a million inhabitants in the 10th century, the Islamic duty of urban water supply implied advanced water skills, technologies and governance system.

A further Islamic driver for hydraulic works has been a strong incentive emanating from the legal system of water governance: *al-zakat*, i.e. the religious solidarity tax. Its rate is unanimously recognized among Sunni schools of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence and positive law) as 10% for the yields of a non-irrigated field or crop, while irrigated ones are only taxed

²⁶ See for instance Al-Zobi's (1999, pp.45-46) interviews of Kuwaiti bedouins on their sedentarization rationale.

a half of it, at 5%²⁷. In addition developing water works are a strong moral incentive for agricultural initiatives that could benefit any living creature, but especially the poor (Caponera, 1973; 1992; Faruqui, 2001). Generosity of water is particularly praised by Islam. A *hadith* (a narration of Prophet Muhammad's deeds, sayings or approvals) stated it in explicit terms: "*the best of charity is to provide water*" (reported by Ibn Maja). According to Islam furthermore, no tribe, family or individual could refuse the 'right to thirst' (*Huquq al-sharb*) to a person in need of it. Sometimes the presence of some *awqâf* (religious endowments) such as a *mâ-sabîl* (a water fountain for the needy and travellers) ensured that no one from the local *ummah* (community; the collective social unit in classical Islam) was responsible for providing the destitute who were instead supported by the community²⁸. These *awqâfs* and small fountains show that when there was no state public services, in small settlements or among nomads, there was nevertheless the Islamic fundamental notion of *maslahat al-nâs* (the people's interest) being implemented through an individual or collective act of generosity for the collective well being.

This is this 'people's interest' principle that has led Faruqui (2001) and Madfei (2009) to assert that market principles such as the full cost recovery or privatisation are permissible in Islam provided that "*water pricing is equitable and efficient and that the government ensures equity in pricing and service*" (Madfei, 2009). Faruqui (2003) advanced that for this purpose the best framework was the PPP in which the State remains the leading actor and can manage prices and strategies in this mixed enterprise to defend the collective interests and those of the poorest.

²⁷ This is mentioned in all books of Sunni jurisprudence and positive law which deal - completely or partly - with irrigation waters. See for instance Al-Mawardi's or Abu Ya'la's chapters on irrigation in their respective reference books on (medieval) Islamic governance, both entitled *Ahkâm al-sultaniya* (the rules of governance, chapter 15).

²⁸ See for instance Guingand's (2009) short work on the cartography of the wells and the cultural analysis of the tradition of the *mâ'sabîl* in Kuwait prior to the oil era.

The concrete influence shariah legislation has over local water rights has been documented in some ethnographic works. Most particularly, Islamic egalitarian principles and the fundamental principle of justice influenced the repartition of lands and water rights. Especially through the Islamic prohibition of a monopoly over water and through the inheritance system: all sons and daughters must inherit from their parents, generally leading to a division of the assets. Wilkinson's (1977, pp.144-147) description of its influence on rural Omani communities exemplifies this well.

There are however limitations to the influence of Islam over the water usage and management in Arabia, and particularly in the GCC coastal cities. For instance the unambiguous stance of the Islamic corpus and Islamic scholars interviewed against any wastage or exuberant consumption of water and other resources (see Ennajar, 1999, chapter 11, pp. 285-300) has to be contrasted with today's immense consumption footprints of GCC inhabitants²⁹, which are closer to South-western American consumption patterns than any Islamic ideal.

More fundamentally, whilst Schiffler (2001, p.454) agrees with Faruqi and Al-Jayyousi (2001) that Islam is theoretically compatible with modern principles of water management, as formulated in the 1992 Dublin and Rio texts, Schiffler reproaches them however to "*overestimate the importance of Islam for water management in Muslim countries*". He explains for instance that most often "*legislation, institutions, tariffs and other key aspects of national water management are similar to and often inspired by western models*" (Schiffler, 2001, p.454). The Islamic scholars interviewed in Abu Dhabi and Doha explained indeed that they were not consulted on water legislation or on matters of politics generally. When the author asked whether the Gulf States had gone against the Islamic

²⁹ The WWF (2012) Living Planet report ranked Qatar, Kuwait and the UAE respectively number 1, 2 and 3 in terms of largest ecological footprint per capita in the world.

prohibition of a water monopoly at the time of water nationalisation, all scholars replied that this was allowed following the above-mentioned principle of *maslahat al-nâs* (the people's interest). Islamic orthodoxy therefore, as explained by the scholars interviewed, does not propose a rigid or exclusivist dogma for water affairs, but rather broad guidelines, essentially of a moral order, with few strict prohibitions such as a monopoly over water for private interests or the use of contaminated waters for ritual ablutions.

Faruqui et al (2001) and Schiffler (2001) indirectly support this idea of Islam proposing no precise model nor strict guidelines for water management: the former underlining the religious freedom to reuse treated sewage effluents (TSEs) contrary to popular belief, and the latter highlighting the “*substantial diversity of customary water rights*” in rural areas of Islamic countries, many of which predate Islam by centuries but were integrated into it since custom (‘*urf*’) is considered a valid source of Islamic jurisprudence (see also Caponera, 1973; 1976; 2001). Schiffler concludes that “*water management at the national level in Islamic countries is rarely inspired by Islam*” (2001, p.455). Other forces, such as the British influence or tribalism, seem to have played a significantly greater role in defining water governance. Even if this seems counter-intuitive to those unfamiliar with this thinking, who perceive an Islamic *altérité* in Arabian cities (e.g. the numerous mosques and regular prayer calls, specific eating habits and gender traditions), the less apparent but underlying social force and proper values of tribalism particularly have been playing a fundamental role in water governance and even more in framing the social political setting it depends on as will be expounded in later chapters. As Kilcullen (2007) aptly summarized, “*Islam (...) is a key identity marker when dealing with non-Muslim outsiders, but when all involved are Muslim, kinship trumps religion.*”

V.2 - The agency of tribalism in Arabia's models of water governance

The modern literature on the culture, societal organization/politics and water governance nexus has particularly researched the rural areas of Yemen and Oman, essentially their mountainous regions where heavy water works have been serving irrigation and drinking purposes for centuries, in some cases millenia (e.g. Brunner, 2000; Dresch, 1993; Lancaster and Lancaster, 1999; Lichtenthäler, 2003; Al-Sulaimani et al., 2007; Al-Tikriti, 2002; Wilkinson, 1977). When linking tribalism and water politics in Arabia, the literature investigated particularly how changes in political structures have led to drastic societal changes and affected water usages and strategies. With a long historical perspective, Wilkinson (1977) argued that the shift from an imperial (Persian) political system toward a tribal form of governance could only lead to the decline of the most complex hydraulic infrastructures. His analysis was built upon the slow deterioration of the most complex Persian Qanat hydraulic systems (Arabic *aflāj*) in the piedmonts of Southeastern Arabia. But he relied on two debatable assumptions: that complex aflaj technology and know-how were initially imported from Persia and on Wittfogel's (1957) theory of 'Oriental despotism'. This one claims that in Oriental regions aridity required major water works that only 'hydraulic civilizations' with large, learned and powerful state bureaucracies could provide, at the cost of an "*oriental despotism*" (Wittfogel³⁰, 1956; 1957). If it is well established that Achaemenid and Sassanid Persian dynasties occupied most of Oman and built complex water works over several centuries there, Al-Tikriti (2002) demonstrated with archaeological evidence that

³⁰ A large scholarship addressed the multifaceted flaws of Wittfogel's (1957) 'Oriental Despotism', ranging from "*theoretical and terminological weaknesses*" in the use of notions of 'total power', 'despotism' and 'feudalism' (Friedrich, 1958, p.351), undocumented and historically unsupported assertions over Ceylon (e.g. Leach, 1959; Needham, 1959), negligence of historical unofficial counter-powers to the State in Persia (Abrahamian, 1974) and more generally, the ideological biases of the whole work (Needham, 1959) that has been seen by some as the continuity of a "*semi-rational [intellectual] tradition*" (Vidal-Naquet, 1964, p.532). On this two latter points, it should also be highlighted that Wittfogel – who never dissimulated his stiff anti-communism during the Cold War – attributed borders to its 'Oriental Despotism' that reached Central America and were strikingly similar to those of the camp of Communist, Socialist and non-aligned countries. Unsurprisingly, NATO member Turkey and pro-NATO Japan are found to be not hydraulic societies, based here again on scantily documented historical reasons.

some of Oman's earliest aflaj may have predated by almost two centuries the oldest Achaemenid infrastructures. Because pre-achaemenid Oman is thought to have followed a tribal social-political organization, Al-Tikriti's (2002) findings seem to empirically undermine the theory of the need for imperialistic (Wilkinson) and/or despotic (Wittfogel) political rule and state bureaucracy to build large and complex water works for irrigation and potable water. On the other hand, one may argue, when constructed and operational, large-scale water infrastructures require large, learned and powerful state bureaucracies for maintenance and its financing, thereby favouring the development and the continuous need of an oriental despotism.

From a Gulf perspective, Fernea (1970) argued that in Southern Iraq the fall of the Abbasid Caliphate and re-surfacing of tribal forms of local communitarian governance did not lead to a significant decline in irrigation and potable water infrastructures and that some local improvements were even observed, thereby weakening the argument of a uni-causal and deterministic correlation between centralized authoritarian bureaucratic power and hydraulic sophistication or large-scale capabilities, at least on the Arab side of the Gulf region. On the Iranian side of the Gulf, Molle et al. (2004) found that these debates were left without any firm or consensual answer. Two main elements drawn from this short review are nevertheless useful for this research:

- The debates on the changes of water paradigms in Arabia or the Gulf region portray tribalism as a social consequence of a negative larger political change (e.g. the fall or withdrawal of an empire), but never as a driver of structural political change or elaborated water policies, nor as a functioning main component of a large-scale and elaborate water governance.
- The literature does not attribute to cultural features such as religion or official language any major role over the evolution of water governance. This leads us to wonder whether tribalism or any other main feature of the Arabian political cultures

(e.g. Arabness, Islam, the rentier culture, British and Western political influences) has represented any direct or significant influence over modern local water policies? If so, how exactly? As to the more market-oriented reforms in water governance, have these political cultural elements been acting as drivers of change? And what counter-forces or barriers were there to it?

V.3 – Any role for Arabness or oil rentierism on water governance in Arabia?

Not all cultural aspects of the Arabian rural societies have benefitted from the same academic interest. Tribalism has been by far the most explored social-political feature found. Though the local Arabic discourses over water management and the etymology of key terms have regularly been touched upon and even well documented over the last three decades (e.g. Varisco, 2004), the influence of Arabness or rentierism over water governance to the contrary are often not evoked at all, or only appear of secondary importance in the literature, and are generally used to emphasize the role of another cultural feature. Lancaster and Lancaster (1999) for instance have deeply explored Yemeni tribesmen's Arabic discourse (in a Foucauldian sense) in which, they argue, the tribe is perceived as an identity that provides access to a social structure and various processes, which in turns affect water and land rights and usages. But a more direct role or possible direct agency of the Arabic language upon the water governance remains to be investigated.

The impact of oil revenues appears in the literature as a distant but feared threat over local tribal water management, infrastructures maintenance and sustainability (e.g. Wilkinson 1977; Lichtenthäler, 2003). Due for instance to the abandonment of villages and the increasing use of motorized wells in Northern Oman's mountains (Wilkinson, 1977) or the fear that oil-powerful central States could nationalize some tribal communities' land and water resources property and customary rights in the rural areas of Northeastern Yemen (Lichtenthäler, 2003). In tribal ownership systems, infrastructures are owned by the local community but

water rights belong to individuals. These rights can be traded, inherited, rented or given, according to both Islamic and tribal customs (see Caponera, 2001).

Concerning the impact of oil revenues' over a more urban population's water affairs in the GCC, this has been seriously neglected by researchers, with Limbert's (2001) anthropological study in a small Omani city in the rural interior offering a rare glimpse into the psycho-social impact upon the Nationals' representations of fetched water and traditional (i.e. pre-oil) management. This is imbued with nostalgia for a fantasized period associated with genuine identity and traditions. Limbert (2001) shows that this nostalgia and veneration of 'traditions' and traditional artefacts lead to short *ad hoc* practices of traditional water use, such as animals fetching water at a newly renovated 'traditional' well, but without challenging the radically different modern water consumption patterns or threatening the local water governance system. Strong drivers of change have transformed the water governance from the pre-oil era and it appears that nostalgia, though being widespread among Khalijees (i.e. the inhabitants of the Gulf countries), is not a counterforce strong enough to drive back the current water usages that the oil and gas wealth has enabled in the GCC.

VI - Hydrocarbons, regional energy integration and massive desalination in the GCC

If there seems to be a consensus that water and energy constitute two major drivers of change in human living conditions (e.g. Roberts, 2006; Wilkie, 2007), there is however little empirical literature on how one of these resources constitutes a driver of change for the governance of the other. In the Gulf region for instance, there has been no consideration of how regional energy integration has affected the market-led reforms of the governance of desalination, despite its reliance on massive energy supply. Has regional energy integration been a driver of change for the governance of desalination? If so, how exactly? Has it supported its liberalisation? Has it played against it in any way? Investigating the literature on

regional energy integration can help better understand the rationale and expected outcomes of this regional dynamic on desalination governance reforms, in the Gulf cities and beyond. This is the focus of this last section of research review, to complete the framing of the work described in this thesis.

VI.1 - Regional energy cooperation, integration, and economic growth

The relation between economic integration, infrastructure and economic growth has been researched for many years and is now well documented. Considerable research emerged during the 1990s (e.g. Blomstrom and Kokko, 1997; Moreno et al., 1997; Vamvadikis, 1998; Canning, 1999) and it is now established that an unambiguous relationship exists between economic integration and economic growth, with a positive correlation at the regional scale.

Much research was specifically devoted to regional energy cooperation and/or integration, highlighting particularly their positive economic and environmental outcomes (e.g. Schiff and Winters, 2002; Gandara, 2007; Castile et al., 2008). Regional energy cooperation and integration programs aim to optimize the use of a polity's energy resources and comparative advantage within a given region. Regional resources can be perceived as a regional pool (though never being a commons property) to be mutually exploited for a shared, but differentiated, interest. For instance instead of flaring natural gas associated to oil reserves, developing countries such as Nigeria, Iraq or Azerbaijan may embark on regional projects with neighbouring energy-poor countries to create new outlets for their surplus of energy resources, while providing cheaper and more reliable energy to their neighbours. The theoretical goal is the optimization of the energy resources regionally available for the end of greater economic outcomes - in a very broad sense.

Regional energy cooperation and regional energy integration, though often confused, do not refer to the same regionalization paradigms. The former is generally made through bilateral (in this case state to state), time-limited and well-regulated agreements. The latter is developed through the gradual formation of a single and deregulated market, generally in an irreversible manner. In other words, regional energy cooperation is a circumstance-dependent cooperation among sovereign national energy sectors, while regional energy integration requires an advanced form of liberalisation, the gradual merger of pre-existing domestic markets and a transfer of responsibilities towards a trans-national body in charge of supervision and regulation. In this case the governance of the resource becomes multi-scale.

VI. 2 - The debated reform of energy sovereignty and the liberal nature of regional energy integration

Those against regional energy integration portray it as a considerable, dangerous and unnecessary loss of sovereignty over a strategic sector; while those in favor of it see it as a further step forward in cooperation - bringing in more institutional and economic efficiency - and a step ahead towards full regional economic integration. Regional energy cooperation in Western Europe by the late 1950s served *de facto* as a first step for countries to move towards ending state monopolies, gradually reforming to join a competitive regional energy market, such as the rising E.U. gas and power common markets for instance. This meant that some early regional energy cooperation was part of a longer-term dynamic of regional energy integration.

From a liberal economic perspective, some, such as neoliberal integration theorist Balassa (1961), define regional integration as either a process of removing discriminations among and between regional member States, or as a situation of absence of such discriminations, for economic optimization. This “*commercialist*” approach (Vacchino, 1981) is however widely criticized, not only by opponents to regional integration but also by those

who value - or at least give greater importance to - developing regional solidarity (e.g. Torres, 2004, Lizarazu, 2008).

Nurturing regional solidarity is an objective all regional integration treaties, constitutions and charters refer to, but which can all the more drive a regionalization dynamic when a group of countries unites because of a perceived external threat, such as the Socialist block for Western Europe during the Cold War, or Revolutionary Iran for the Gulf monarchies since the early 1980s. Independently of any ideological perspective, regional energy integration dynamics are political, and an unfavorable public opinion or political disagreements among member countries over a project can become an insurmountable barrier to a regional energy dynamic (UN-DESA, 2005). Based on the example of the Western Mediterranean dynamics of energy integration, with the Maghreb countries' gas pipelines supplying Europe, the World Energy Council (2005) argues to the contrary that it is "*market availability*" - rather than inter-State affinities or homogenous political philosophies - that is the ultimate driving force for energy cooperation and/or integration (WEC, 2005, p. 10).

More recent writings suggest however that regional energy dynamics actually need to be more context-specific in terms of reforms, and more sensitive to countries' political economic specificities (World Bank, 2009) than previously advocated by the main international and regional organizations, which demand the liberalisation of the energy sector.

Beyond the sovereignty issue and the debate of the drivers of integration, few examples have investigated potential or existing negative impacts or limits to regional energy integration such as the often under-estimated techno-economic and legal complexities and the under-estimated integration costs (Eynon et al, 2002; Lerner, 2003; Turvey, 2004). Only within the literature addressing the environmental issues of large power generation

infrastructures - especially large dams (e.g. WCD, 2000) - can some theoretical critiques be found to the otherwise overwhelmingly positive discourse promoting regional energy integration (e.g. Castile et al., 2008 Gandara, 2007; Schiff and Winters, 2002; WEC, 2005). Critically investigating the impact of these regional processes of energy liberalisation - and especially on energy-intensive industries like desalination - is thus an important task that remains to be undertaken.

Conclusion

Social-political governance, water governance, regional energy integration and other forms of beyond-the-State, post-modern governance all share fundamental ideas that a new configuration of power and new governing values are needed. Governing should be a vertical, integrative and multi-scale process involving networks of diverse actors, and not anymore the sole responsibility of the Westphalian State. In the urban water sector, water governance development has generally meant water services reforms and the integration of networks of private, public and – to a lesser extent - civil society actors to decision-making and policy–implementing processes. This meant that the resource and its management have increasingly been the object of a rule shared by different stakeholders (public, private, non-profit or hybrid ones) with different visions, values and strategies that remain to be harmonized on (ideally) common principles of good/effective governance: e.g. transparency, participation and inclusiveness, accountability, etc.

Good governance reforms in developing countries have known significant limitations related to the issue of legitimacy, often due to their foreign and non-democratic origins. But in non-democratic polities where services are delivered and where the State does not appear as illegitimate, such as Qatar or the UAE, it is important to ask the question: have good governance reforms, or sector reforms on these lines, generated similar critics? More importantly maybe, what has led wealthy countries like the GCC ones - which do not seem to

be fragile or failing states at all - to implement water services governance reforms? What have been their drivers of change? Would they be similar to industrialized countries, which responded to an increasing complexity of the society? Or are these drivers closer to that of developing countries and the financial crisis of 'fragile states' due to the volatility of oil revenues as supported by some literature? Or is it possible that GCC leaders have tried through the governance paradigm to modernize their politics, including that of urban water supply, without having to adopt the European model of democracy? Market-oriented urban water services reforms have been studied in several contexts but have remarkably left untouched a number of inter-related issues that need to be addressed.

First of all, the study of water governance reforms in countries which are neither industrialised States in crisis nor failed developing countries, for instance in rentier States. Have the governance reforms been pushed by a crisis narrative there as well? If not, what was/were the drivers for water governance reforms? Also, the issue of desalination has so far been left remarkably untouched, despite its growing importance globally (10% annual growth over the past decade), and the major role it may play this century to supply freshwater to a growing urban humanity, in a global context of water resources depletion. Here too, there is very little literature.

Acknowledging these important knowledge gaps, it appears that investigating with a comparative approach the driver(s) of change of water services governance in a rentier and/or non-democratic setting holds the potential to generate interesting results. Investigating this in the context of the semi-democratic and non-democratic GCC cities, with their heavy reliance on desalination, should contribute significantly to the literature on urban water governance, to the topic of comparative water governance and most importantly, to the issue of the drivers of desalinated water governance reforms.

Chapter 3

A Theoretical Framework for Comparative and Critical Analysis of Desalinated Water Supply Governance in the GCC Cities

In this chapter, the *raison d'être* and the functioning of DiGaetano and Strom's (2003) integrated comparative framework for urban governance will be described. It will then critically reappraise its sophistication, and will finally highlight the need of a post-colonial critical approach for the analysis of cultural elements in the Gulf region.

I – Raison d'être and functioning of DiGaetano and Strom's framework

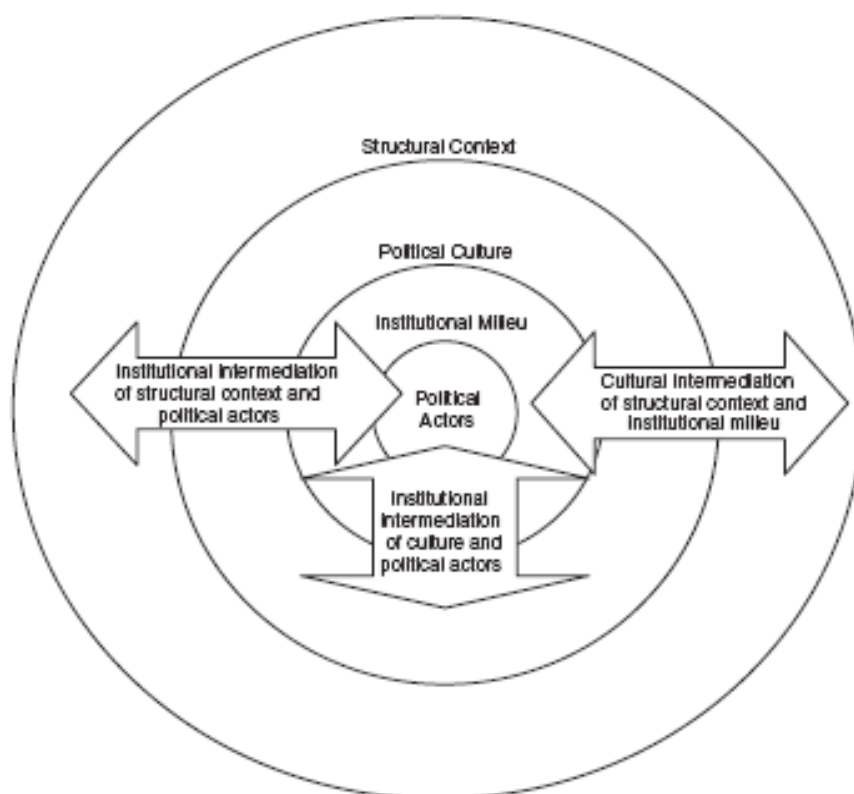
DiGaetano and Strom (2003) applied their comparative framework to the study of public-private partnership arrangements in four cities from four different countries: the United States, France, England and Germany. Unlike the study of McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (1997), who had focused on a political process to link the three above-mentioned comparative schools, DiGaetano and Strom's approach links their three dimensions of analysis (structural, political culture and rational actors' agency) through a 'new institutionalist' point of integration: the political institutions.

DiGaetano and Strom (2003) define institutions as "*the organizational means by which collective decisions are made and carried out*". By stating that political systems "*are not just the sum of their formal institutional structures*", they clearly take their distance from the 'old institutionalism'. Like Bevir and Rhodes (2010), and more generally the interpretativist *courant*, they do not equate institutions with formal and rigid governmental structures. For them, institutions are dynamic and "*historically embedded entities that sustain and disseminate systems of beliefs and practices*" (DiGaetano & Strom, 2003, p. 362). A key notion in DiGaetano and Strom's conceptual framework is the 'institutional milieus', i.e. the

complexes of “*political and governmental arrangements that mediate the interactions among the structural context, political culture, and political actors*”, as represented on figure 2. These political and governmental arrangements can be either formal or informal. The formal ones, named “*institutional bases*” include the governmental bodies and semi-governmental agencies, the political parties, interest groups (defending or promoting a private interest) and special interest groups (often associations aiming to produce solutions or advance and disseminate knowledge within a particular field), as well as official partnerships that “*give visible form (...) through rules and organizations*” to the governance process. Complementary to the institutional bases, the modes of governance shape the governing relationships among and within formal institutions implicated in the governance process (DiGaetano & Strom, 2003, p. 363). Informal arrangements are given great importance in this framework, and a typology of some ‘ideal types’ of modes of governance is proposed: clientelism, corporatism, managerialism, pluralism, or populism (as shown on table 1 on the following page). DiGaetano and Strom acknowledge that these modes of governance are nothing but ‘ideal types’, and that some hybrid modes exist. In the context of a research in non-Western and developing countries, as in our case with the Gulf countries, these ‘ideal types’ have to be fundamentally rethought to be of any conceptual help; especially given the specific rentier state model of political economy in the GCC region.

Another salient feature of DiGaetano and Strom’s integrated approach is that it privileges a dynamic analysis. They argue that “*by tracking institutional longevity and change, we can further our understanding of the varying effects of the structural context, culture, and agency on the process of urban governance*” (2003, P. 263).

Figure 2 : An Integrated Model of Urban Governance



Source: DiGaetano and Strom, 2003

TABLE 1: Modes of Urban Governance

	<i>Clientelistic</i>	<i>Corporatist</i>	<i>Managerial</i>	<i>Pluralist</i>	<i>Populist</i>
Governing relations	Particularistic, personalized, exchange	Exclusionary negotiation	Formal, bureaucratic, or contractual	Brokering or mediating among competing interests	Inclusionary negotiation
Governing logic	Reciprocity	Consensus building	Authoritative decision making	Conflict management	Mobilization of popular support
Key decision makers	Politicians and clients	Politicians and powerful civic leaders	Politicians and civil servants	Politicians and organized interests	Politicians and community movement leaders
Political objectives	Material	Purposive	Material	Purposive	Symbolic

Source: DiGaetano and Strom (2003)

Concerning the public private partnerships - an example often characterising changing configurations of political governance - this integrated approach within a diachronic perspective enables the authors to go beyond simple conclusions, and to open new research perspectives:

Understanding the popularity of such partnerships and the growing dominance of a discourse stressing partnerships and competitiveness appears, at first blush, best furthered through a structural analysis. Over the past 20 years, the idea has spread that public-private partnerships provide a means for coping with the pressures of global economic restructuring and the consequent competition among cities that it has fostered. (...) But a closer look reveals that the common rubric “partnership” obscures real divergence cross nationally among the arrangements so labelled. Structural analysis offers little to help us understand such variation. Rather, cultural analysis can help explain why different partnership forms, with different goals, arise cross nationally. Rational actor analysis, finally, enables us to refine our understanding of the uses, if any, to which partnerships are put, why some are considered successful and some failures, and why some are sustained and others ephemeral.

Source: DiGaetano and Strom (2003, p. 377).

Similarly, the diachronic perspective used by Castro, Kaika and Swyngedouw (2003) on the institutional change in water management in the case of London has proved useful to highlight the continuities and contradictions arising from the different arrangements of public and private management strategies and the goals of sustainable development, which is advocated by both public and private actors, and which lies at the heart of the developmentalist notions of good/effective water governance.

II – A critical reappraisal of DiGaetano and Strom’s integrated framework

DiGaetano and Strom’s (2003) work is of course not perfect, and some weaknesses – at least two - must be acknowledged. Though this theoretical framework develops largely on actors, relations, networks, arenas, and institutions, governance in this research seems to be too narrowly conceptualised. It is only referred to as “*the process of coordinating political*

decision making”. This may exclude some dimensions of governance. For instance, the activity of a government to steer policy is an important component of any national, local, or sector governance. And coordinating and steering are clearly two separate political notions, though both belong to the *répertoire* of political governance.

Concerning more directly the three-dimensional theoretical frame, it can be noticed in the case studies that the three elements of explanation of governance (structure, political culture, and leading actors’ agency) are not equally considered. In DiGaetano and Strom’s work, the structural dimension appears as the exterior source of change, the cultural aspect refers to the then more or less favourable acceptance of the society, a sort of cultural filter, whilst the rational actor’s approach refers to a reaction from the individuals and their eventual coalitions and strategies to react to change. But if this methodology’s pattern is used independently of the specificity of the object of research, isn’t it likely to bias our reading of the governance process? Is it completely irrational to imagine, for instance, endogenous changes produced by local actors’ evolving culture that can deeply affect a structural context? So, within this framework, the pattern of explanation ‘structural > cultural > individual agency’ has to be considered for what it is: an assumption. If not, DiGaetano and Strom’s (2003) integrated approach may finally not be so different from the context-free “*blunt macro analysis used by structural theorists*” they criticise for missing the local non-structural peculiarities.

Some subsequent uses of the DiGaetano and Strom’s (2003) theoretical framework for urban governance have shown that this framework reflects enough theoretical flexibility. For instance, while having been initially designed to compare Western polities, DiGaetano and Strom’s integrated approach was used several times in non-Western urban environments, as in the comparative study of Turkish cities (see Ataöv & Eraydin, 2010) or of Chinese cities (see for instance Becker et al., 2007; Wuttke & Waibel, 2008; Becker, 2009). Provided “*some amendments concerning its operationalization*” are made, especially regarding the political

culture, Becker (2009) considers that this integrated framework is suitable for non-Western polities, as it is a “*sufficiently wide and flexible theoretical approach*” (2009, pp.5-7).

Beyond this consensus, on the capacity of DiGaetano and Strom’s (2003) tri-dimensional approach to enable comparative analysis of non-Western polities, some argue however that this framework suffers – as it is - from another theoretical weak point: the general disregard of the imperfection of representation (and thus participation). Ataöv and Eraydin (2010) argue that DiGaetano and Strom’s integrated framework may not provide a complete understanding of why certain governance models are more efficient and effective than others. They give the following explanation:

“The participation of actors in governing processes does not always ensure their equal and democratic participation in the formulation of decisions and the formulation of decisions does not always guarantee the translation of decisions into actions”.

They finally conclude that:

“Comparative research with an analysis of three interfaces should be extended to include an in-depth examination of the collaborative process and its reflection with respect to the degree of participation and to include how much that process generates action-based knowledge as well as enhances commitment and, in turn, leads to shared action.”

Source: Ataöv & Eraydin (2010, p.38).

This critique aimed at DiGaetano and Strom’s disregard of the ineffectiveness of participation of many governance models - beyond mere symbolic evocations and superficial procedures - is supported by a significant amount of governance literature, as indicated in the first part of this literature review. But Ataöv and Eraydin’s (2010) point may not be so relevant for our highly specific research.

Paradoxically, it is precisely because there is an important deficit of political participation in the GCC countries – widely acknowledged - that one can hardly under-estimate the deficit

of public participation in the region's governance models³¹. To the contrary, it is generally taken for granted that, beyond a discourse of regional democratisation, the Arabian Peninsula is a democratic desert. The difficulty for the researcher seems actually more to be able to decipher other forms of (non-democratic) participation, through traditional tribal channels for instance.

Ataöv and Eraydin's (2010) remark highlights that a critical appraisal of any institutional discourse concerning political participation remains a fundamental condition to yield reliable and meaningful results for any study on governance. This is all the more true when working in and on the Middle East.

III - A Post-colonial interpretative approach for critical analysis

Analysing local governance, especially of water, needs to refer to local choices, values, ideas and traditions of governing the resource. But analysing a culture as explained by Geertz (1973), *"is not an experimental science in search of law, but an interpretative one in search of meaning"*. Because all perceptions and recorded 'facts' appear *"within the context of a prior set of beliefs or theoretical commitments"* (Bevir & Rhodes, 2004, p.132), to investigate the role of culture, and especially of a political culture in the making and remaking of a local water governance, needs to be critical and even suspicious to claims of neutrality in the descriptions and exegesis of a culture. The *culture* concept itself has repeatedly been used and abused to exaggerate the difference between anthropologists and their subjects (Farmer, 1994; Scheper-Hughes, 2006), with the underlying idea that since they are *"from different cultures, they are of different worlds, and of different times"* (Farmer, 1994, p.24). Scheper-Hughes (2006, p.512) explains that these practices, frequent in the field of anthropology, have

³¹ Kuwait's tradition of trade unions, relatively free press and parliamentary elections make it appear as an exception of democratic participation, by regional standards. Political parties are, however, not allowed, and the parliament can constitutionally be dissolved at any moment by the ruling Emir, as happened 6 times since the Parliament's establishment in 1963.

as a consequence to artificially classify humans into “*discrete types, orders and kinds*”, among which anthropology generates and iteratively reaffirms power asymmetries through knowledge and time (see Fabian’s concept of ‘denial of coevalness’, 1983). Suspicions toward a ‘factual’ or ‘neutral’ scholarship on culture are all the more justified when dealing with contexts considered remote, exotic, and eventually dangerous by their authors.

A significant part of the academic productions on the *Orient*, *Asians*, the *Near East*, *Arabs* and *Islam* have for long been produced by Western imaginaries, greed, fantasies and its imperialistic propaganda (Fabian, 1983; Chomsky, 2005 [1970]; Said, 2003 [1978]; Massad, 2007, etc.). This external scholarship was eminently deconstructed by Edward Said in his well-known book Orientalism (1978). Together with Frantz Fanon, Said built the foundations of a critical scholarship today known as Post-colonialism. The Oxford Dictionary of Geography defines it as:

“The examination of the impact, and legacy, of the European conquest, colonisation, and dominance of non-European cultures, lands, and peoples, together with the analysis of the ideas of European superiority inherent in European colonisation. Other key features are: the exploration of the part played by representation in inaugurating and reproducing such ideas within both colonies and decolonised states; challenging the binary, homogenous categories of the colonising and colonised, and the recovery of the voices and agency of colonised peoples”.

Source: Mayhew (2004, pp. 395-396)

Despite the end of Europe’s imperial form of colonialism in the second part of the 20th C., post-colonial authors witnessed nevertheless during the past two decades the emergence of a new wave of conceptually analogous ‘academic’ productions, not only influenced by the traditional Orientalist discourse, but re-adapting and reinforcing it, such as Huntington (2002 [1996]); Lewis (2002; 2003a; 2003b; 2004) and Riddel and Cotterell (2003). Both Orientalism and Neo-Orientalism share a fundamental element in their *grille de lecture*: their iterative

process of external construction of an exotic object of research, most often in a monolithic form and degrading position of *altérité*.

A prominent feature of the Orientalist discourse on Arabia was its reliance on geographic and cultural determinism. It considered for instance that the ‘backwardness’ of Arabian tribes was the mechanical result of the Arabian Peninsula’s harsh environments (e.g. Benoist-Mechin, 1955, chapter 1). It also argued that aridity in Oriental regions required major water works that only ‘hydraulic civilisations’ with large, learned and powerful state bureaucracies could provide, but at the cost of an “*oriental despotism*” (Wittfogel, 1956; 1957). Among other major flaws, this deterministic link *Environment* → *Social System* → *Political Culture* completely underestimates the major role that can be played by *foreign* structural factors (the evolutions of international trade routes, the development of competitive technologies abroad, colonialism, etc.) It also underestimates the local actors’ individual agency: even the supreme despot is generally depicted as a mere product of his civilisation determinism.

These elements reinforce the relevance of DiGaetano and Strom’s (2003) integrated comparative framework, where factors and forces pertaining to structure, political culture and individual agency are analysed altogether – and triangulated - to provide a more comprehensive and less ideological picture of public affairs in a foreign milieu. But, investigating the political culture in a Middle Eastern context also brings about some risks.

The ‘Neo-Orientalist’ movement tends to precisely focus on culture and religion, often conflating the two in the case of Islam. It portrays it as a decadent and failing civilisation in times of modernity, because of its (alleged) incapacity to accept any hostility towards new or foreign philosophical and cultural paradigms (see for instance Kedourie, 1994; Huntington; 1998; Lewis, 1992; 2003a; 2003b; Riddel & Cotterell, 2003). A particular work of Samuel

Huntington seems emblematic of the essentialism and ideological bias characteristic of this Neo-Orientalist discourse, and also of the bold ambitions, grand claims, but controversial methods that Bevir and Rhodes (2010) have reproached to comparativists as previously detailed. Huntington's (1998) *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* is a case in point of this very controversial discourse on the 'Islamic civilisation'³²:

"The fundamental problem for the West is not Islamic fundamentalism. It is Islam, a different civilisation whose people are convinced of the superiority of their culture and are obsessed with the inferiority of their power"

Samuel Huntington's statements regarding a fantasised and monolithic global Muslim community (Huntington always neglected the individual concerning Muslims) have been challenged by a vast scholarship on the theoretical level (e.g. Rubeinstein & Crocker, 1994; Gresh, 2004; Said, 2001; 2004a), by statistical studies of conflicts (e.g. Henderson & Singer, 2000; Ellingsen, 2000; Fox, 2002), and polls of Muslim populations, such as Esposito and Mogahed (2008)³³. The Neo-Orientalist tradition has nevertheless known a renaissance after the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the subsequent Western concern with the 'Muslim mind'. The sudden pervasiveness of Huntington's theories in the USA, i.e. the nation with the most globalised and influential mass media, was described by Abrahamian (2003).

"When, in 1993, Foreign Affairs first published [Samuel Huntington's] article 'The clash of civilizations?', the intellectual community in general dismissed it as somewhat strange if not downright wrong. But, when the attacks of September 11 took place, his book with the same title but without the question mark became an instant bestseller. By 2002 Netscape was offering internet surfers free copies. (...) What is more, the mainstream media in the USA automatically, implicitly and unanimously adopted Huntington's

³² Based on anthropological literature (especially Geertz, 1974), this thesis rejects the assumption that there is a single or monolithic Islamic civilisation ranging from Morocco to Indonesia. It assumes to the contrary that the 'Muslim world' is made of several significantly different cultural regions and civilisational areas.

³³ We can wonder whether Huntington's simplistic theories on the cultural specificities of an 'Islamic civilisation' could not be explained by the fact he did not speak *any* of the languages of the said region or that he simply never conducted any recorded field work on - or among - a Muslim society.

paradigm to explain September 11. (...) By mainstream media, I mean quality newspapers and journals read by the American literati and intelligentsia, whom political scientists would describe as the 'attentive public'. The papers include the New York Times, Wall Street Journal and Washington Post. The journals include Time, Newsweek, Atlantic Monthly, New Republic and, to some extent, the Nation and the New York Review of Books. The Huntington paradigm was even more keenly embraced by the tabloid press, the television and radio networks, including National Public Radio, and even smaller quality newspapers—with the notable exception of the Christian Science Monitor. But then the daily circulation of the Monitor is 75 000 while that of the New York Times is 1 113 000 and that of the Wall Street Journal 1 801 000.”

Source: Abrahamian (2003, pp. 522-523)

Huntington's ideas – because of their ideological and pervasive nature – will require a particular attention for us to be able to work in an honest and reliable manner on and in the Arabian Peninsula. On both the theoretical and field levels, this research will use a critical approach to all sources of information.

Conclusion

DiGaetano and Strom's (2003) integrated comparative theoretical framework has been selected for this research on the drivers of change of desalinated urban water governance in the GCC cities since it integrates the three main schools of comparative studies (i.e. the structural, the political culture and the rational agency schools) that represent complementary sources of analysis and understanding. However, for these layers and this integrated framework to be reliable, they need all to be provided with information that is not deceptively biased. The special difficulty to investigate matters pertaining to culture in a non-Western environment, especially due to Orientalist and Neo-Orientalist discourses, requires a critical Post-colonial analytical approach that is not superficial nor ad-hoc, but systemic and deeply-rooted into the theoretical framework as well as into the methodologies.

Chapter 4

The unique economic, cultural and political setting of the GCC coastal cities' desalinated water governance

Analysing a model of local governance, and especially of water governance, requires understanding local choices, values, norms and traditions of managing the resource. To be able to accurately understand the drivers of change of the water governance models of some GCC coastal cities, this chapter will first introduce the unique political and economic setting of the GCC countries. Then it will shed light upon their regional biophysical environment and introduce their coastal cities' specific models of water governance. Finally, the long-term political cultural forces, or *tendances lourdes*, that have significantly framed and reframed the GCC cities' political governance since at least the second half of the 20th century will be introduced.

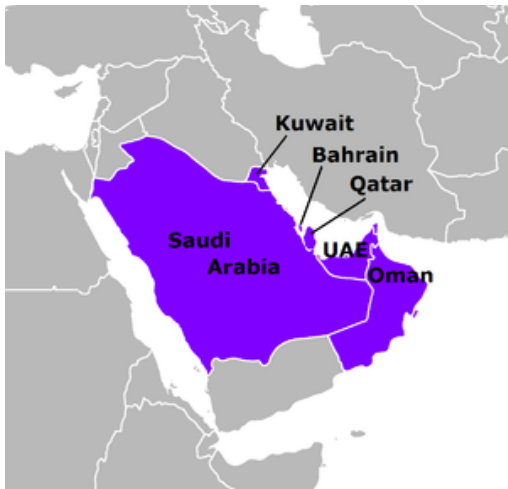
I - The unique economic and political setting of the GCC coastal cities

The GCC is a political and economic regional organisation created in 1981 in order to foster regional integration and provide a defence alliance to its six member countries, visible on map 1 on the next page. This region is politically and economically unique since all of the member countries display monarchical regimes and are or have been until recently all dependent on hydrocarbon exports. But their political history and political cultures change significantly from one another

I.1 – The political diversity of the GCC countries

The UAE is a loose tribal federation of emirates; Kuwait and Bahrain are well established parliamentary monarchies; Qatar and Oman are slowly democratising monarchies while Saudi Arabia remains a unique case of absolute monarchy with religious attributes. The latter has always remained independent and sovereign since its formation in 1932, all other GCC countries were British protectorates. Kuwait gained independence in 1961; while Bahrain, Oman, Qatar and the UAE obtained it in 1971. The influence of Great Britain is still palpable in the largely Anglophone administrations of most GCC countries. Even among the three emirates³⁴ of this study, i.e. Kuwait, Qatar and Abu Dhabi³⁵, the role and power of the main GCC political institutions (Heads of states, Crown Princes, governments and parliaments) can vary significantly from a polity to another.

Map 1 – The political borders of the GCC region



Source: Diplomacy and Power Politics blog³⁶.

³⁴ With a different political history, all Arab political notions and institutions cannot find exact equivalents into English and related Western political notions, and vice-versa. An emirate, in the case of Kuwait, Qatar and the UAE federation, should be understood as a principality (the most frequent translation), or as a state, since it is territorially sovereign. In the case of Saudi Arabia, the word emirate refers, as in Medieval Islamic politics, to a province (from a larger political *ensemble*) at the head of which governs an Emir, or governor in that case.

³⁵ Kuwait and Qatar are two independent Emirates and sovereign Nation-States, while Abu Dhabi is the leading emirate of the loose federation of the United Arab Emirates.

³⁶ Map available at www.diplomacyandpower.com/?tag=gcc (last accessed 01/07/2012)

I.2 –Abu Dhabi, Kuwait and Qatar, uniformity and diversity of former city-states

Abu Dhabi, Kuwait and Qatar are three emirates with a monarchical system according to their constitutions. But being ruled by tribal elites, they seem to oscillate between true monarchies and forms of oligarchies. In all three polities, the Emir is the legal ruler and he nominates his successor, the Crown Prince. The right to rule the emirate is always passed on within the ruling family. Due to their rentier-state political structure, a notion touched upon in chapters 2 and 6, the GCC countries are generally designated under the single umbrella of ‘petro-monarchies’. Beyond this apparent homogeneity however, Abu Dhabi, Kuwait and Qatar operate within the three relatively different political systems, representing the different political milieus and cultures of their respective capital city.

Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City have known different historical developments. Kuwait City for instance, is a significantly older urban body than Doha or Abu Dhabi³⁷. It had much stronger ties with major Arab and Ottoman large urban centres of Mesopotamia (Baghdad and Basra particularly) and the Levant (Damascus and Cairo). It was consequently more influenced culturally by their universities and intellectual circles than the (historically) much smaller Gulf Arab cities like Doha or Abu Dhabi, the latter having been traditionally more oriented towards its rural hinterland for its economic activities (for detailed historical backgrounds, see Abu Hakima, 2004; Anscombe, 1997; Heard-Bey, 1999; Onley, 2008; State of Qatar MFA, 2003).

³⁷ According to European archives cited by Abu Hakima ([1983] 2004), Kuwait, then a small port under the name of ‘Grane’, was first charted by the Dutch East India Company in a late 17th C. document. There is no indication at all that Abu Dhabi or Doha existed at that time. Only as late as circa 1885, some freshwater was reportedly discovered on Abu Dhabi’s island and only years after, during the early 19th C., tribal populations from the hinterland began settling in (see Heard-Bey, 1999). Doha’s exact ancestry seems unknown. It was until the second half of the 19th C. no more than a small village probably unknown outside Qatar, very close to an old but small city, al-Biddah, with which it gradually merged after the Al-Thani took over the leadership in Doha, making it the capital of the Peninsula in the late 19th C. (State of Qatar MFA, 2003, 17-20).

The political cultures of Abu Dhabi and Qatar are actually the closest ones within our sample. If one replaces ‘Qatar’, ‘Al-Thani’, ‘legislative body’, ‘advisory body’ and ‘AlJazeera’ with its Abu Dhabi equivalents (i.e. ‘Abu Dhabi’, ‘Al-Nahyan’, ‘FNC’, ‘National Consultative Council’ and ‘Al-Arabiya Channel’), the following description of the Qatari political situation portrays remarkably well the one of Abu Dhabi:

“Politically, Qatar is evolving from a traditional society to one based on more formal and democratic institutions to meet the requirements of social and economic progress. The country's constitution (...) establishes an elected legislative body and makes government ministers accountable to the legislature. In current practice, the Amir's role is influenced by continuing traditions of consultation, rule by consensus, and the citizen's right to appeal personally to the Amir. The Amir, while directly accountable to no one, cannot violate the Shari'a (Islamic law) and, in practice, must consider the opinions of leading families and the religious establishment. The opinions of the people are institutionalised in the Advisory Council, an appointed body that assists the Amir in formulating policy. (...) There has been no serious challenge to Al Thani rule. As the most visible sign of the move toward openness, the Al Jazeera satellite television station based in Qatar is considered the most free and unfettered broadcast source in the Arab world. In practice, Al Jazeera rarely criticises the ruling Al Thani family or addresses Qatar's domestic issues. (...) Qatar also has signed defence pacts with the U.S., U.K., and France. Qatar plays an active role in the collective defense efforts of the Gulf Cooperation Council (...). Qatari forces played an important role in the first Gulf War and the 2011 revolution in Libya, and Qatar has supported U.S. military operations critical to the success of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.”

Source: U.S. Department of State (2012)

Qatar and the UAE's political systems feature democratic elements³⁸. Qatar has held 4 municipal elections since 1995's new leadership and Abu Dhabi has increased several times the number and prerogatives of the representatives at the FNC since 1996. There is no doubt that both Qatar and the UAE are more democratic than at the time of independence forty years ago. But they remain distant from Western canons of democracy. Both Parliaments have

³⁸ The democratic idea and terminology can only be found in Qatar's constitution of 2003 and the UAE permanent constitution of 1996, not in previous constitutions and legislations.

limited access to strategic information and cannot veto new legislation or the annual budget; there are no direct elections of the MPs and no political party. Furthermore in the UAE, the FNC's first elections in 2006 concerned only 6889 voters (i.e. less than 1 percent of the national population) selected by their rulers and permitted to vote only for half of the seats, the remainder being filled by appointed members (Ulricksen, 2012). Last but not least, The FNC has no jurisdiction at all over the emirates' internal affairs, such as water and electricity in Abu Dhabi. In Qatar on the contrary, the 2003 Constitution - democratically accepted by national referendum - gave important rights to the Parliament over all activities. But so far no parliamentary election has been held. The first ones are expected in 2013 and until then a non-elected (i.e. Emir-appointed) parliament is running it, with very little mediatisation of its activities. Last but not least, none of the Qatari and Emirati assemblies can veto a ministry's budget, nor oppose a decree from the Emir.

Kuwait, to the contrary, is a Parliamentary monarchy with powerful labour unions (GSN³⁹ 912, 2011) and a turbulent National Assembly (Lambert J., 2011). Kuwaiti MPs propose, debate, vote and pass the laws and budgets, including the Emir's official revenues. In 2006, Kuwait was the first Gulf country to declare its new ruler unfit for office and to remove him by a unanimous vote at the National Assembly. The Emir has the constitutional power to veto laws passed by the parliament, but MPs can override this refusal if they pass the law again with a two-thirds majority, making mandatory the implementation of the legislation. On the other hand, the Emir can constitutionally dissolve the Parliament for the common interest. According to the 1962 Constitution, he then has to call for new elections, a process over which he – legally - has very limited power. In Kuwait, parliamentary power can sometimes prevail over the monarch's will.

³⁹ The Gulf States Newsletter (GSN) is not a peer-reviewed journal, but a well-documented commercial source of political and economic information that interviews academics, practitioners and insiders at the highest levels. Since the GCC countries display little transparency concerning high-level politics, the GSN Newsletter is considered the main reference on contemporary GCC political affairs.

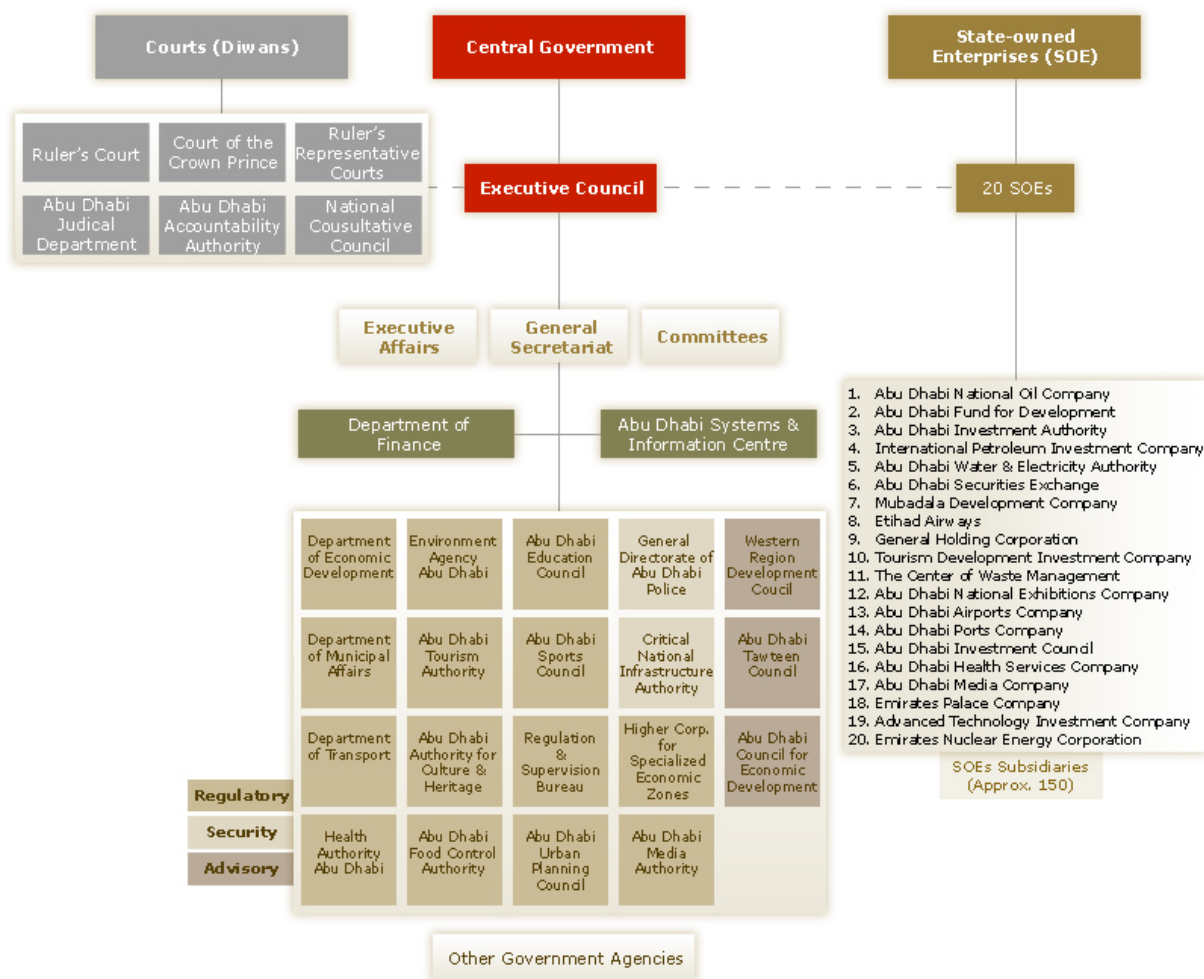
Abu Dhabi is also unique on several aspects. Contrary to the independent States Kuwait and Qatar, Abu Dhabi is a member of a federation of seven emirates, the UAE. It is confronted consequently to much more political complexity. The UAE federation's highest political authority is the Supreme Council. Its members comprise the seven emirates' rulers and it has both legislative and executive powers to ratify treaties, sanction decrees and give to the federal ministries the main policy orientations, particularly on foreign affairs, defence and monetary affairs. The Council elects a president and vice-president of the Federation from among the seven rulers for a five-year renewable term. Shaykh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, the Emir of Abu Dhabi, the largest emirate by land, population and financial contribution to the Federal budget, has been unanimously re-elected President of the UAE since 2004, after succeeding his father.

The UAE cabinet follows up on the implementation of the federation's general policy and decrees, drafts new legislations and draws up the annual budget. The draft laws and budget produced by the Supreme Council or the Cabinet are submitted to the Federal National Council (FNC), a 40-member parliamentary body, before being raised to the Supreme Council for final sanction. It can examine and amend all proposed federal laws and the budget, even grill some Ministers, but it cannot veto the legislation and its investigation capacities remain limited to what the Cabinet decides. The FNC is not elected through direct elections, but from an electoral college designated by each ruler within his emirate. But the UAE being a loose federation, these three federal institutions (the FNC, Cabinet and Supreme Council) have limited to no power in each emirate's internal affairs.

At the emirate level, Abu Dhabi's Executive Council is in charge of the emirate's oil and gas sector, its own finances, its own water and electricity sector among many other responsibilities. There are also a great number of directorates, councils, departments, authorities, state-owned enterprises and their subsidiaries (often international joint-ventures),

and more traditional offices and courts that have been institutionalised, as is represented below on figure 3.

Figure 3 – Abu Dhabi’s Complex Government Structure Chart



Source: Abu Dhabi E-Government Portal, available at: www.abudhabi.ae (last accessed 08/08/2012).

I.3 – Diverse local political cultures

Abu Dhabi's complex institutional milieu, remarkably rich for a member of a federation, reflects a strategy of rent distribution through many institutions and positions, but also the post-colonial and Arab nationalist legacy of a strong state that can be fully sovereign and independent. It enables the Abu Dhabi government to administrate very aptly the local affairs in all its cities through both modern and pre-modern (but official) institutions. It also

integrates into the local legislative (the non-elected National Consultative Council) and executive bodies influential members of the tribes to retain the support of the tribal communities, i.e. the great majority of the Nationals.

The two independent states of Qatar and Kuwait function within formal political settings that are easier to read for an outsider. There is a Head of State ruling according to the Constitution, a Crown Prince with growing but limited representative functions, a Prime Minister in charge of a Cabinet for national executive functions, a Parliament to pass laws, a relatively independent judiciary, municipalities for a small number of local executive responsibilities (but not much urban services like water and electricity for instance). But Kuwait and Qatar can also be seen as the two extreme poles of a Gulf political spectrum that ranges from limited press freedom on domestic affairs and no parliamentary elections in Qatar (the first ones are forecasted for 2013) to a free and highly politicised press and a fully elected Parliament in Kuwait.

In Kuwait, Parliamentary life is at the core of stiff political factionalism that spreads widely out of the National Assembly, where alliances are made and remade. A 2010 newsletter specialised on Gulf politics, the GSN, explained something that rapidly appears as obvious to any person attempting to monitor Kuwaiti politics: *“(c)onfusion is the overwhelming impression as Kuwait’s factions tussle over reform, vested interests, economic strategy and political patronage. These battles are reflected in everything from a dispute over chamber of commerce leadership to control of the Zain telecommunications giant.”* (GSN 889, 2010).

Photo 1: A culture of contestation and semi-democratic national politics



Source: AP Photo/Gustavo Ferrari.

Oct. 16, 2012. To contest a political decision of the government, some MPs and their followers staged an informal sitting at Errada Square in Kuwait, reconstituting informally with carpets and its rectangle shape the tribal majlis, a relatively open space for socialising and political discussions.

In Qatar and Abu Dhabi by contrast, the much more limited role of the parliament and the press has kept so far competition and conflicts among rival elites, families, tribes and factions into the spheres of the tribal majlis and the diwan of each member of the ruling family politics. There is no press release about it, no critical parliamentary investigation or domestic journalism on it, and consequently little to no transparency at this level of politics. This may explain why, in comparison to Kuwait, there is so little corruption emerging from Qatar and Abu Dhabi, where tribal institutions, informal processes of concertation and the sense of consensus are more pronounced. Transparency International's 'Corruption Perception Index 2011' ranked Qatar 22nd and the UAE 26th as the countries in the world with the public sector the least perceived as corrupted, alongside industrialised nations such as

the United States (24) or France (25)⁴⁰. Kuwait on the other hand, ranked 54th alongside democratic countries with economies in transition such as Hungary (equally 54th) and the Czech Republic (57th). Is Kuwait's political life, with institutional checks and balances inspired by the British parliamentary democracy, not victim of its democratic political nature? An opinion widely expressed in Qatar and Abu Dhabi, where the economy displays a much higher GDP per capita. Is it also why Kuwait City displays a different pattern of water governance than Abu Dhabi and Doha?

II – Desalinated urban water supply and the unique environmental setting of the GCC

II.1 - The environmental setting of Arabia and the GCC countries

The GCC countries located on the Arabian Peninsula, between the Red sea to the West, the Arabian/Persian Gulf to the East and the Indian Ocean and sea of Oman to the South. To its North, the Peninsula is bordered by the hyper-arid desert steppes of Al-Nafud. This desert finds some continuity deep into the Peninsula with the 1000-km long stretch of the Al-Dahna desert along Eastern Arabia's Gulf coast, down to Southern Arabia. There, the Peninsula's largest desert - almost a quarter of Arabia - remained completely uninhabited until the recent oil exploitation. Hence its name, the '*Rub' al-Khaliy*', the 'Empty Quarter'.

With extremely high summer temperatures, high evaporation rates, random raining patterns and generally scarce groundwater resources, the Arabian Peninsula is one of the harshest environments on Earth for people, fauna and flora (Alsharhan et al., 2001; WWF, 2007). Most of it is either arid or hyper-arid and there is no perennial river.

⁴⁰ According to Transparency International, "*the Corruption Perceptions Index ranks countries/territories based on how corrupt their public sector is perceived to be. (...) A country's rank indicates its position relative to the other countries/territories included in the index.*" 184 states and territories were assessed and ranked. The report and ranking are available at <http://cpi.transparency.org/cpi2011/results/> (last accessed on 05/08/2012).

Map 2 – Arabian desert eco-regions and political borders



Sources: New World Encyclopedia; World Wide Fund for Nature; NASA.

The only mountainous regions with sub-humid climates are found in the Southwest of Arabia, between Saudi Arabia and Yemen, and to a lesser extent in the Peninsula's South and Southeast, in the Sultanate of Oman and Yemen. With its mountains, this Southern part of Arabia collects – but also stops – the limited monsoon winds that alleviate Yemen and Oman's general aridity. Paradoxically, this is well to the North of these mountains, in desert eco-regions, that can be found universal access to water connection and the region's highest standards of water services, in the coastal cities of the GCC.

II.2 – The critical role of desalination in the coastal GCC cities

Because the hinterland of the Arabian Peninsula is marked by aridity and since – to the difference of Iraq and Egypt – it does not benefit from any permanent river, all the largest GCC cities have developed either along a coast or not far from it, as can be seen on map 2

above. There, the products that are lacked (manufactured ones, but also timber and even freshwater) have been imported by seas for centuries from regions with better biophysical conditions: essentially Iraq, South Asia and Eastern Africa, and as far as Eastern Asia (Hakima, 2004; Guingand; 2008; Lienhardt, 2001). An obvious exception to this rule of spatial framing of the GCC by the coasts is Riyadh, the capital city of Saudi Arabia; an exception enabled by the massive and long-distance supply of desalinated water.

Along the Gulf coast, the main GCC cities (e.g. Abu Dhabi, Doha, Kuwait City) provide to all their city dwellers reliable freshwater supply, at quality standards higher than the WHO's, yet at low prices when not simply for free (AlSharhan et al., 2001). Against the background of tropical semi-desert to desert climates (see Frey et al., 2007), this paradox could easily be solely attributed to oil revenues allowing massive seawater desalination. Yet this explanation is non-satisfactory as this thesis will demonstrate. Yemen and Nigeria for instance, have also been oil exporters for several decades, but none of their coastal cities can boast of the same achievements in providing universal access to safe and reliable drinking water. Nor can Abu Dhabi, Kuwait and Qatar's achievements be attributed to a stable or quiet regional political environment, since all three countries are confronted by stiff territorial disputes on their borders⁴¹, are located between three 'Gulf hegemon's'⁴² and fierce rivals Saudi Arabia, Iran and Iraq, and have naturally been deeply troubled by three Gulf war periods: the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war, the 1990-1991 invasion of Kuwait and 'Desert Storm' operations, and the 2003 invasion of Iraq and subsequent civil war.

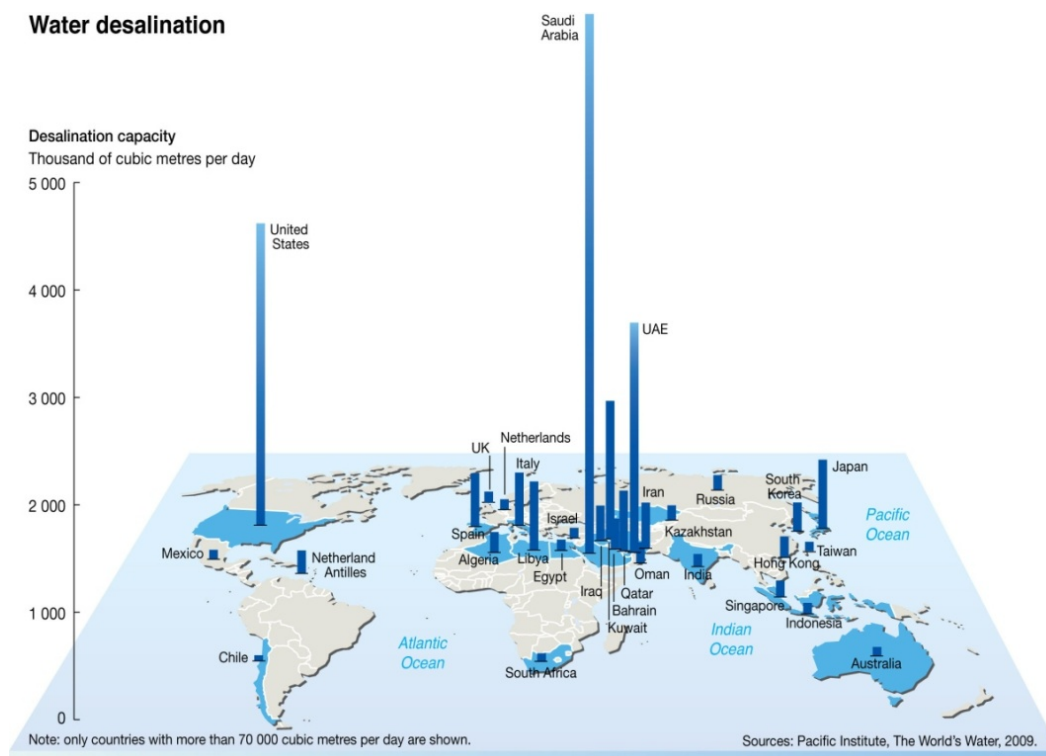
The Gulf area, which comprises the East of the GCC region, the South of Iraq and the West of Iran, gather almost 60% of the world's desalinated water production capacities. The

⁴¹ For detailed information on the GCC territorial disputes, see Lepac, 2009 or Schofield, 2009.

⁴² During Michaelmas Term 2007, the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies (OCIS) hosted a series of lectures on the theme "Security and Stability in the Gulf". The term "Gulf hegemon (s)" was used a number of times to designate Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia by a number of specialists of the region. See the Oxford gazette: www.ox.ac.uk/gazette/2007-8/weekly/181007/lecs.htm#TOP (last visited on 30/06/2012)

exceptional desalination capacity the countries of the Gulf region have, as is apparent on figure 4, can be properly appraised when contrasted with its very small share of the world population, roughly 0.5% as of 2012.

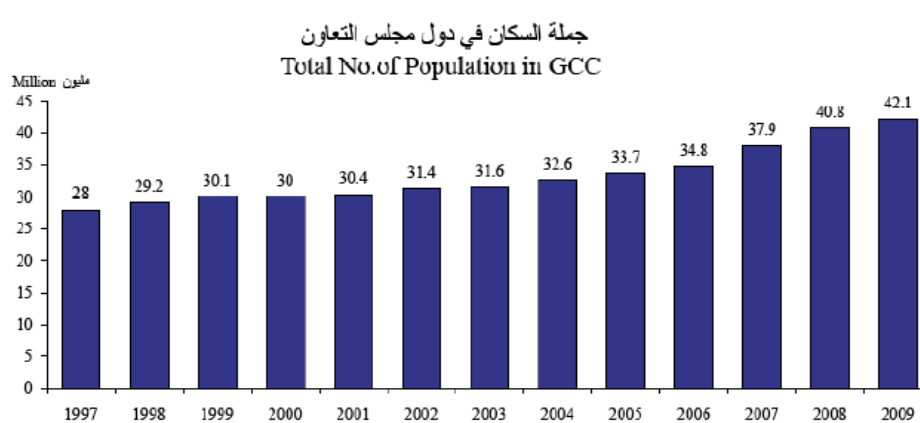
Figure 4 : Desalination Capacity in the World, as of 2009



Courtesy of UNEP/GRID-Arendal. Available at: www.grida.no/graphicslib/detail/water-desalination_11e4 (last visited 24/06/2012)

This map cannot reflect the fast-pace evolution of the GCC. Between 1998 and 2011, the GCC's real GDP has expanded by an average of 5.2% per year and by a cumulative total of 65% (IBDE, 2011). In parallel, the population has risen by 150+% in only 12 years, from just over 28m in 1997 to an estimated 42.1m in 2009 (GCC statistical bulletin, 2011), as is visible on figure 5 below. The GCC has one of the fastest-growing populations in the world and though the majority of it is composed of foreign workers - mostly from South Asia -, it should remain an unusually young part of the world (IBDE, 2011).

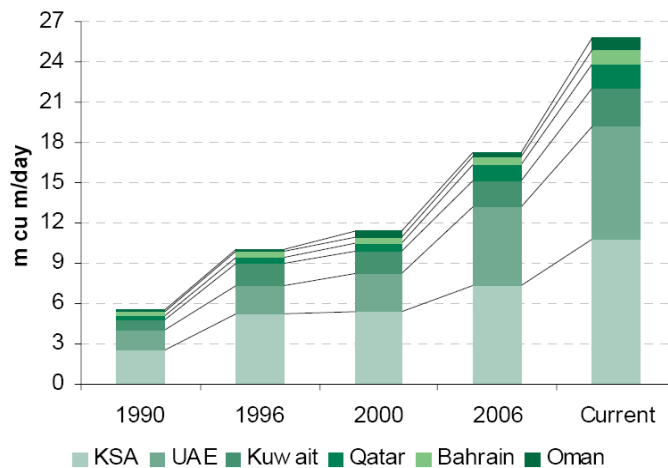
Figure 5 : Increase of the GCC population between 1997 and 2009



Source: GCC statistical bulletin (2011, p.14)

Due to limited, deteriorated and almost totally depleted underground water reserves in the coastal area (Risk et al., 2001; FAO, 1997, 2009), the six GCC countries have responded to their growing water demand over the past twenty years by increasing their desalination capacities (NCBC, 2009; Dawoud, 2005; Dumortier & Lambert, 2007; Al-Mutaz, 2001), as is apparent on figure 6 below.

Figure 6 : Desalination Capacity Increase 1990 - 2009



Source: NCBC, 2009

The GCC's inter-related economic, demographic and infrastructural expansions and challenges find their origins in the colossal flows of oil and gas revenues that have been affecting these societies and polities since the mid-20th C. This thesis will argue that these

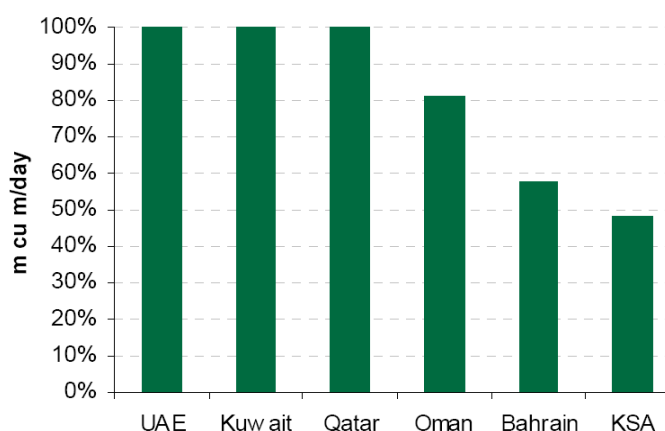
external revenues and related ‘boom and bust’ economic cycles have significantly affected their local water governance. But not necessarily in the most predictable ways, nor how the literature on GCC privatisation dynamics asserted it, reviewed in chapter 2, as will be demonstrated in chapters 6 and 7.

II.3 - Overview of the organisation of the GCC water sectors

In all the GCC countries, the State - through its water authority, ministry or corporate body - plays the central role over water policies, supervision of the sector and the effective provision of urban water services. Beyond this however, the GCC water sectors differ noticeably one from another on two fundamental points: the levels of dependence on desalination for urban supply and their degree of private participation to the sector.

The level of dependence on desalination for urban water supply services is significantly lower in the larger countries of Oman and Saudi Arabia, where groundwater and to a much lesser extent wadis contribute noticeably to the urban water supply. Meanwhile, desalination has reached 100% in the smaller states where the population is concentrated in the main cities: i.e. Kuwait, Qatar and the UAE as can be observed on figure 7 below; Bahrain remaining an exception to this trend for a number of reasons discussed in chapter 5.

Figure 7: Municipal Water Supply in the GCC countries



Source: NCBC, 2009

Schematically, the national water governance of Kuwait, Qatar and the UAE has been following relatively similar over-arching water allocation strategies over the past half century. At the time of independence (1961 for Kuwait, 1971 for others), state modernisation and the first oil revenues radically transformed water management and water laws in all three countries. Around the capitals, the customary ownership of artesian wells and *de facto* ownership over the resources on family and tribal lines were transferred to the central State. The newly centralised administrations in Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait reallocated water resources following two strategies. Outside the urban areas, it allocated along the same tribal lines water rights - but not ownership - to exploit the newly nationalised resources through (more or less) regulated and monitored wells, with subsidised motor pumps to boost agricultural production. In the cities however, the state which had also taken over the water rights and resources ownership did not redistribute them to extended families or tribes. It provided to an increasing number of urban *households* the services of a modern water management. Reliable modern water supply was used as a tool to settle down the Arabian tribes and ‘nationalise’ these populations which used to roam the desert disregarding modern borders and nationalities.

The limited underground water resources of the coastal area supplied most of the urban water consumption, for all purposes. Meanwhile, oil-financed desalination represented a small but fast-growing source of freshwater, compensating the over-abstraction of fresh underground resources (FAO, 1973; 1978) to almost total depletion a few decades after (FAO, 1997; 2009). Sewage effluents were then non-treated and systematically discarded into the Gulf waters. This model lasted until the ‘rationalisation’ measures of the 1990s and privatisation reforms projects, the drivers of which will be investigated throughout the thesis.

The early 1990s is a period of increasing economic rationalisation in terms of water policies as it will be developed throughout the thesis. Since then for example, sewage

effluents have been seen by the water authorities as a valuable resource to be increasingly reutilised (Arar, 1991). However, despite the sewage networks extensions and their systematic retreatment, TSEs' reutilisation has been restricted to ornamental purposes and, in Qatar, to the irrigation of forage crops (Amer, 2005). Outside of the coastal areas, the limited groundwater resources are mostly brackish in the three countries and they are allocated by the states to their decreasingly subsidised agriculture (Caponera, 2003). The treated sewage effluents (TSEs) and underground water resources thus remain largely outside the scope of this study on urban desalinated water services, yet the cultural and political reasons underlying the economically sub-optimal allocation of these waters will be evoked in chapter 9, when dealing with the local political culture's influence over water strategies and reforms.

Since the 1990s, the cities of Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City have been relying chiefly, increasingly and heavily on a growing number of large desalination plants for drinkable water (Sommariva et al., 2001; NCBC, 2009). At the scale of each of these 3 emirates, the general water allocation of the different resources is thus more or less the same, and can be mirrored to Abu Dhabi's one, visible in table 2 below. The only significant difference being that Abu Dhabi's larger hinterland holds more underground resources. But there too, they are over-exploited for agricultural purposes.

Table 2 – Water sources and water uses in Abu Dhabi - 2007

Water Source	Water using sector and water use (Mcm/year)							
	Agriculture	Forests	Amenity	People	Livestock	Industry	Lost	Total
Groundwater	1413	579	51		20			1,816
Desalination	76		91	366	183	46	94	856
TSE		130					51	182
Faljs			25					25
Total	1489	709	167	366	203	46	145	3125

Source: Abu Dhabi Water Master Plan, 2009.

Several large desalination plants in Abu Dhabi and Doha are PPPs, following their partial privatisation or after having been initiated ‘from scratch’ by joint ventures. In both cases, the same pattern of PPPs where the State (of Abu Dhabi or Qatar) remains – directly or not - the main stakeholder was followed (Dumortier and Lambert, 2007; NCBC, 2009). In all three cities however, the governments have always kept total control over the distribution. In Kuwait, the 1990s governmental declarations in the sense of PPPs in the desalination production were never followed by implementation, for political reasons that will be expounded in chapter 9 and 10. Consequently, the water governance differs between and among Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City from a capital city to another, not merely in the type of institution supervising the urban desalinated water governance, but also in the extent of the private sector’s participation to the water affairs, as exposed on table 3 on the next page.

To explain these differences in governance, understanding the region’s main political cultural forces and trends is an obvious pre-requisite. Tribalism and Islam in Arabia have traditionally been depicted as the two most powerful and/or unchallenged cultural forces responsible for framing internal Arabian politics for centuries (e.g. Cottrell et al. 1980; Hopwood, 1972; World Bank, 2003). In the same vein, uncritical journalism has spread the idea that the Arabian ‘petro-monarchies’ constitute a political anachronism⁴³ in modern times and were - beyond a vague discourse of regional democratisation – a democratic desert. These are gross and misleading generalisations as this thesis will demonstrate. Gause (1994) called for a study of contemporary Arabian societies and politics beyond the “*conventional wisdom*” of tribalism and Islam as (sole) pillars of the traditional social-political governance.

⁴³ In the 1960s, many analysts considered that the Arab world’s monarchies would be swept away by the revolutionary movements of Arab socialism led by the Nasserian Egypt, or Arab Nationalism led then by Baathist Syria and Iraq. Samuel Huntington for instance, was among those predicting then that all Arabian monarchies were to disappear sooner or later (see Herb, 2005).

Table 3 – An overview of the private participation in the Gulf coastal area of the GCC, as of 2012

Country of the GCC	Institution supervising the water sector	Independent Water Producers' ownership	Private Sector involved in Operation and Maintenance	Private Sector in Management and Billing
Bahrain	Authority	(3), owned by private consortia	Yes	No
Kuwait	Ministry	None	Yes	No
Oman	Authority	(3), state not always shareowner	Yes	No
Qatar	Corporation	(4), state remains indirect shareholder	Yes	No
Saudi Arabia	Ministry	(2), state remains main shareholder	Yes	No
UAE	Local authorities for Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah; Federal authority for	(9), Authority remain main shareholder	Yes	In some emirates only

	poorer emirates			
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Laurent Lambert. Sources: Global Water Intelligence; Zawya information and the official websites of the ADWEA (Abu Dhabi/UAE), FEWA (Federal level/UAE), Ministry of Water & Electricity of Kuwait, Ministry of Water and Electricity of Saudi Arabia, Kahrabaa (Qatar), Bahraini Authority for Water & Electricity, Omani Authority for Water & Electricity.

III – Common features of the regional political culture and diverse institutional milieus of the urban water politics of Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City

The triangulation of the literature on the GCC political cultures, interviews and field observations in GCC cities indicated that in addition to the role played by Islam and tribalism, Arabness, Western political influences, and, for the past half century, redistributive rentierism and multi-culturalism, should not be underestimated and require some explanations. They will be introduced in the following section, in a diachronic perspective, to facilitate the understanding of the complexity and diversity of the GCC local political cultures that have shaped the models of urban water services of Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City since at least the time of their independence.

III.1 - The long-term influence of tribalism over Arabian politics

In the Arabian Peninsula, the tribe (*qabila* in Arabic) has been a fundamental social unit for several millennia, i.e. well before the Muslim era. A tribe relies on a social cohesion based on the '*asabiyyah* (a feeling of belonging to and loyalty) towards a kinship defined by a common ancestor, either invented or real (see Lienhardt, 2001; Heard-Bey, 1999; Haddad, 2009). Tribes are led by a shaykh, i.e. an elder. Grafton (2012) explains that historically, a shaykh of a family or clan was the leader since he was "*known for his prowess and ability to protect the community*". The term shaykh (or shaykha for a female) can sometimes also serve as a sign of significant respect for an elderly person within a community or family system (Wehr, 1980, p.496). Though it is widely used within Muslim circles to designate a

particularly learned member of a religious community, the tribal position of Shaykh actually preceded Islam by centuries and is not restricted to Muslim communities (Grafton, 2012).

Tribalism, bedouinism and nomadism refer to distinct notions and, though at times overlapping one another, should not be confused. Tribalism refers to some kinship systems of extended solidarity; Bedouins (*badû*) strictly speaking refer to the inhabitant of rural areas (generally semi-arid desert steppes, called *badiyya*), while the term nomads describes populations without a permanent settlement and who move according to the season or pasture conditions. If all nomads of Arabia are Bedouins (i.e. rurals) and belong to a tribe, all members of a tribe are not necessarily nomads or even Bedouins. Following a pragmatic strategy of risk management, especially vis à vis meteorological uncertainty, the largest tribes had clans and sections in different economic activities, beyond the two main activities of pastoralism and oasis seasonal agriculture, such as trade, fishing, pearl diving, (permanent) commerce in a city market, etc.

If environmental determinism is a contested approach within social sciences to explicate human groups' social organisation and politics, it remains so far prevalent – albeit more or less directly in recent scholarship - in the study of pre-oil Arabia and its social institutions⁴⁴. The explanation for the Bedouin tribal social structures in Arabia is that the harsh environment of the Arabian Peninsula in pre-oil era made impossible for individuals or nuclear families to survive in the semi-arid coastal environments or the arid to hyper-arid hinterland without an extended solidarity group, due to the extreme aridity and hectic precipitation patterns. On the other hand, and more importantly arguably, this social strategy enabled also to better manage risks associated with the lack of state-enforced security in rural areas. This solidarity and protection network among extended families has enabled the smaller

⁴⁴ See Frauke Heard-Bey's ([1986] 1999) brief discussion of this issue in the chapter 1 of her book 'From Trucial States to United Arab Emirates'.

social unit, the tent/family (*al bayt*), to herd its flocks to water wells and greener pastures with greater security and more freely even in remote desert areas. The anthropological analysis of the Arabian tribes' ecology and Arabic tribal discourse have led Lancaster and Lancaster (1999) to interpret the tribe as an identity that provides access to a social structure and its processes.

Al-Khawaja (1989) described the nomadic tribal folks as constituting *"a close knit community, bound together by a complex network of relationships which had, as its nucleus, loyalty to the immediate family, a loyalty which spread out to encompass the extended family and the tribe."* This concentric loyalty to the immediate family first, then the extended family, then the tribe and eventually the tribal confederation reflects a segmentation-based social system that is aptly expressed in the following Bedouin word: *"I against my brother, my brothers and I against my cousins, then my cousins and I against strangers"*. Paradoxically, this segmentation-based social system – when domesticated after a long process – eventually played a certain role in the construction of national identities, the nationality eventually appearing as yet another concentric layer of identity and loyalty. As a consequence, the non-Nationals who live in the GCC countries do not benefit from the same level of social cohesion than the Nationals among themselves. This has a direct influence on the urban water services governance of Abu Dhabi and Doha for instance, as it will be explained in chapter 9.

Tribalism also played a role in the legitimisation process of the ruling dynasties in the main Gulf coastal cities, due to the tribal legitimacy of the ruling shaikhly families. The ruling families of Kuwait, Qatar and Abu Dhabi - namely the Al-Sabah, the Al-Thani and the Al-Nahyan - all come from their respective Nation's most powerful and politically habile tribal group. Those groups' respective shaykh has been instituted as the ruler (Hakim) of a coastal urban community (Kuwait City, Doha and Abu Dhabi) during the 19th or early 20th century and eventually became the Head of State during the 20th century modernisation.

Tribes can form particularly large groups, spanning vast regions, and can constitute social institutions of remarkable economic, military and political power and longevity, making for this purpose tribal alliances and marriage strategies among themselves. Al-Qassemi (2012) illustrated this latter point with the example of the large tribal group of the ‘Anazas, constituted of a number of smaller but nonetheless very influential tribes.

"Today, the ruling dynasties of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Kuwait all belong to the ‘Anazas of central Arabia. The ‘Anaza tribe is amongst the largest and most ancient Arabian tribes. Its members can be traced back to Prophet Mohammed’s companions and its descendants can be found across the Arabian Peninsula (...). In 1891, the ruling Al Rashid tribe of Hai’l exiled the family of Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud, the founder of modern Saudi Arabia, to his tribal ‘Anaza cousins in Kuwait. Abdul Aziz, only fifteen years old at the time, remained there for eleven years before leading forces back into Riyadh and capturing it from the Al Rashid family in a bloody battle. Almost exactly a century later, as Saddam Hussein’s forces invaded Kuwait, the Al Sauds returned the favour by offering sanctuary to the Kuwaiti ruling family when they were forced into exile during the attendant Iraqi occupation. Similarly, when the rule of the Al Khalifa regime of Bahrain was in jeopardy in the spring of 2011, Saudi Arabia sent in troops—along with the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—to the island kingdom as part of the Peninsula Shield Forces. Three months later, one of the Bahraini king’s sons, Sheikh Khalid Bin Hamad, got engaged to the daughter of the Saudi King Abdullah. Another of his sons, Sheikh Nasser, a full brother of Sheikh Khalid from a Saudi mother, had already married the daughter of the ruler of Dubai and UAE Prime Minister in 2009. The vast reach of the ‘Anaza tribe across the Arab world cannot be overestimated."

Source: Al-Qassemi (2012)

The settlement and integration of the nomad tribal elements into growing cities represented political ecological challenges to the newly-independent states. The tribal populations provoked increased stress on the scarce and fragile coastal water resources, but they also were not keen on abandoning their customary grazing rights over what they considered their tribal lands to International Oil Companies (IOCs) which had paid concession rights to the ruler. As explained by Al-Khawaja (1989) *"this complex system has withstood generations and, until recently [the time of oil revenues and urban development],*

the Bedouin remained fiercely independent and committed to their traditional attitudes and way of life". This was upon tribal lines that the ruling families of the Gulf shaykhdoms, the newly born emirates, allocated compensations such as lands with hydraulic equipments, works in the central administration or even free social housing neighbourhoods⁴⁵ with modern urban services, etc. Because of the tribes' traditional loyalty to their Shaykh, tribal elites have always been well taken care of by political authorities with prestigious governmental positions and their tribes have been particularly recruited in security forces, where they are now prevalent.

Nomadism has now completely disappeared from Abu Dhabi, Kuwait and Qatar, and the rurals are now a small minority, since the urbanisation rates in these polities are all over 95%⁴⁶. The word *Badu* (which used to designate the rurals and particularly the nomads) now refers to recent town-dwellers⁴⁷, who define their identity primarily by their tribe and organise their social life accordingly, e.g. for marriage, the elections, job-searching, to define where it is appropriate to live in the city, etc. To the *Badu* is generally opposed – though they may share remote tribal affiliations – the *Hadari* (literally the 'civilised'). A Hadari is a town-dweller whose family settled in the city prior to the oil era, whose name generally does not directly refer to a tribe and who mostly defines his identity by his close family. For instance, the long-established Behbehani Merchant family in Kuwait is considered Hadari (yya) since it has long established itself in the emirate's capital as a Merchant family and since it does not

⁴⁵ There are several studies on the allocations of whole neighbourhoods to populations according to their tribal origins and the societal consequences of this urban tribal geography in the GCC countries. See for instance Al-Zubi (1999), "Urbanisation, tribalism, and tribal marriage in contemporary Kuwait" (January 1, 1999).

ETD Collection for Wayne State University. Paper AAI9932953.

⁴⁶ According to The Economist Intelligence, figures for 2010 give urban population ratios of 98.4% in Kuwait and 95.8% in Qatar. The federal figure for the UAE indicates that 87.6% of the whole population is urban, while this figure is higher in the emirate of Abu Dhabi than in the poorer Northern emirates such as Ras al-Khaymah or Fujayrah.

⁴⁷ The notion of 'recent' town dwellers is of course subjective and can be contested. Yet the idea that emerged from interactions with Nationals, Badu and Hadari, and with anthropologists in Abu Dhabi and Kuwait was that families that had come to the city after the oil era had not the same legitimacy than other populations installed before, for at least three generations.

claim to belong to a tribe. The importance in this country of the tribes in parliamentary politics (to the concern of the Hadaris who used to dominate it), has been well encapsulated by Nuseibeh's (2009) analysis of tensions within the Kuwaiti society:

"More than a dozen major tribes make up around half of Kuwait's one million citizens (...). Tribal MPs won about half of parliament's 50 seats in this year's election [i.e. 2009]. In recent polls, the tribes' tactic of holding primaries to pick candidates has caused controversy because political parties are illegal in Kuwait."

Source: Nuseibeh (2009, p.1)

For political scientists and development specialists, tribalism and patrimonialism more generally represent archaic social-political phenomenon, even a backward 'bane' to peace and development (Cacho, 2008), to meritocracy (Al-Qassemi, 2012) and to the rule of law and accountability (Fukuyama, 2011). Interviewee Ahmad Al-Shahi⁴⁸ argues that the Gulf societies of the Arab shaykhdoms should not be understood with exterior/foreign intellectual models, either marxist or capitalist, but considered as an original social-political model in itself, in which kinship is very important. Al-Shahi explained the standard organisation of labour of this social-political system: the tribal elite rules, the merchant families are in charge of trade, and the rest of the society is occupied in productive tasks. The merchants or the lay people do not govern but can directly speak to the ruler, through his tribal *majlis* (i.e. 'council') for instance, and it is not exceptional that these direct talks, more or less formal, influence political decisions. The significance of this pre-modern tribal institution in modern politics should not be under-estimated.

While there were great concerns and social stress with the economic and social changes induced by the first oil concessions revenues prior and after World War II (see Lienhardt, 1993), political stability was preserved in the developing polities of Abu Dhabi, Kuwait and

⁴⁸ Author's first interview with Dr. Ahmed Al-Shahi, 8th July 2008, The Middle East Centre, Oxford University.

Qatar, although they were deprived of most of the institutional and organisational constituents of a modern polity (e.g. political parties, an independent judicial system, universities, etc.). This paradoxical stability without an institutional development matching the region's deep social changes until at least the 1960s, can primarily be explained by the efficient intermediation of traditional tribal institutions as well as the influence of a political culture that was foreign to public expressions of political discontent, especially outside of the reference frames of the family, clan or tribe. Al-Dhahiri (2007) explains indeed that the "*UAE society is still affected by the legacies of the past that have been passed onto it through the Bedouins' experience, where consensus is paramount.*"

Al-Qassemi (2012) evoked a general pattern of 'tribal governance' in the coastal emirates. For him, "*(t)ribal governance in the Arabian Peninsula today entails allocating certain government posts known as "sovereign portfolios" to family members. These portfolios include defence, foreign affairs, security, intelligence, the interior ministry, and the premiership.*" A system of tribal regime that Al-Qassemi – though himself from a major ruling tribal confederation in the UAE – sees as nefarious. "*This system all but ensures complete allegiance and loyalty to the tribal leader, takes precedence over competence, and undermines meritocracy*" (Al-Qassemi, 2012, p.5).

Despite obvious influences of Islam in the social life and references to it in the Constitutions of Qatar, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, Ilyi Harik (1990) classified in his typology of Arab states their tribal social-political model as 'traditional secular system[s]' on the basis that political authority was "*vested into dynasties free from religious attributes*" and because of their legal systems where "*the role of [tribal] tradition in these cases is preeminent*"; a point also defended by Heard-Bey (1999, p.132). This does not mean at all that Islam has no political or legal influence, but rather that it is not the most influential one

for legislation. Yet Islam has always been such a major trait of the local culture that it has consistently played a role in politics.

III.2 - Islam as a *tendance lourde* in the Eastern Shaykhdoms' political culture

Within a few decades after the Islamic revelation in 7th C. Western Arabia, the whole of the Peninsula adopted this religion and spread it across continents. Nowadays the Arabian Peninsula, hosting the two cities of Mecca and Madinah, remains intellectually associated to Islam by Muslims within and without Arabia. Yet the great diversity of Islamic strands in the sub-region is rarely acknowledged. The Peninsula is indeed a living mosaic: mostly Malikite Sunnis among Nationals of Kuwait, Abu Dhabi and Dubai (UAE); Ibadites in Oman; Wahhabi Salafis in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Sharjah (UAE) and Ras al-Khaimah (UAE); Zaydi Shiites in Northern Yemen but Maliki, Shafi'i and Salafi Sunnis in Southern Yemen; a majority of Ja'fari Shiites in Bahrain and minorities in all GCC countries, etc. In addition to these 'indigenous' sects, Muslim migrant workers in all GCC countries (e.g. Hanafi Sunni South Asians and Shiite Iranians) and non-Muslim expatriates (e.g. Catholic Philipinos, Indian and Nepalese Hindus) have significantly diversified, complexified and even blurred the religious landscape of the GCC.

The tribal concentric system of production of identity, described above, has made the sect another layer of belonging, cohesion and loyalty. This explains why Kuwaiti, Qatari and Emirati Nationals display such openly religious signs as the '*abaya* (a long black dress for women) which – contrary to Iran and Saudi Arabia – is not imposed at all by law upon female citizens. The ruling elites of Abu Dhabi, Kuwait and Qatar tend to be significantly more secular and socially liberal than their populations as will be seen later on. GCC women eagerly display their '*abaya* to show to which privileged 'ethnic' group they belong (i.e. the

Nationals), and the way of wearing it – slightly different from a Sunni to a Shiite – can indicate the sect of the individual. This identity layer plays a role in social and political affairs for minorities like the Shiite Nationals in all six GCC countries. In our three coastal capital cities, their number varies from as much as 20-40% in Kuwait City to 5-10% in Doha⁴⁹. This also plays a role in the context of elections in Kuwait City, during which voters have proved more likely to vote for candidates of their sect (e.g. the Shiites) or religious ideology (e.g. the Salafists), even though they may not necessarily be particularly religious persons themselves. While in Kuwait prior to the spring 2009 elections, the author investigated the identity issue with groups of students on the campus of Kuwait University. A number of the students there, though all are members of a neutral student union, explained that they would vote in the Parliamentary elections based on their affiliation to the candidates. While a Sunni Badu, X Al-Mutairi, decided he would vote again for his Al-Mutairi tribal 'relatives' (that he seemed not to know personally), a Shiite student explained he would vote for the Shiite candidates who had been designated by his community during (illegal) sectarian primaries. Consequently, the candidates elected upon sectarian lines may not necessarily have a religious vision or program. They primarily defend the clientelist interests and aspirations of their community. This organisation of private interests groups in Kuwait has important consequences on the urban water governance as chapter 9 will demonstrate.

Islamic shariah is sometimes described as a “*golden thread*” of all the GCC legislations. In the three countries, Islam is indeed referred to in all Constitutions, and in Kuwait and Qatar Shariah is respectively referred to as “*a main source*” and “*the main source*” of legislation⁵⁰. But Harik’s (1990) above-mentioned argument that “*the role of [tribal] tradition in these*

⁴⁹ It is very difficult to find reliable estimates on the highly politicised issue of the Shiite populations in the GCC countries. The governments provide figures that are generally considered lower than reality by the Shiites themselves. We have consequently chosen to propose indicative intervals based on the government figures (lowest figures) and the much higher figures generally claimed by the minority itself through the media.

⁵⁰ Extracts from the Constitution of the State of Qatar, article 1 (see www.constitution.org/cons/qatar/constit_2003.htm), and the Constitution of the State of Kuwait, article 3 (see www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/ku00000_.html). Links last visited 30/07/2012.

cases is preeminent” is nevertheless justified⁵¹. Shariah’s role is mostly limited to family law and serves almost exclusively to regulate inheritance, marriages and divorces, etc.

Shariah’s original meaning is the path towards a water point, as indicated by the Encyclopedia of Islam. In an early Islamic context, this also meant a spiritual path towards something extremely precious. Carney (1983) explains that the Shariah does not just refer to an Islamic law, as often found in a simplifying literature. But it is "*equally law and morality, as well as religion and etiquette*" (Carney, 1983). It could be observed during the time in the region that Islamic religiosity in the GCC coastal cities goes well beyond legislation and parliamentary politics, thereby completely supporting what Lienhardt ([1957] 2001) and Heard-Bey ([1982] 1999, p.131) had written before. In the emirates, popular religiosity is traditionally plainly embedded into the Nationals’ daily life, which in turns appears to them as an Islamic one. There are prayer rooms in all public buildings; most Nationals go to pray when the call to prayer is heard all over the city and generally silently respected (e.g. no National would publicly turn on a radio at this time); Ramadan is a month of fasting followed by virtually all adult Muslims, disregarding their sect, degree of religiosity, gender or age. The two annual Muslim holy days of ’Eid are days off with public celebrations, etc. This religious sense also influences the eating habits and more generally the perceptions of purity and impurity. For many observers, Islam represents "*one of the most influential forces in the Arab world moulding and regulating individual and group behaviour and outlooks*" (Yousef, 2000). This is especially true in the Gulf countries, where it has influenced the political cultures. Some major modern political institutions in the three studied emirates trace their origin to a few key Islamic institutions that need to be briefly introduced: *shurah*

⁵¹ Between September 2008 and June 2009, and in parallel to the interviews of water professionals, the author made field investigations and conducted interviews that appraise the exact role of Islam in local politics during field visits to the Ministry of Justice in Doha, the authorities for religious affairs in Abu Dhabi and Doha, and with religious figures in Kuwait City, as will be developed later on.

(consultation), *ijma'* (consensus) and, last but not least *amîr/Emir* (commander or chief, in Arabic).

On the international stage the UAE, Kuwait and Qatar are modern states, but for domestic and regional understanding, they are primarily *imârât* (emirates). This means that these polities are headed by an *amîr* (emir) who holds supreme (but not absolute) authority within the polity. He does so in his Islamic quality of *waliyy al-amr* (the [legitimate] custodian of authority), although he may not be a religious figure at all. As already mentioned, the GCC heads of states are members of a tribal elite who owe their position to their kinship and to a time honoured belief that their clan or family is the most suitable one to advance the whole community's interests.

The principle of *Shura* (consultation), which stems from the Quran⁵², the Sunnah and early Islamic traditions, has overall always been applied in Eastern Arabia – albeit to different degrees and under very different forms. What the three polities have in common is that the Emirs of Abu Dhabi, Kuwait and Qatar are all tribal shaykhs, and all three have to implement in a way the *shura* principle through their tribal majlis, where they directly listen to the Nationals' problems, concerns and requests. Beyond this however, the absence in the Quran and Hadiths of theological precisions as to who exactly should participate to the Shura, what topics should be debated and to which extent the decisions from the Shura should influence or impose themselves upon the ruler and State has led to a diversity of practices in the GCC. Today in Abu Dhabi, the Shura principle is implemented for instance through the *amiri diwan* (office of the Emir), a form of powerful cabinet which constitutes technocrats the Amir consults for decision-making and where he meets important personalities from the Nation and beyond. In Qatar, the (so far non-elected) parliament is named *Majlis al-Shura* (literally

⁵² The word and principle of *Shura* are explicitly referred to three separate times in the Quran. First in Quran 2:233 on family affairs, then in Quran 42:38 (in a chapter title Shura) for community consultation over religious matters and finally in Quran 159:3, on consultation as a mean for social and political cohesion.

"assembly of the consultation"). It proposes and advises the Emir over new legislation and State budgeting. Far more institutionalised, even if the word *Shura* is not apparent in its name, the Kuwaiti *Majlis al-Ummah* (National Assembly) provides the Emir a major place of consultation, ideas and debates. But in this specific case, and contrary to Sunni Medieval Islamic political theory⁵³, the Emir is not supposed to attend the sessions and more importantly he cannot pass legislation without the approval of a majority of the Assembly, as already mentioned.

Unlike in Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, i.e. the so-called 'Northern Gulf' Arab countries, where Islamic diversity has often led to stiff religious tensions, the smaller Shiite minorities and heavier Bedouin influence in the lower Gulf countries (i.e. Qatar, the UAE and Oman) have produced a more pragmatic *modus vivendi*. Al-Dhahiri (2007) argued that Islam in the Eastern Emirates *"has been able to augment the Bedouin principles that support limitless compromise and strengthen it further with the concept of consensus which is central in the Islamic faith."*

The Sunni Muslim scholars have traditionally given great value to consensus (*ijma'*). This can be limited to religious affairs among scholars of a same sect or opened to include all significant segments of a society, as preferred in a tribal context. This Islamic-tribal influence can be seen as a factor of social harmony and political stability, but also, as will be seen, as a potential obstacle to economic reforms in Arabia.

III.3 - Arabness: language, identity and politics in Kuwait, Qatar and Abu Dhabi

Arabness (*al-'urûba*) has without any doubt been influencing, though more or less successfully over time, the political cultures of Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

⁵³ See for instance the two main references of classical Sunni Islamic political theory that are Al-Mawardi' and Abu Ya'la's treaties, both entitled *aHkâm al-sultâniyya* (the rules of the [political] authority). The Shiite or Ibadhi doctrines are not considered here because the GCC polities of Kuwait, Qatar and Abu Dhabi are inhabited by mostly Sunni Arabs and have been governed for several centuries by Sunni ruling families.

In all three countries' constitutions, there are references to the Arab identity of the State, the solidarity towards the larger Arab nation and/or “*sister Arab states*”, and to Arabic as the State's official language⁵⁴. Corm (2003, p.201) argued that “*despite the fragmentation of Arab societies in several states and rival systems and despite the [tribal and sectarian] segmentation that exists within each society, Arabness is nonetheless the common identifier of societies in the Middle East and North Africa.*” He concludes that “(t)his constitutes a compelling argument to adopt as object of research Arab societies, studied within their linguistic and historical community” (Corm, 2003, 201-202).

Arabness, or ‘being an Arab’, has been defined in different ways by a number of intellectuals and scholars⁵⁵. One of the broadest and most authoritative definitions, that of Rodinson (1979), defined as ‘Arabs’ “(t)hose who belong to the Arab ethnic group, the Arab people or the Arab nation, speak a form of Arabic and consider it their “natural” language; regard the history and cultural characteristics of the Arabs as their inheritance; assert an Arab identity or consciousness” (1979, pp.50-51). Arabness should not be confused with Arab nationalism or Panarabism which refer to nationalist ideologies that stemmed from the modern politicisation of this shared Arab identity during the late 19th and 20th C.

A consensus on Arabness among Arabists and Historians of the region stresses the central role of the language, Arabic, for the very definition of who the Arabs are (e.g. Corm, 2003; Rodinson, 1979; Mardam-Bey, 2005). Mardam-Bey (2005) explicates that it is “*a powerful identity 'ferment'*” all over the region. In the 20th C., Arabness has gained, through diverse secular Arab nationalist ideologies, a significant political influence throughout the Middle East and North Africa, including the Arab Gulf polities. With the signing of a Treaty with the British in 1892 by Abu Dhabi and other Trucial states, followed by the 1899 Anglo-

⁵⁴ Arabic is the official language in all three countries as explicitly mentioned in the constitutions of Kuwait (article 3), Qatar (article 1) and the UAE (article 7).

⁵⁵ For historically contextualised overviews of these debates, see Ait-Chaalal (2007) or Choueiri (2000).

Kuwait Treaty, the shaikhdoms of Abu Dhabi and Kuwait put a final end to the Ottoman Sultanate's suzerainty over their territory. They apparently followed no official religious rationale, only sovereignty purposes (see on this period Anscombe, 1997; Heard-Bey, 1999; Hakima, 2004). These were, in a Hobbesian sense, the first expressions of state sovereignty from these rising Arabian city-states.

During World War I, Central and Western parts of Arabia, then led by rival dynasties, also fought the Ottomans with the assistance of the British to establish an Arab rule all over Arabia and the Near-East. In 1916, the Al-Thani of Qatar put an end to the ailing Ottoman suzerainty and signed a protection treaty with the British, similar to the ones signed by Abu Dhabi and Kuwait. But the 'great Arab revolt' did not produce the promised independent Arab kingdom, and actually led to an unrivalled political influence of the British Empire over the Arabian Peninsula, the Gulf and most of the Near-East. It was in this colonial context that modern Arab nationalist movements emerged as powerful mass ideologies and gradually obtained the independence of an increasing number of Arab countries. This included revolutionary groups taking over British-backed monarchies, as in Egypt (1952), Iraq (1958), the Federation of South Arabia (1967) or Libya (1969). This partly explains the great doubt of most observers in the 1960s and early 1970s over the future of the newly independent Arabian emirates of the Gulf coast (see Arthur, 1999).

This resulted in an 'Arab cold war' between Western-backed monarchies led by Saudi Arabia and the Egyptian-led republican Arab countries and related revolutionary cells and guerrillas they supported in Arabia, especially in the two Yemen and Oman. The monarchies consequently had to cautiously manage a redoubtable tension between a popular sympathy for Pan-Arabist ideas domestically and all over the region on the one hand, and these regimes' logical concern for their own legitimacy and survival. It was against this complex background that the small Arab Gulf monarchies of Kuwait, Qatar and the UAE gained independence. The

most enduring political features from this Arab nationalist influence were the State rhetoric and practices emphasising:

- The Arab identity, in the law and education system;
- Solidarity and cooperation among sister Arab nations in foreign affairs;
- Complete sovereignty and security overall strategic internal affairs of the State (energy, water and electricity) vis à vis foreign powers;
- A modern, sovereign and strong State (to contrast with the pre-colonial backward administration and colonial pattern of puppet leaders)

With these Statecraft elements, the Arab monarchies could boast a certain Arab nationalist legitimacy for domestic consumption in the dangerous context of the Arab Cold War. This intra-Arab conflict ceased after the devastating Arab defeat of 1967 against Israel and the 1970 death of Egyptian President Nasser. But the resumed inter-State Arab solidarity, evident in the 1973 oil embargo against Israeli supporters, was again short lived. In summer 1990, the Iraqi army brutally invaded Kuwait and occupied the country. This constituted the single most important challenge to the GCC regimes of the twentieth century, as most of them felt betrayed and lethally threatened by Iraq. Meanwhile the extreme vulnerability of their countries had become obvious to their disenchanted populations. For this reason and for the tensions it resumed among Arab countries, the invasion of Kuwait and 1991 war against Iraq was a watershed in GCC politics. During the crisis the Arab monarchies kept nevertheless two formidable assets against Iraq and its supporters in the Arab world: oil and the powerful foreign allies that it provides.

III.4 - Western political influences

The British had initially come to the Gulf region in the 18th C. to protect and secure its maritime route between England and the Indian Vice-Royalty. Since that time and until their departure from the region in the 1970s, the British became slowly but increasingly in charge

of the Gulf Arab shaykhdoms' affairs. First and foremost of the foreign affairs, especially vis-à-vis other powers (the Ottomans, Saudis, French, etc.)

The idea of transforming these emirates into official protectorates had been discussed in London in 1902, but had eventually been discarded out of concern that this enterprise would also yield the responsibility to deal with the hinterland's complicated tribal affairs (Heard-Bey, 1997, p.324). Over the decades nevertheless, agreements were made over trade, duties, monopolies, telegraph, postal services, the financing of small health projects, etc. Until their departure, this British influence produced the following form of division of political and legal responsibilities. The Emirs and ruling families supported by the British dealt with tribal internal affairs, Islamic and customary law; while the British managed the defence and international politics (including dealing with the border issue at times). In the last decades of this informal protectorate, when oil had been discovered, it also included infrastructure modernisation and the development of new and modern institutions with long-lasting consequences: the birth of a modern education sector, of a growing English-speaking bureaucracy, and last but not least, the development of written laws, codes and registers for land property, exploration rights and an increasing number of commercial activities.

The gradual modernisation of property law, which became of major importance at the time of oil exploration and exploitation, has had one of the deepest and most lasting impacts upon modern politics. "Under British influence - Ismail and Ismail (1991) argued - *communal ownership was transformed into private ownership*" (1991, p.456). A large area of rural land and its wells for instance, would not belong by customary rights to such or such family, clan or tribe anymore, but were delimited and fragmented by the State and each piece allocated either to the State or to an individual from the former group of users.

Another major lasting legacy from the British indirect rule in Kuwait, Qatar and Abu Dhabi has been the dependence on foreign technocrats, military officers and high level advisors. The major role played by British foreign workers and British-educated foreigners in nurturing a political proximity of view between the Gulf polities and London is not a recent or temporary phenomenon. Onley (2004) encapsulated in the following lines how important the native proxies were for the Empire at the time of the protectorates in the whole Gulf region:

"The secret to the Gulf Residency's effectiveness was the extent to which its infrastructure worked *within* the indigenous political systems of the Gulf. Arab rulers in need of protection collaborated with the Resident to maintain the Pax Britannica, while influential men from affluent Arab, Persian, and Indian merchant families served as the Resident's "native agents" in over half of the political posts within the Gulf Residency. The result was a collaborative power triangle between the Resident, his native agents, and the rulers that sustained Britain's informal empire in the Gulf during the nineteenth century."

Source: Onley (2004, extract from the abstract)

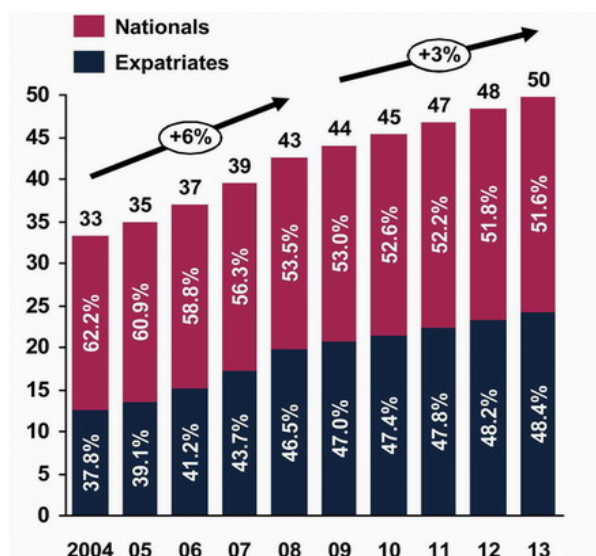
This pattern helps to shed some lights on the role of today's practices. Most of the elites send their children to study abroad, in English speaking countries, especially in England and the USA. The British citizens have been representing since the oil era the largest community of high-skilled expatriates in Abu Dhabi, and one of the largest in Qatar and Kuwait. Even today, the States of the Gulf are recruiting Anglophone expatriates despite an important unemployment rate among the Nationals under 40. Finally, either the GCC rulers or their sons, or three generations of them as in Qatar, may have studied at the military school of Sandhurst, in UK. As chapter 9 will demonstrate, this massive presence of British and Western expatriates as well as Western-trained Nationals in the private and public sectors cannot be dissociated from the transfer of governance models and political reforms observed in our case studies.

Finally, an important legacy from the influence of the British Indian Vice-Royalty is the multiplicity of statuses, codes and legal rights and obligations for the diverse communities living in the GCC societies. This multiculturalism and diversity of rights, particularly with populations from the Commonwealth (chiefly from South Asia), is certainly the most visible heritage of the British legacy in today's Gulf societies.

III.5 - Multiculturalism and different rights to the urban services

Over the past half century, oil revenues generated in the GCC states have financed a fast-paced development that has attracted to the region, millions of foreign workers from all over the world. Foreign workers were invited to massively participate to "*one of the largest infrastructure construction drives in history*" (AM, 2011). This drive has relatively receded since the 1960s and 1970s, when the Gulf countries had to build almost all the infrastructures of a modern country: hospitals, secondary schools, highways, electric stations, drinking water networks, sewage systems and treatment plants, etc. But the focus on developing the non-oil sector and diversifying economies with various industries, tourism infrastructures, a buoyant real estate and construction sector generated over the past decade as well as considerable employment opportunities that were again mostly occupied by a foreign workforce. Across the GCC, the private sector prefers foreign workers over Nationals since the former accept lower salaries, while having often more advanced experience and expertise, and with more flexible hiring arrangements (AM, 2011). The social fabric of the GCC region is becoming unique, as shown in figure 8 on the next page, in that the foreigners represent almost half of the total population.

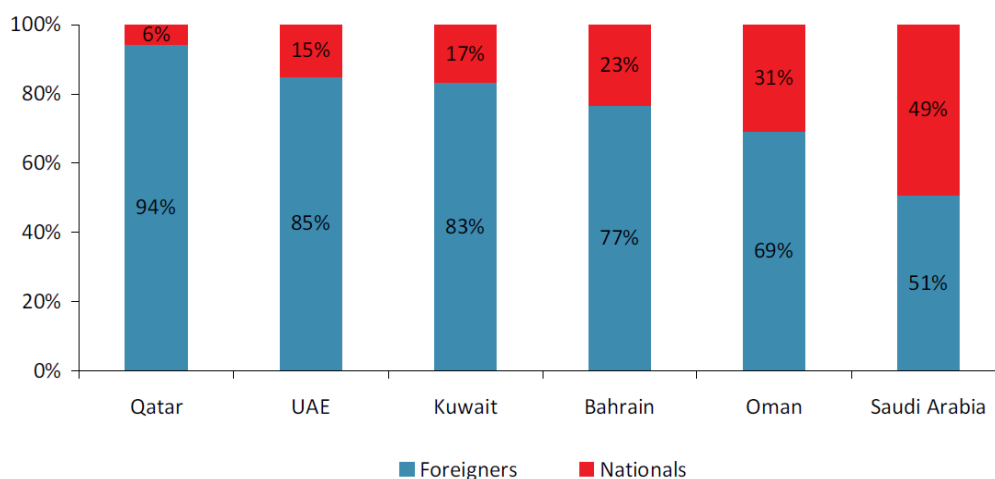
Figure 8: GCC Population, Nationals and Expatriates (2004-13) in millions, with % and CAGRs



Sources: Qatar National Bank for the data (QNB, 2012); Qatarisbooming.com for the figure.

The situation in Abu Dhabi, Kuwait and Qatar is even more seriously unbalanced than this regional average, with the presence of a much larger number of foreign workers than National citizens (with ratios over 6 to 1 in Qatar and Abu Dhabi). The Nationals/Expatriates ratio is even more unbalanced in the active population, as shown on figure 9 below.

Figure 9: Foreign and native components of the labour force across the GCC as of 2011



Source: AM (2011); London School of Economics and Political Science.

The expatriates' cultures significantly influence how individuals perceive and react to their environment (e.g. Adler, 1990; Ali, 1989; Yousef, 2000). The great number of South Asian and Egyptian workers has brought in their national bureaucratic practices, characterised by a relatively low efficiency and a procedural approach to bureaucracy – in contrast to a goal-oriented approach for instance - towards which the Western expatriates and GCC Nationals can express a general aversion and consider that things deserve serious reforms. A point the Nationals seemed to generally agree upon, and even to integrate as their own discourse. Should it be considered as the domestication of a neoliberal discourse?

Although it is not official, in Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait the *lingua franca* is English, even within some government administrations. Some exceptions remain such as family law, religion and parliamentary affairs, where Arabic generally serves as only the working language. This appears to have reinforced the widespread association of the English/American language - and thereby of the high skilled Western expatriates and their ideas - to the notion of modernity and efficiency.

The language and religion of the Nationals remain predominantly Arabness and Islam nevertheless. The major survey realised by Gallup in 2011 described the GCC societies as having a “*deeply rooted Arab and Muslim heritage*” (Gallup report, 2011, p.7). There are several reasons to this. Since Arabic and Islam constitute the official language and religion of the countries, they have as such always been taught at school to most children of Nationals and some Arab expatriates. There are also strong contingents of Arab migrants, especially from Egypt, Sudan, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen, and of non-Arab but Muslim migrants from Pakistan, India and Bangladesh, who tend to acquire basic Arabic skills, thereby reinforcing the predominant Arab-Muslim local culture.

Last but not least, the governments of Abu Dhabi, Kuwait and Qatar have tried to protect their society from being radically transformed by foreign workers (or mixed couples), by implementing vis à vis foreign workers ‘non-integration policies’ (Beaugrand, 2011): e.g. no easily-available visas, policy of non-naturalisation of expatriates (except for a few highly-skilled Sunni Muslim Arabs), policies to attract nationalities with cultural traits that should deter them from staying (e.g. Catholic Filipinos and Western Europeans), and of greatest importance to our study, no access to the welfare benefits that the Nationals have.

III.6 - Redistributive rentierism and the Gulf monarchies’ modern legitimacy

The redistribution of the oil revenues transformed the State-society relationship. Rentierism was touched upon in chapter 2 and its effects on contemporary urban desalinated water supply will be analysed in chapter 6. The literature on rentierism claims that the rentier state is protected from democratic aspirations from its society because the generous redistribution policy tends to depoliticise it (e.g. Najmabadi, 1987; 1993; Crystal, 1989; 1995; Gause, 1997). This literature asserts that the redistribution of the rent revenues and the absence of taxes constitute trade-offs that enable the authorities to rule without significant popular demand for participation. The field observations and interviews in Abu Dhabi, Qatar and Kuwait provided however a more contrasted and diverse picture.

Conclusion

The GCC monarchies display a variety of political cultures significantly different from Western models of constitutional or parliamentary monarchies. In these polities, the legacy and roles of tribalism, Islam, Arabness, redistributive rentierism, multiculturalism and Western political influences are important elements to understanding the political cultures and institutional settings of local and regional politics. These six *tendances lourdes* are useful on their own to partly explicate the political diversity and to investigate the drivers of change of

water governance, but their dynamic interactions should not be neglected since this brings much deeper analysis. The ruling elites of the GCC cities interpret Islamic concepts differently (such as *shura*, consultation), according to their own rentier structure, political histories and political conditions, and even more so according to their tribal heritage, to their British and Arab nationalist political heritage, etc.

All these elements and the insights from Al-Dhahiri (2007), Harik (1990), Heard Bey (1999), Lienhardt (1993; 2001) and Ahmed al-Shahi eventually support Bevir and Rhodes' (2006) point of view, detailed in chapter 2, that "*the practices of governance originate from actions [or non-actions in some cases] that express beliefs shaped by traditions*" (2010, pp. 20-21 and 157-158). In order to be able to integrate these cultural elements to other dimensions of comparative analysis, i.e. the structural approach and rational choice theory, an integrated methodology taking into account the GCC specificities is needed.

Chapter 5

Researching the Drivers and Barriers to Change in Urban Desalinated Water Governance: Comparative Methodological Framework and Research Techniques

Along the lines of the comparative theoretical framework outlined in chapter 2, this chapter details the methodological framework, the multi-method approach, and research techniques employed in investigating the drivers and barriers to change of the urban desalinated water supply governance in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. This chapter first describes the methodological framework operated for this research. Second, it explains the rationale for using case studies and their selection among the main coastal cities of the GCC. The final section presents the organisation of the year of field research and the research techniques that were implemented.

I - *Problématique* and comparative methodological framework

The holism of DiGaetano and Strom's integrated comparative theoretical framework is perfectly suitable to achieve what Najem (2003) had identified as critically missing in the field of governance studies: identifying and assessing the influence of the heterogeneous forces that have been defining the governance reforms agenda in countries of the South. This thesis takes note of some of the major gaps in the water governance literature discussed in chapter 2, especially concerning the drivers and barriers to change in desalinated water governance; and it takes note of the critical need to address the issues of water governance reforms in arid and coastal cities. To restate the main research question of this thesis, this research asks the key question: "what have been the drivers and barriers to change and their respective influences in the reforms of the GCC coastal cities' desalinated water governance?"

I.1 - Potential, constraints and calibration of the methodological framework

DiGaetano and Strom's (2003) theoretical framework, developed for comparing cross-country urban governance, was perfectly adaptable to our comparative research on the urban water governance across several countries. One could hypothetically consider that a model for comparative analysis designed for *urban* governance may not be appropriate to this research on the basis that it does not cover managing a common pool resource like water. But in our very specific case, this remark may not be so relevant. The GCC capital cities have supply-side management strategies; generally no one and no sector receive insufficient water and, last but not least, they heavily and ever-increasingly rely on manufactured water: mainly desalinated water (from brackish aquifers and increasingly seawater) and its retreatment in yet modest but growing proportions. In other terms, given the governments' strategies to meet all demands through an ever-increasing water production, these capitals are not in a paradigm of penury where some difficult political choices for allocation have to be made to the detriment of others: this is not a 'zero-sum game'.

Based on the literature review, it can be affirmed that this research can be performed with DiGaetano and Strom's theoretical framework provided the following conditions are met:

- The pattern of explanation 'structural -> cultural -> individual agency' has to be considered as a working *assumption*, but not as a postulate; and complex interactions among these 3 dimensions can be considered, beyond DiGaetano and Strom's apparent linear causality;
- Each of the three dimensions should be informed not only by diverse literature, interviews and data, but also by field-based observations of an ethnographic nature (including passive observations) as far as possible;
- Field observations should target both formal and non-formal stakeholders;

- The ‘reading’ of discourses should always be critical, and consider the power asymmetries between and among the stakeholders, as well as the political sensitivity of questions pertaining to local values, decision-making and its processes;
- A flexible, critical, and local-culture-sensitive approach to thinking, social and political institutions, and the notion of governance should prevail.

The role and degree of influence over local water governance of international trade, international aid donors, emerging endogenous civil societies, and more broadly structural factors could probably be assessed ‘only’ with a confrontation of the literature, official data, and a few well-selected structured interviews. But, to be able to critically appraise the influence of the two other dimensions - the local political culture and the individual agency of key actors - a more complete methodological framework was needed. For instance, the transmission of western values and the local feeling of a crisis of legitimacy of the ruling elites – to name but a few of Najem’s drivers of change - should be researched through ethnographic field observations and qualitative semi-directed interviews.

But the GCC polities are social-political systems marked by a strong social stratification. It would be impossible for a DPhil student to observe the daily work of a Minister and his advisors, not least because a significant number of Ministers are Princes from the region’s ruling families. The most appropriate solution in this context was a middle path between more ‘orthodox’ methodologies on the one hand, (generally fed by the literature, data, official communication and interviews), and Bevir and Rhodes’ field-based ethnographic methodology (with field observations and study of individual cases) on the other. By combining in this way a critical approach to the literature and data with empirical fieldwork and qualitative analysis, this work is positioned in the epistemological “*boundary zone*”, where much critical analysis can be achieved (Rocheleau, 1995).

I.2 - Critical considerations for Post-colonial field and literature investigations

The above outlined flaws of the Orientalist and Neo-Orientalist theories (especially their neglect for non-environmental structural factors and local actors' rational agency – see chapter 3) constitute another reason to privilege DiGaetano and Strom's (2003) integrated comparative framework, where factors and forces pertaining to structure, political culture, and individual agency are analysed altogether – and triangulated - to provide a more comprehensive and less ideological picture of public affairs in a foreign milieu. This framework is however not sufficient to prevent the ideological bias emanating from diverse sources that have been fed by Orientalist and Neo-Orientalist sources.

Neo-Orientalist ideas remain prevalent in many academic circles and think tanks, and their underlying assumptions remain widespread and influential (Abrahamian, 2003; Said, 2001; 2004b). This required being alert and critical of the Orientalist and Neo-Orientalist ideological discourses during the interviews and the use of literature when dealing with notions related to ideas of Orient, Arab, Asian, Muslim, Eastern, etc. This required being vigilant concerning the potential bias in descriptions and analyses of local cultures, peoples, social norms, institutions, and values all along the thesis, and particularly in the making of chapters 8, 9 and 10 which focus on non-structural explanatory factors.

The Neo-Orientalist idea of Islam's (alleged) incapacity to accept and hostility towards new or foreign philosophical paradigms (e.g. Kedourie, 1994; Huntington; 1998; Lewis, 1992; 2003a; 2003b) did not serve for instance as an easy explanation for the barriers to change, inertias, or counter-forces to local evolutions in water governance that could have been *a posteriori*, legitimized by some quotes from field interviews and selected papers. To the contrary, the research started from field observations and interviews to gradually and critically construct an understanding of local political culture and structural forces and – as far as possible – of the elites' individual agency over the local water governance.

This critical post-colonial approach has been used not only to process the scholarship and narratives from Westerners and other foreigners, but also to critically analyse the local discourse from individuals and institutions which may have been influenced by essentialist discourses over the years, and might have integrated it and assimilated it as their own (Fanon, 2002 [1961]; Said, 2004a [1978]; Massad, 2007). The literature did not replace nor shape the field, but in dialectic with it provided further information, some confirmations, and some conceptual and methodological elements for a better inquiry. It was thus possible before and during the field research to deconstruct deeply entrenched beliefs fed by powerful writers.

II – A case study approach

This section will first explain the rationale for the use of case studies and then how this approach will be employed.

II.1 - Rationale for the use of case studies and the selection of capital cities

The case study method provides a particularly adapted way to investigate the complexity of natural resources management and/or governance (Crosthwaite, MacLeod & Malcolm, 1997; Darradi et al, 2006; Howitt, 2001). Compared to most methodologies, the case study approach researches a contemporary phenomenon *within* its real-life context (Yin, 1981) and thus preserves the complexity of research: recording, critically processing and restituting the diverse (and often contradictory) perceptions of a phenomenon. Crosthwaite, MacLeod and Malcolm (1997) considered that case studies particularly well suit explanatory questions, the “*how*” and “*why*”. The “*why change*” question refers precisely to the origins; to the drivers of a new dynamic.

Some limitations of the case studies approach should be acknowledged, however. Case studies cannot provide a complete representation of reality, and remain representations of a phenomenon and its context (see Bryman, 1998; Stake 1995). Furthermore, a too limited

number of cases can prevent the establishment of any reliability or generality on the researched issue (Feagin et al, 1991). To perform our research project, a detailed review of all of the coastal cities of the GCC, or of one major city from each of the six GCC states, could not be performed due to limited time and the total absence of literature on their water governance. A few case studies had to be selected.

This research investigates capital cities because the majority of the GCC populations live concentrated in these ever-growing urban bodies. Moreover, researching different capitals meant researching different countries, which enables one to systematically test hypotheses about causal relationships at the *inter*-state level, between and among DiGaetano and Strom's (2003) three different but complementary dimensions/variables: structure, political culture, and individual agency. Of course, the trade-off to this choice is that *intra*-state comparisons are not possible, but since half the GCC states have been, until fairly recently, city-states (Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar), this does not represent a significant shortcoming.

II.2 - Transversal approach to all case studies

To be able to investigate the region's drivers and barriers to change in urban water governance, and to compare among themselves our separate cases, it was necessary to focus on a transversal dynamic of change that has been affecting – effectively or not – all of the urban water supply governance models of the region. One of the major factors of change in the urban water governance of the GCC over the past two decades has been the development of public-private partnerships (PPPs), essentially for water production. PPPs are all the more an interesting angle of research that their widespread use as a tool of governance at the global scale indicates, according to DiGaetano and Strom (2003, p.376), "*a convergence of public policies across local and national borders*" (see also Clark, 2000; Jessop, Peck, & Tickell, 1999; Levine, 1994). But that PPPs for water were successfully and repeatedly implemented

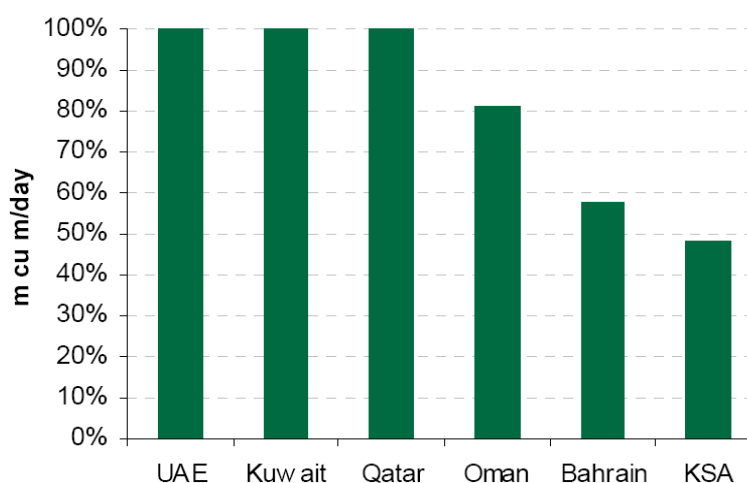
in the metropolitan areas of Abu Dhabi (UAE) and Doha (Qatar) while being totally absent from Kuwait City (Kuwait) or Dubai (UAE) for instance, also indicated to us that this global convergence, and its structural drivers, had faced local barriers in some GCC polities. Consequently, investigating the drivers and barriers to change in the region through the transversal issue of the water supply PPPs in our selected case studies appeared as a perfect method to confront structural elements of convergence with elements of local differentiation stemming – allegedly - from the local political cultures and individual agencies of local actors. Another transversal issue had also been selected, but the rise in water fees – that was expected from the regional dynamics of commodification and privatisation – did not materialise. Some explanations will nevertheless be proposed to shed light on this situation that appears as a specificity of the GCC region's urban freshwater supply governance.

Since the capital cities of the Sultanate of Oman and Saudi Arabia are not located along the Gulf waters, and since these countries are significantly different from the four other GCC members by their much larger territories and quantities of surface water resources in their southern parts, it was decided not to investigate Muscat and Riyadh, but to focus on the rest (4 out of 6) of the GCC capital cities. These latter ones are all coastal cities of less than 2 million inhabitants located between a hyper-arid hinterland and the Gulf waters. The three metropolitan areas⁵⁶ we finally selected are Kuwait City (Kuwait), Doha (Qatar) and Abu Dhabi (Emirate of Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates). Being advised by senior researchers prior to the fieldwork that four cities to investigate would probably require too much fieldwork for the limited time of a DPhil research, Manamah was excluded from the list of case studies. This decision was based on four of Bahrain's peculiarities: Bahrain's highly politicised Shiite majority made its political culture different from other small GCC States, as

⁵⁶ By metropolitan area, we refer to a predominantly urban area made of a populous urban core and its peripheral zones (not necessarily themselves urban areas) that are socio-economically dependent on it.

it eventually became apparent during the 2011 major civil unrest while the Arab spring had limited to no effect over other GCC countries' regime stability. Second, Bahrain's almost complete depletion of hydrocarbon resources also makes it structurally non-representative of the GCC countries, all exporters of hydrocarbons. Third, Bahrain has been significantly poorer than its neighbours for the last 25 years, even prior to the exhaustion of its hydrocarbon resources. Last but not least, as shown on figure 10 below, Bahrain distinguishes itself with its significantly lower dependence on desalination for urban water supply than Abu Dhabi, Qatar, or Kuwait, who are all three depending on it at 100%. Bahrain's level as of 2009 is almost half of it.

Figure 10: Desalinated water vs. municipal consumption in the GCC countries



Source: NCBC, 2009

Perhaps one could argue that bringing in Bahrain would have yielded interesting results precisely because of these unique features. But this is pure speculation while it was sure that having more than one peculiarity/difference with the rest of the group would have provided much greater analytical complexity. It would have been extremely difficult - if possible at all - to discriminate which precise variable(s) among these four main differences with the rest of the group is responsible for a variation in Bahrain's water governance from the rest of the studied cities.

III – Fieldworks and research techniques

The field research was structured into 3 main periods, planned to optimise the time and budget available for this research, and maximise our understanding of the drivers of change in the region, as will be detailed after a few words on the set of research techniques deployed during the field research.

III.1 - Research techniques

The year of field research relied on several techniques, widely used in the social sciences and humanities: unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews, and passive observation.

- **The unstructured interview** is a qualitative research method that originated from sociology and anthropology in order to elicit people's social realities (Zhang, 2006; Zhang, Wildemuth, 2009). Also called 'ethnographic interview', it can provide a more detailed picture of a living and complex behavioural reality than questionnaires or structured interviews. It can give elements and themes that might not have been anticipated otherwise by the researcher, as the unstructured interview is not limited by the interviewer's *a priori* categorisation (Punch, 1998). This, consequently, is perfectly suitable to explore a field neglected by the literature, and with peculiar features such as the water governance in the GCC region.

- **The semi-structured interview**, contrary to the unstructured one, is based on a pre-defined set of questions or special topics. The choice of semi-structured interviews for our research aimed to ensure that each interviewee was presented with comparable questions (the formulation and sequence of which may vary) to enable reliable comparisons between and among our 3 cities. A semi-structured interview is, however, significantly different from a questionnaire or a structured interview for comparative politics by their open-ended formulations. The interview was indeed flexible in the processing of the listed questions

precisely to allow some room for the development of unexpected answers, and to eventually ask complementary sub-questions. It was paid attention to non-verbal communication (e.g. silence, smiles of amusement, signs of embarrassment) and also to avoid stereotyping the interviewees in their answers, be it by profession, nationality, gender, level of education, etc., but to consider unexpected or singular answers. Singular answers were not discarded on the basis of non-representativeness. It was tried rather to ‘make sense’ of it by investigating the rationale of a surprising answer, leading for instance to an additional sub-question, or to a paraverbal feedback indicating our interest in further information.

- **Passive observation**, or non participant observation, is an ethnographic research technique that aims at observing, recording, and analysing the behaviour of one or several individuals or a group, within their context while remaining outside of the phenomena being observed (Pawar et al., 2004). There is now a widely shared – if not consensual – idea that the ambiance and the apparent social intelligence of the moment (for instance the unsaid but commonly understood) should also be paid great attention, carefully described and analysed to be able to provide a relevant meaning to the observations (see Geertz’s explanations of a thick description, 1973). This is what has been repeatedly used over the past decade by Bevir and Rhodes (e.g. 2003, 2004, 2006, 2010) in their interpretative studies of governance, and that this research aimed to apply in a non-Western environment.

III.2 - Organisation of the field research in the Gulf region

As already indicated, the fieldwork for this research - which benefitted from previous fieldworks realised in the region for the BA and MA research - was structured into 3 main periods in the region over the years 2008 and 2009. Here is a description of the organisation of these main periods of field investigation in the three selected capital cities.

Period 1: field research in Abu Dhabi (UAE), 1st Sept. 2008 – 29th Nov. 2008

I began the field research in the Gulf by 3 months in Abu Dhabi since this is where my supervisor Dr. Rachael McDonnell also worked on a regular basis, so that meetings could easily be arranged for any methodological re-adjustment during the first months in the region. Partly building on previous field research done in the UAE for an MA dissertation (though more in the Emirate of Dubai with local and federal water institutions than in neighbouring Abu Dhabi), I explored in-depth the context of the local urban water supply governance, in its socio-economic, historical, cultural, and political dimensions, and mapped-out who were the influential elites. This exploration process lasted almost a month and a half, and was based on the locally available literature and research (local history books and journals, local newspapers archives, museum exhibitions, etc.), interviews of special informants (locally-based anthropologists, historians, journalists, and political scientists, see Annex B) and a (statistically non-representative) exploratory round of unstructured interviews with local consumers. The two dozen unstructured interviews of consumers from diverse national backgrounds and social levels were aimed at learning about local consuming practices, roughly assessing the degree of knowledge of the consumers about the local water institutions and water quality as well as checking whether my list of questions for semi-structured interviews with water professionals had not missed any important relevant point.

By mid-October 2008, the process of semi-structured interviews with a cross-country set of questions for qualitative data began (see Annex C). The interviewed civil servants were from all the water institutions active in the governance of desalinated water supply of Abu Dhabi. To have a broad perspective of the whole sector, this research obtained at least one interview from each institutional actor of the water governance: the regulatory body, the sewage retreatment company, the municipality's department for parks and green areas, etc. In

all of these institutions, passive observation was practiced as much as possible prior, during, and after the interviews, drawing on Bevir and Rhodes' interpretative approach of governance (2003; 2006; 2010). This time spent in the offices, but also in the corridors, lobbies and waiting rooms, was also used to initiate the snowballing process.

Given the prevalent rentier culture evoked in chapter 4, the water institutions are not an easy place to obtain interviews with professionals, except Public Relations (PR) professionals who generally do not share much more than what the institution's website does. In some cases, the self-censorship was particularly high, since interviewees or potential interviewees do fear losing their well-remunerated position. A situation I had already witnessed during periods of field investigation a few years before in the region (especially in Jordan and Dubai), yet in a different academic context.

In order to interview professionals that would otherwise not be attributed the responsibility to communicate with a foreign researcher, and especially on issues pertaining to governance, the author used a snowballing process to meet persons by having recommendations from one interviewee for other potential interviewees, asking a diversity of profiles, positions and water institutions. With this method, I court-circuited any possible censorship from the PR department.

These professionals' perspectives on some topics could substantially differ from the official lines and provide valuable information. Water professionals in Abu Dhabi were asked the same set of relatively loose questions (Annex A) for semi-structured interviews than the one later used in the 2 other Gulf cities (Doha and Kuwait City) during the rest of the year of field-research in the region.

Period 2: Field research in Doha (Qatar), 1st Dec. 2008 – 29th Jan. 2009

Prior to the use of the cross-country set of questions for semi-structured interviews, two other types of interviews were used in Doha as was done in Abu Dhabi: background interviews of academics and a few civil servants to understand the setting in which the urban water supply governance is taking place, and short interviews with local water consumers to eventually recalibrate the semi-structured interviews of water-related civil servants and companies employees (with identical results than in Abu Dhabi, the recalibration was eventually not necessary in Doha).

The background research took much less time than in Abu Dhabi because the local cultural, linguistic, and religious environment is very similar on the one hand, and because Qatar is a much smaller and simpler country than the UAE in terms of politics. For cross-country comparisons however, the same process of semi-structured interviews than in Abu Dhabi was applied in Qatar, with interviewees selected through the snowball effect.

Period 3: Field research in Kuwait 1st March, 2009 – 28th May. 2009

Prior to the use of the cross-country set of questions for semi-structured interviews, the two other types of interviews were used in Kuwait as was done in Abu Dhabi and Doha: short unstructured interviews with local water consumers and background interviews. The short and informal interviews of a non-representative but diverse set of water consumers in Kuwait uncovered some differences with Abu Dhabi and Doha, and some minor modifications were operated on the set of questions of the structured interviews of water civil servants. Because of the tumultuous and complex political life of Kuwait – especially the recurrent Parliament-Cabinet struggles -, significantly more background interviews of academics and civil servants were performed than in Doha to understand the social, historical and political setting in which the urban water supply governance had been taking place. The same process of semi-

structured interviews that was conducted in Abu Dhabi and Qatar was applied in Kuwait. This however, took much less time because the number of institutions dealing with urban water supply is more reduced than anywhere else in the Gulf, as will be detailed and expanded in chapter 4.

These 3 periods were ultimately completed by shorter but complementary field works in the region, in June 2009 and September 2010, where field information could keep on informing, refining, readjusting, and confirming the thesis being written.

Conclusion

In researching the urban water governance in the Gulf oil monarchies, this research attempts to construct a contextual, critical, and dynamic representation of the drivers and barriers to change in desalinated water governance in the GCC region, studying, for this purpose, the transversal issue of water PPPs in three places: Abu Dhabi, Doha, and Kuwait. In order to obtain from these case studies the most comprehensive picture of the drivers of change, this research was realised with a multi-method/hybrid methodology made on the one hand of critical analysis of the literature and official data, and on the other of interviews and passive observations so as to uncover how, in several institutions of the water sector, the civil servants, top decision makers, and the private sector participate formally and informally in the urban water supply governance, its change, barriers to change, and inertias. All discourses (in a Foucauldian sense) related to culture was critically analysed in a *Post-colonial* perspective to avoid deceiving generalisations and the perpetuation of an entrenched but flawed Orientalist discourse. With regards to interviews, some exploratory interviews were done in each of the three cities to perfectly calibrate the semi-structured set of questions to the local context. With a snowballing approach, the author interviewed professionals from nearly all of the water institutions of the selected case studies.

The author's own situation (as a 'Caucasian' Westerner, from a scientific institution, etc.) was always considered to influence the interview process, and taken into consideration when processing the material. From there, it was possible to determine *which* and *how* forces produce formally and/or informally the most significant changes. Inertias, counter-forces or barriers to changes were paid great attention too, as far as possible.

Chapter 6

Rentierism, Oil Prices and Desalinated Water Governance in ‘Petro-Monarchies’

A Shift from Post-Independence to Post-Rentier Urban Water Governance in Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City?

Since their independence, the oil-exporting emirates of Abu Dhabi, Kuwait and Qatar have developed modern political systems characterised by rentierism as seen in chapters 2 and 6. Their urban water strategies are singularly marked by the rentier nature of these small states, as will be shown in this chapter. This chapter focuses on structural factors such as rent revenues and social political structures and institutions (formal and informal). More precisely, it will critically assess what has been the social-political consequence, and the economic influence of the rentier nature of the GCC states vis-à-vis the desalinated water governance models and their partial privatisations in Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City. How has the rentier state paradigm significantly shaped the urban desalinated water governance of these states? What has been the influence of rentierism over the 1990s market-led dynamics of change? Was it a driver of, or a barrier to change? What about the exact role of the fluctuations of the rent (the hydrocarbons revenues) over these reforms? Do the PPPs indicate a post-rentier water governance perspective?

This chapter will proceed in two steps to appraise the social-political and economic influence of the rentier paradigm in the changes and reforms of the municipal water governance. First, it will examine the influence of the rentier state paradigm over the three case studies⁵⁷, before and after the 1990s’ market-led reforms of the water sector and confront

⁵⁷ Our study cannot be limited to Kuwait City, Doha or Abu Dhabi strictly speaking, as due to urban expansion, they all have merged with their respective suburbs into metropolitan conurbations with identical water and energy services. We will consequently refer to these three larger urban bodies, while using their usual name.

the rentier influence on the pro-reform international discourses of good governance and effective water governance introduced in chapter 2. The second and last section will critically reappraise the literature's general assumption that the GCC rentier polities were driven towards market-oriented reforms by the fall in oil prices in the late 1990s.

I – Normative governance paradigms and rentierism in the making and re-making of municipal water governance in Kuwait City, Doha and Abu Dhabi

The urban water strategies of Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City are singularly marked by their rentier nature. Despite the late 1990s' significant structural reforms in some cities, particularly the development of PPPs, some key regional characteristics remain: the State is by far the main actor of the sector; it relies on desalination for its supply-oriented water strategy; drinking water supply services are heavily subsidised and supplied to all households at good quality standards. Most of these characteristics are due to the redistributive rentier state nature of the GCC polities. In order to systematically assess this influence over the urban water governance of the three case studies and their reforms, this chapter will use the most used parameters by international aid/financial organisations for 'effective water governance', and refer to Rogers and Hall's (2003) set of principles mentioned earlier⁵⁸. For practical purposes, the principles of effective water governance to be discussed will be gathered into the following four groups:

- 1: Water efficiency and effectiveness
- 2: Equity, inclusiveness and ethics
- 3: Openness, transparency and accountability
- 4: Coherence, integrative approach and sustainability

⁵⁸ It is not implied here that Rogers and Hall's (2003) work is a consensual work, nor that it can be applied in all and every context, but rather that it is often used as a reference for assessment and that its criteria have the benefit to go beyond the pure technocratic elements of water management.

I.1 – Effectiveness and efficiency of the water governance

I.1.a – Effectiveness of the local water governance systems

The three emirates of Abu Dhabi, Kuwait and Qatar, deprived of any significant surface fresh waters, have managed to provide municipal water to 100% of their urban population (highly concentrated in the capital), in a reliable manner (in quality and in quantity across the seasons), at standards higher than the WHO and at either a low cost or at no cost at all (this point will be developed later on). Against a background of limited underground water resources,⁵⁹ and with water demand increasing remarkably fast⁶⁰, this represents significant achievements. To do so, all the GCC governments have continuously been augmenting their desalination capacities, maintaining over the decades a supply-side management strategy.

Over the past decade, the emirates of Qatar and Abu Dhabi have developed a series of cautious PPPs that have continuously been playing a greater role in their production of desalinated water as seen in chapter 4. This has enabled Abu Dhabi and Qatar to receive FDIs to co-finance upgrades or new water infrastructures, while remaining sovereign over the whole production. Because of the unbundling of the water activities in these two countries, and because of the effective participation of new actors - chiefly foreign and private companies as minority stakeholders -, there is a proper dynamic of water governance, with so far a dynamic towards a more horizontal form of consultation for decision-making on techno-economic aspects of water affairs among the network of public and private actors. But, for all that effectiveness in delivering water services to all households and in reforming their water sectors, are these governments' water governance systems efficient? Concerning Kuwait, is this state-led water sector efficient?

⁵⁹ Four of the six GCC countries are rated among the 10 most water scarce countries in the world: Kuwait with 10 m³/person/yr, the UAE with 58 m³/p/y, Qatar with 94 m³/p/y and Saudi Arabia with 118 m³/p/y rank respectively first, third, fifth and eighth in the world ranking of lowest domestic water availability per capita (UNESCO-IHE, 2006; Mostafa-Amer et al., 2006).

⁶⁰ Over the past decade, the water demand in the GCC increased at a rate between 5 and 10% per year according to the country, primarily due to massive immigration fluxes and strong natural demographic rates (Al-Neaimi, 2003; INED, 2004; Dziuban, 2011).

I.1.b – Sub-optimal energy strategies in oil-exporting rentier countries

Because reliable statistics on efficiency in the public sector are not accessible for an outsider, this issue will be studied essentially through a qualitative approach, integrating some quantitative data available whenever relevant. In Kuwait, Qatar and Abu Dhabi, the dependence on desalination is now close or equal to 100% for municipal water supply, as mentioned in chapter 4. This urban water strategy represents two major issues with regards to efficiency. First, the direct cost of relying on an energy-intensive desalination technology. Second, the immense opportunity cost from the massive allocation of energy resources.

In rentier states, the difference between state and regime is generally negligible (Sasley, 2002). As rational actors, one of the main goals of the rentier ruling elites is to protect the ruling bargain by pleasing their population with a generous welfare state and modern urban services. The rentier States of Abu Dhabi, Qatar and Kuwait have thus always privileged supply-side water policies since the first oil exports, rather than limiting the consumption, thereby significantly depleting their limited freshwater resources and relying now fully on desalination. This specific choice was made to the detriment of treated sewage effluents (TSEs), which are used only for marginal uses. The citizens of the three countries consider TSEs as '*najasa*', i.e. a source of religious impurity, despite religious decrees by theologians enabling its reuse⁶¹. Although the majority of water professionals interviewed in Abu Dhabi, Qatar and Kuwait expressed their interests in a greater role being attributed to the TSEs, the rentier states – though not being democratic – have not challenged this opinion, and relied instead on the desalination solution. This means that instead of giving greater importance to technocrats and foreign consultants, and to integrate all international best practices for the sake of efficiency, the three rentier states' urban water services governance

⁶¹ The Council of Muslim Leading Scholars produced in the 1980s a special religious decree to regulate the reuse of treated effluents for different purposes and enable its use and consumption, but the GCC popular religiosity in this case, as in others, tends to differ from the Islamic orthodoxy as defined by the 'Ulâmâ (i.e. the religious scholars).

privilege their citizens' known preference, consent, and contentment over their technocrats' opinion or water management cost-efficiency.

All desalination technologies are energy intensive. But one of the GCC's salient features is that it depends heavily on thermal technologies for desalination (especially the Multi Stage Flash technology, or 'MSF'), rather than on Reverse Osmosis (RO), which is more recent and privileged over MSF in the rest of the world for its energy efficiency. To produce one cubic meter of desalinated water, MSF required in 2008 an average of 15,5kWh of energy, against only 4 to 5,5 kWh for RO. Considering the use of some old thermal desalination plants in the GCC (some dating back to the 1970s), the gap is even larger in the region. Abu Dhabi's Director of the Centre of Excellence for Water Technologies, Nidal Hilal estimated in January 2013 that the regional average of an MSF plant requires 25 kWh per cubic metre (pcm), against 4.7 kWh pcm or less for RO⁶². Yet distillation technologies amount to almost 90% of all desalinated water produced in the Gulf while, in comparison, desalination produced with RO amounted to 76% in the Mediterranean region (Latteman, 2008). This heavy reliance on the more energy-intensive distillation technologies constitutes both a problem of environmental efficiency and an economic one. This second-best technological choice is due not only to the "generous" rentier water governance, but also to the vast regional concentration of hydrocarbon resources and its low cost of exploitation in the Arabian Peninsula.

The massive allocation of local hydrocarbon resources to desalinate water has been institutionalising major losses of revenues. For instance in Kuwait in 2010, an average of 12 per cent of the daily oil production was burnt to meet the desalination and electricity needs

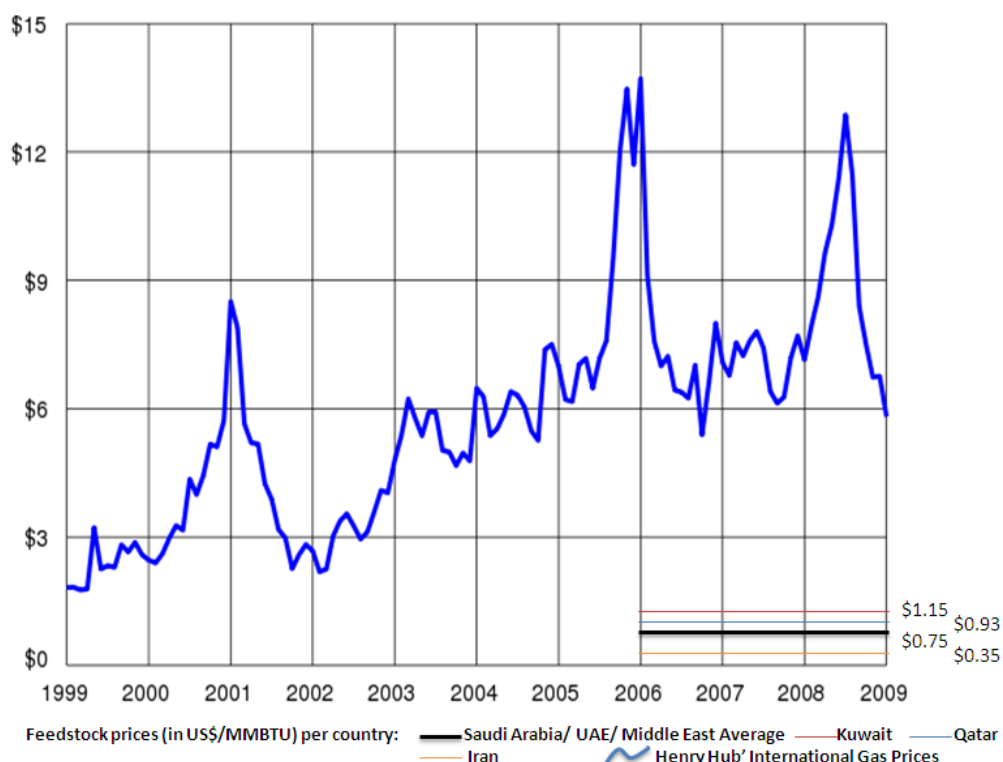
⁶² See 'Two areas of focus for Masdar water research', by Zarina Khan, Jan 13, 2013, The National, Available at: www.thenational.ae/news/uae-news/environment/two-areas-of-focus-for-masdar-water-research#ixzz2IAFwOgv

(mostly produced in a common industrial process called cogeneration), costing over \$4 billion per year at current oil prices. And a scenario of continued strong growth of power and water demand forecasts that the sector could require as much as 20 per cent of the national oil production in 20 years⁶³, which represents as much oil not economically optimised through exports. In the case of Doha and Abu Dhabi, where desalination plants rely on natural gas, the same principle applies, though at a lower economic and environmental cost (as will be further developed subsequently).

In addition to this loss by non-economic optimisation of energy resources on the international market for all three countries, the desalinated water is massively produced with heavily subsidised gas or oil as a fuel. As visible on figures 10 and 11 below, the estimated average domestic prices for gas feedstock in the Gulf countries for 2006-2009 (the main reference for desalination except in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia) are much lower than the 'Henri Hub' prices (the reference northern-American market) have ever been during the last ten years. Even at their lowest level in 1999 (i.e. slightly less than \$2.00/MMBTU), the international market prices were already much higher than the Middle East regional average of \$0.75/MMBTU for 2006-2009. The energy cost in the total water production cost (10-20% depending on the year's fuel mix) given during the interviews in Abu Dhabi and in Doha is consequently far from representing the true costs for the States. The difference between the state-subsidised feedstock prices (given in figure 11 below) and the international market prices, as shown on figure 11 below should be integrated. The same principle applies to Kuwait with its oil supply to desalination plants.

⁶³ Figures given by Bloomberg and based on Ahmad Bishara's information. See '*Kuwait Plans to Build Four Nuclear Reactors as It Seeks Alternative to Oil*', Sep 10, 2010, available at www.bloomberg.com/news/2010-09-10/kuwait-joins-gulf-push-for-nuclear-power-with-plans-to-build-four-reactors.html (last accessed 01/09/2011)

Figure 11: Northern American Market following NYMEX's Henri Hub (1999-2009) and Estimations for the Subsidised Gulf Domestic Gas Feedstock Prices (2006-2009)



Laurent A. Lambert. Sources: Nymex's Henry Hub natural gas monthly average prices, 1999-2009; Natural Gas Market Review 2007; Oxford Business Group, 2009; Business24-7.ae, 20/12/09.

Figure 12 : Estimations of the subsidised feedstock prices, Jan. 2006 – Jan. 2009

Gulf Countries	Domestic Prices (\$/mmbtu)
Iran	0.35 *
Oman	0.90 *
Qatar	0.87 *
Saudi Arabia	0.75 *
UAE	0.75 *
Kuwait	1.00-1.15 **
Middle East Average	\$ 0.75 ***

Laurent A. Lambert. Sources: * Natural Gas Market Review 2007
 ** Oxford Business Group, 2009; *** business24-7.ae, 20/12/09.

I.1.c - The issue of human resources efficiency in a rentier setting

The efficiency of Kuwait', Qatar' and Abu Dhabi's rentier water governance model is also deeply related to their peculiar state-society relationships. Unlike capitalist/productive states, these GCC rentier states do not owe their revenues to a tax base (there is no income tax), but

to the national rent: hydrocarbons. What these polities require from their citizens is first and foremost contentment and loyalty to the political system, and the ruling bargain in exchange has been providing a generous welfare state, with free or subsidised services like urban drinking water services, a large variety of subsidised commodities (food, petrol, etc.), and jobs in the State apparatus.

According to the results of a study issued on August 8th 2010 by the International Bank of Qatar, Qatar has the highest ratio of public employment of Nationals among the GCC member states, with 88% of nationals, followed by the UAE with 85% and Kuwait with 82%⁶⁴. These redistributive States have been providing state jobs to their citizens more according to the state's revenues and capacity to distribute wealth, than according to the domestic social or economic requirements. Considering the sometimes low productivity standards required from the national civil servants, Al-Rumaihi (1996) described the situation as "*disguised unemployment in the governmental sector*". In concrete terms for the main water institutions in the GCC, which are all state-owned or at least state-dependent entities, they have traditionally been over-staffed because of the state's job-allocation policies. Though the situation differs from one country to another, one can easily witness in all three countries visited for this research a number of low- to mid-level local employees who - during a significant part of their office time - are not effectively working, or are simply absent for a reason or another. During field research, it was possible to observe that the apparent low-productivity of low- to mid-level staff in the three capital cities transferred the bulk of the workload onto the following four groups:

- The *foreign* low- to mid-level staff, generally from developing countries (especially Egypt, India and Pakistan), in charge of the daily routine and most unpleasant work.

⁶⁴ See Oxford Business Group's report '*Qatar: A new labour force*', 12th August 2010.

- The mid- to high-level technical and/or management staff, generally from Western countries, Australia and New Zealand;
- The high-level management staff, almost uniquely composed of Nationals, who are western-educated technocrats, and who consistently considered themselves during interviews as pro-reform;
- The limited number of foreign consultants, generally from Western countries and Japan, but increasingly from emerging nations such as South Korea and South Africa.

With regards to human resources, the efficiency of the water sector can be assumed sub-optimal, weighed against the number of employees, although there is no access to any thorough quantitative investigation or independent research on this subject. One needs also to acknowledge the variations from one institution to another, but a clear regional pattern of significantly lower productivity of the numerous civil servants from among the Nationals is commonly acknowledged throughout the region. It is not only the subject of regular informal talks within and without the water institutions, but also of debates in the press, a significant amount of academic literature,⁶⁵ and policy measures as will be developed later.

Probably the most illustrative strategy of the authorities to tackle their human resources' low efficiency issue - while getting round the core rentier problem of job (over-) allocation to Nationals - has been the development of efficient e-government portals, for urban water services and other welfare services⁶⁶. Any local resident or company of these emirates can for instance view and pay its water bill, learn about how to reduce its consumption, or ask a question to the concerned water institution through its website. There is no doubt for anyone having experienced the former face-to-face bureaucratic process that the procedures are now

⁶⁵ For a literature review of the issues of bureaucracy In a GCC country, see Al-Omar (1992, esp. pp. 11-12), at :www.irti.org/irj/go/km/docs/documents/IDBDevelopments/Internet/English/IRTI/CM/downloads/IES_Articles/Vol%203-2..Fuad%20A%20Al-Omar.Privatisation%20in%20the%20GCC..dp.pdf (last accessed 1/10/2011)

⁶⁶ In the United Nations E-Government Survey 2010 edition, the UAE, Kuwait and Qatar belonged to the top 1/3 countries for the quality of their e-government platforms, ranking respectively 49th, 50th and 62th over 185 nations.

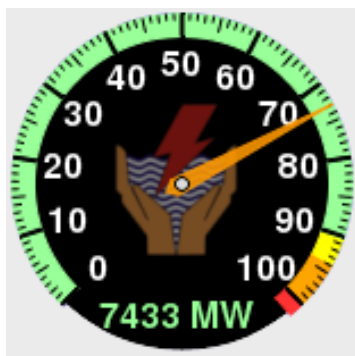
streamlined. Yet there remains a need for critical investigations to assess the real gains in productivity for the specific services delivered and the overall productivity of the water institutions of the Gulf countries.

I.2 - Openness, transparency and participation

I.2.a ‘Good governance’ terminology but limited progresses on transparency

The development of e-governments initiatives, with information available online, can be seen as a step forward towards more openness, transparency and participation. The fact that these water e-portals can be used both in Arabic, the official local language, and in English, the de facto *lingua franca* among all communities, supports the idea that the authorities are committed to reforming their traditional governance for greater openness and increased attention to customers and the *res publica*. The Kuwaiti electricity and water authority is proud to display in real time on its website, on the national TV channel, and on a giant outdoor screen along one of Kuwait’s main roads, the gauge of current electricity consumption, as shown below, eventually accompanied with the mention of the current water production and capacities. This tool is credited by the authorities to have helped the population visualise the critical periods of tension over the national network and reduce their consumption when peak demands approach in order to avoid power blackouts and the lowering of the pressure for tap water that can accompany critical tensions on the network.

Figure 13: Kuwait's main tool for demand-side management (in MW and thousand imperial gallons)



Fresh Water Production: 395.422 : Consumption: 406.077 Stored: 2569.964

Source: Website of the Ministry of Electricity and Water of Kuwait, Readings for 30/09/2011.

All water entities' websites speak a language of good governance, as can be seen below in Figure 14, as extracted from the website of Kahramaa; the Qatari corporation delivering and charging the water and electricity bills.

Figure 14: Kahramaa's "Case studies for greater participation"

Case Studies

It's your world so get involved in its future!

Case studies are the result of initiatives to encourage sustainable and socially responsibility policies; and the reporting on their implementation. Companies can then be brought together along with labour groups and civil society to facilitate the discussion for common issues and solutions.

View our case studies online.

Source: Kahramaa website, Qatar.

Despite this engaging discourse, evoking participation, sustainability and responsibility for instance, the website does not provide any case study to view so far⁶⁷. Beyond the functions to pay one's bill, check one's account, or read the official information, many links for further information on the websites simply do not work. More importantly,

⁶⁷ In the Gulf region, the only country to have implemented a truly interactive web 2.0 government portal is Bahrain (see UNPAN, 2010). However the political instability in this Kingdom may have deterred other countries to follow this bold initiative.

some key information to be able to understand the governance of the sector are absent: e.g. the production cost of desalinated water, the yearly benefits or loss of the water billing entities, and the environmental assessment reports before any major work to inform the local population.

The exploratory meeting performed in all three cities with (non-representative) small samples of local consumers to eventually recalibrate the questionnaire for semi-guided interviews had revealed how the consumers were uninformed over the water affairs in all three cities. Most of the consumers interviewed did not believe the water was really potable because they were told so at their arrival. Nationals and the middle and upper class foreign expatriates consumed only bottled water, despite the authorities' high standards for desalination production and systemic tests in all three cities. Those who could not easily afford bottled water (mainly working class foreign workers) used a tap filter or, for the poorest (Asian labour workers), denied the poor reputation of the local tap water and drank it anyway.

I.2.b The rentier absence of participation

Two questions (with sub-questions) from the questionnaire for semi-directed interviews of water professionals (Annex A, part A, questions 5 and 6) were asked to various professionals of the water sector, and addressed directly the issue of the population's participation:

(5) *“What is the role of the citizens in this [decision-making] process? Are they consulted? What mechanisms are available for them to participate in this process? And the foreign workers, are they consulted?”* followed by the question:

(6) *“The population of (X) is constituted of many nationalities and cultures, how do you take it into consideration in your work?”*

Within a single city, answers were different, varied, and at times contradictory with one another. For instance in Abu Dhabi, two main groups of answers were recorded. Those arguing that nothing noticeable was done (the smaller group), that “*citizens do not contribute, there is no poll. They are not consulted at all*” (a foreign Sr. engineer from the ADWEA), or that “*it is irrelevant*” (a foreign manager from the ADWEA). In contrast, there were those giving diverse answers as to what was being done (the larger group): the coordinates of the ADWEA are on the back of the bills, information is sometimes also distributed through leaflets printed in many languages, some agents can be recruited for such communication purposes, there exists consumer panels that are interviewed at the end of a year, web pages for public feedback, etc. Despite this list of communication techniques, in Abu Dhabi (where the answers were the most contrasted) as well as in Qatar, several interviewees explained that the populations’ participation is very rare. An interviewee from Abu Dhabi’s Regulation & Supervision Bureau acknowledged with honesty and regrets that they received “*very limited responses from the public*” about the water services.

Pr. Al-Muhannadi, who teaches water management at Qatar University, explained that despite some efforts by Kahramaa (the state-financed corporation in charge of water and electricity), the methods are so far traditional (i.e. non-transparent), and that social scientists would be needed to have a holistic approach, and hopefully improve the performance, in terms of public engagement, service satisfaction and also in terms of greater environmental awareness. Both in Abu Dhabi and Doha remarkably, the participation in the most political aspects of the water governance (e.g. should all consumers pay water bills? What exact role for the private sector?) and its decision making were in general not considered by interviewees.

In Kuwait, the situation was different. The politicisation of the population, the relatively free press, the labour unions and, last but not least, an elected and turbulent

National Assembly (despite the prohibition of formal political parties) have made the privatisation attempts by the government of the desalination and power cogeneration sector a subject of parliamentary debate. In Kuwait, the ruling family-backed government has been trying for years to pass by all means its first legislation to initiate the first public private partnership for desalination with an independent water & power producer (IWPP). Since the 1990s, that has always been refused by the MPs and labour unions who consider that the population may lose their welfare advantages (the heavy subsidies on water and even jobs as civil servants) to the benefit of private interests (GSN 912, 2011). In Kuwait, the government remains fearful of public mobilisation against its pro-market orientations, and tries to remain discrete – “*secretive*” according to the opposition - in its reform attempts.

I.2.c. Rentierism, ‘vested depoliticisation’ and knowledge compartmentalisation

During the interviews realised over a year of fieldwork in Kuwait, Qatar and Abu Dhabi, it was striking to observe the extent to which the knowledge was compartmentalised among civil servants of the water sector; sometimes even on data that can be found in the specialised press, such as the postponement of a contract with a neighbouring country for fuel supplies in Abu Dhabi, or a major structural issue that has been dangerously affecting the operations of a major water institution in Qatar. Also, when asking about any increase in water tariffs during the semi-directed interviews (Annex A, part E), a majority of interviewees did not know about this issue.

The interviews in Kuwait City, Doha and Abu Dhabi have shown that the most cautious or even self-censored civil servants were not Nationals fearing their regimes (as the Orientalist literature argues) or Asian unskilled workers, but the mid- to high-level foreign workers. Interviews with political anthropologists Dr. Khaled Al-Dhahiri (a UAE National) in Abu Dhabi and Dr. Andrew Garner in Doha (an American expatriate), shed some light on this issue. Both mentioned the self-censorship that foreign workers carefully practiced, following

a minimum-risk strategy for the preservation of their lucrative position of expatriate working for a GCC government. Indeed, foreign staff tend to shy away from ever speaking critically – even in a constructive manner - of the state procedures and policies, though in other circumstances and under confidentiality their appreciation of the system is generally critical, and at times fiercely negative. Civil servants in Qatar and Abu Dhabi seem to be hindered by a local culture where transparency, openness, debates, and participation of all does not seem to be (yet?) deeply rooted, despite progresses since the 1990s according to the literature (Najem et al., 2003).

However, a limited number of foreign ad-hoc consultants, (most of whom are senior professionals from Western Europe and Northern America) and the Nationals at the high-level of management to the contrary, give themselves more room for what they consider as constructive criticism. Both explain for instance that there is a need of reforms, including further privatisations, that they generally have been lobbying for change, but that political authorities (the Emir's Diwan for Abu Dhabi and Qatar, the Parliament for Kuwait⁶⁸) have been either deterring or taming down the most radical projects of reform.

Nevertheless, almost all Nationals working for the water supply institutions in Doha (the state-owned corporation Kahramaa), Abu Dhabi (the state-supported Abu Dhabi Water & Electricity Authority) and to a lesser extent in Kuwait City (the Ministry of Electricity & Water), displayed either a cautious attitude when being interviewed about issues that could be considered political, or preferred to simply skip the question with an evasive answer when asked about their opinion of the market-led reforms of the water sector, such as *“the Government has conducted studies and certainly knows what it has to do”*.

⁶⁸ For instance, the two interviewed high-level civil servants of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Water & Electricity interviewed in April-May 2009 in Kuwait, Suhaila A. Marafi, Director of Dep. Of Studies & Research, and Eyad Ali Al-Falah, Assistant Under Secretary for Water Projects, were in favour of privatisation and lobbying it.

I.3 - Ethics, equity, inclusiveness and accountability

I.3.a - The importance of tribal and rentier ethics: generosity and inclusiveness

Kuwait, Qatar and Abu Dhabi are three emirates where the values and ideals of the pre-modern Bedouin times are commonly perceived as highly honourable. Among them, the ideas of a fair and wise ruler and of an egalitarian community system hold a special place into the Nationals' psyche and political culture (see Lienhardt, 2001; Heard Bey, 2005). When the first oil revenues enabled it, these values were partly recuperated and reinterpreted by the rentier state. After independence, water supply was the responsibility of a department or a ministry, headed by someone appointed by the Emir who was in charge of supplying subsidised drinking water to all in the ruler's name. This highly personalised and generous water allocation has indeed been possible thanks to desalination.

Initially, this state generosity was aimed at the sedentarisation of the nomad tribes. By the 1980s, virtually all of the populations of Kuwait, Qatar and Abu Dhabi had abandoned the nomad way of living and were living in an urban environment. It was then purely the rentier strategy of redistribution of oil revenues that has led Kuwait', Qatar' and Abu Dhabi's respective water institutions to provide abundant and generous water services to their national citizens over the last three decades. Even today, the rentier influence remains strong. For instance in Abu Dhabi, the law of 1998 places the public authorities under obligation to supply water to all demands, provided that they are "*reasonable*". This law translates the rentier nature of the state on two points. First, the state is generous and provides to all, so no one shall legitimately complain. Second, the vagueness of the notion of "*reasonable demands*" gives enough discretionary power to the rentier state to remain the only judge of the validity of water allocation demand. On which objective and legal criteria could a lawyer appeal a decision of the water authority? The water authority does not provide benchmarks or criteria; it keeps the monopoly of the technical expertise to decide what is

reasonable and what is not. In the end, both points reinforce the state position as the sole legitimate source of welfare services against which none shall, nor can, compete in any manner. The rentier state is thus, at least in terms of water allocation and decision-making, protected from any form of accountability. However, recent changes in practices within the rentier state system, and in line with the good governance, doxa seems to be changing this situation.

I.3.b – Changes in personal accountability and the fight on corruption

The rentier societies of Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait, though long accustomed to a total absence of transparency in public affairs, have begun to consistently fight against corruption in recent years. In 2011 for instance, five persons were charged over corruption at Adwea, Abu Dhabi's Electricity and Water Authority. The simple facts that a corruption case triggered a formal legal procedure, and that it has been mediated by the local press,⁶⁹ show signs of change from the classic rentier culture. Some forms of scrutiny over the allocation of contracts has also been undertaken; the Abu Dhabi Accountability Authority (a new authority) took the decision (probably with a high political support) to file the above-mentioned case despite the accused Emirati's nationality and high ranking position in the state bureaucracy and the trial has been normally covered by the media. The elites of Abu Dhabi have privileged the principles of full accountability and transparency rather than any remediating deal behind closed doors, and this demonstrates some significant changes in the governance of Abu Dhabi's water authority.

In Qatar, the government launched, in 2003, a campaign against corruption in high places⁷⁰. In 2007, both the UAE and Qatar ratified the United Nations Convention against Corruption. Kuwait has signed but not ratified the UN convention, and corruption

⁶⁹ 'ADWEA Insurance Chief on DH300m charges', The National, Jan 4, 2011, available at: www.thenational.ae/news/uae-news/courts/adwea-insurance-chief-on-dh300m-charges

⁷⁰ See www.pogar.org/countries/theme.aspx?t=13&cid=15 (last accessed on 10/11/2011)

accusations are often made in the Parliament, especially concerning the Ministry of Electricity and Water over some contracts and the summer issues of the power network overloading. In Kuwait, scandals of corruption break out in the press even when members of the ruling family are involved, as will be further developed in chapter 9. The recent draft legislation proposed by Kuwait's Cabinet in favour of a firm anti-corruption law⁷¹ shows that there seems to be – at least formally - a regional convergence of the authorities to fight corruption. But this has not created a more equitable water governance.

I.3.c - Rentier welfare for some, water bills for others, and the issue of equity

The small populations of our case studies are nowadays mainly composed of foreign workers,⁷² and the Nationals are a small minority. They enjoy, nevertheless, major privileges from their welfare state, which provides them with free or heavily-subsidised services. If not a single National of Kuwait, Qatar or Abu Dhabi pays the 'true cost' of water, the situation changes however from one country to another in terms of ethics for the payment of drinking water supply. In Kuwait, drinking water is metered, priced and – despite heavy subsidies - Kuwaitis and foreigners alike have to pay a water bill according to their water consumption. It is worth mentioning that, despite the strong inflation rates of the region, drinking water supply tariffs have not changed since the 1980s in Kuwait, and that a significant proportion of the Kuwaitis still refuse to pay their water bills since the Iraqi invasion in 1990⁷³.

⁷¹ See 'Kuwait cabinet passes anti-corruption draft law', *Trade Arabia*, Sun. 25th Sep. 2011, available at: www.tradearabia.com/news/LAW_205378.html

⁷² See International Labour Organization's 2008 report '*Growth, Employment and Decent Work in the Arab Region: An Overview*' www.ilo.org/public/english/region/arpro/beirut/downloads/events/qatar/decentwork.pdf

⁷³ The persons interviewed at the Ministry of Electricity and Water did not want to provide any figure and argued that the proportion of the people who do not want to pay was gradually decreasing. They seem to be however numerous enough to be the object of special programs to incentivise them to pay their water consumption.

In Qatar and Abu Dhabi, Nationals do not pay at all for their water consumption. In both cases, the Emir – through the State’s budget - pays for its citizens. Companies and foreigners (more than 90% of the population) however have to pay their water and electricity bills. Although they benefit from cross-subsidies, as already mentioned, they pay bills that make the water and electricity sectors in both emirates profitable nevertheless, while Nationals do not have to pay.

I.4 - Coherence, integrative approach, sustainability and the rentier logic

The legitimacy of the GCC ruling elites is related to the rentier states’ generosity and demonstration of that generosity. This is why, despite being arid places, Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City display large public fountains, parks, and ornamental green areas. Meanwhile, the need for coherence and sustainability in urban water governance has been increasing in the Gulf as populations have grown, become more diverse, and more complex. Furthermore, challenges such as aquifer depletion, climate change, and the intensification of the economic and demographic boom and burst cycles due to the oil dependence have all placed the water management under increasing tensions and difficulties. The effective water governance norm considers that integrated water management requires considering all uses, as well as users within and without the water sector, i.e. *“their interconnections with and impacts upon all other potential users and sectors”* (Rogers and Hall, 2003).

Schematically, the three polities under study have been following the same sub-optimal water allocation strategy in recent decades, touched upon in chapter 4. The small and over-exploited underground water resources are intensively being used for agriculture; each of the three conurbations is supplied in drinkable water by large seawater desalination plants; TSEs are generally restricted to ornamental/greening purposes, while most of urban drainage waters have traditionally been rejected in the Gulf (Amer, 2005). Until very recently, the research of coherence and the optimisation of the whole pool of water resources were objectives that were

not considered. Until now and in all three cities, they are highly compartmentalised, each under a different public administration with limited - but increasing - coordination.

Based on the interviews realised in the three countries with water professionals, the following problems were identified as the main barriers to an improved water governance (as of 2008-2009): the lack of strategic documents or planning, especially on the medium- to long-term; the lack of a national, cross-sector and holistic approach to water (especially underlined in Qatar); the lack of waste water reuse; the waste of desalinated water over-production which is dumped into the Gulf during the summer season; the lack of awareness of the population for reasonable usages (a point repeated everywhere, and by virtually all interviewees). Another major problem was not mentioned but must be considered: the consumption patterns of most inhabitants, with its high carbon and ecological footprints⁷⁴. This is partly attributable to the choice of thermal desalination, as already seen, but also to the fact that in rentier societies, consumers' behaviours seem to be biased by multiple layers of subsidies, e.g. for water and power.

However, it is fair to say that authorities have been increasingly reacting to these issues since the late 1990s - albeit in an ad hoc manner –, and implemented several projects and reforms to remediate to their most costly and penalising practices of water mismanagement. Arguably the most important change for more coherence, integrative approach and sustainability in the water governance of Kuwait, Qatar and Abu Dhabi has been the publishing in recent years of the first water master plans for each, as well as long term development blueprints (namely Abu Dhabi Economic Vision 2030, Qatar National Vision 2030, and Kuwait Vision and Strategic Objectives 2035) that aim at giving the country a cross-sector cohesion. However, the direct involvement of the domestic water authorities in the making of these strategic documents seems to have been low and generally limited.

⁷⁴ Qatar, Kuwait and the UAE are the country in the world with the largest environmental footprint per capita in the world, according to the WWF (2012).

Ranging from thin in Qatar where Kahramaa (the water supplier to final consumers) provided statistical forecasts, to close to null in Abu Dhabi (or at least not recorded) and unknown in Kuwait.

These strategic plans show nevertheless a will from the authorities to make their development – water sector included – more coherent and more sustainable. Was it this same quest for efficiency that has led the authorities of Abu Dhabi and Doha to develop PPPs for their water production in the late 1990s? Or is it more related to the influence of oil prices fluctuations over the rentier state, as assumed by the literature?

II – Water reforms in the GCC: the failure of the traditional rentier water model or a post-rentier exit strategy?

II.1 - The narrative of oil revenues crisis and required reforms

From 1982 to 1999, overall low to very low oil revenues strongly challenged the GCC rentier states to sustain their redistributive model. As seen in chapter 2, a number of Structuralists articulated the idea that the fall in oil revenues creates a budget crisis which, in the medium to long term, dangerously affects the functioning, legitimacy, and stability of the rentier system (e.g. Al-Rumaihi, 1996; Hunter, 1986; Karl, 1997; Najem, 2003; Roberts, 1987; Sick, 1998). Oil prices declined until they reached, in August 1998, their lowest level ever since the 1973 oil boom era, at only 10 US dollars per barrel. The literature generally argued that the rentier states - in order to avoid any dramatic fallout during that period – were pushed towards the liberalisation of the political and economic rentier systems they could not finance anymore (Brynen, 1992; Ehteshami, 2003; Gause, 2002; Lucciani, 1994; Quilliam, 2003).

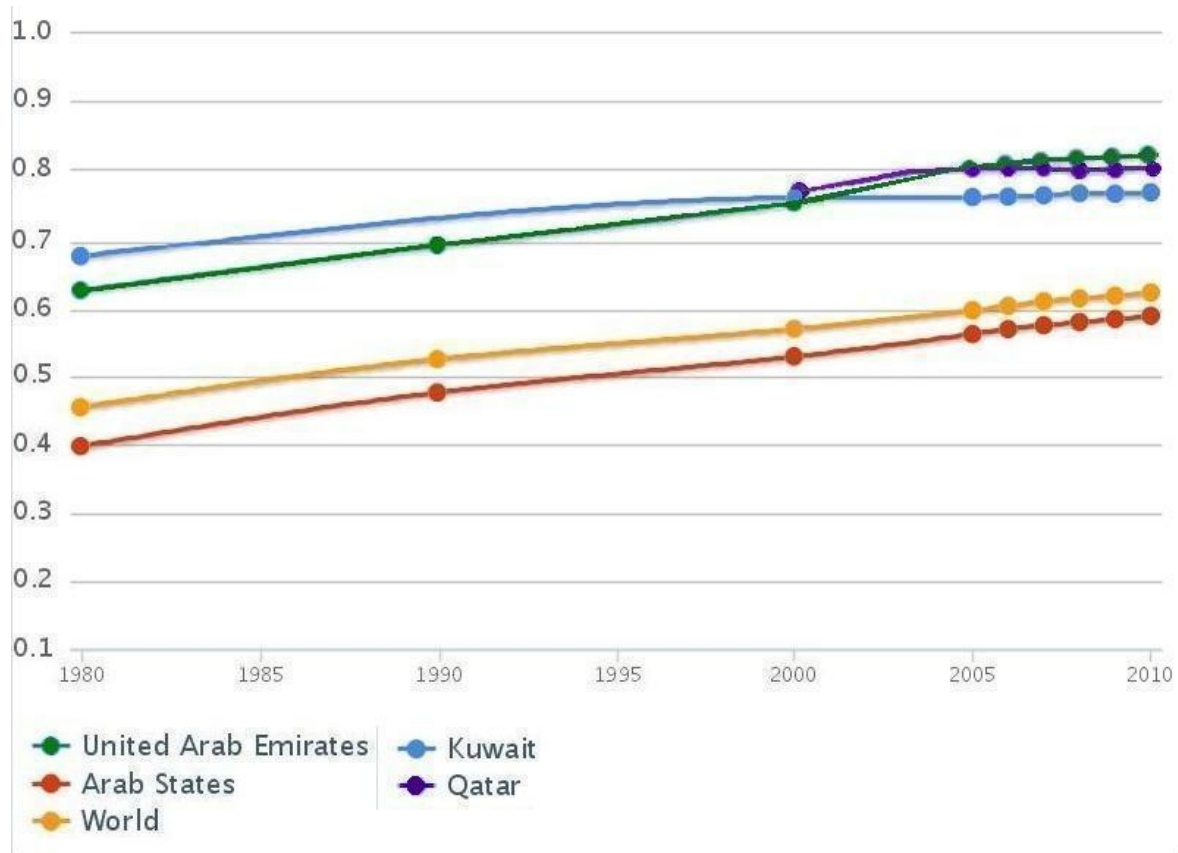
This general narrative was also advanced by a few civil servants and scholars interviewed in the region, and can also be found in the very few press articles on the 1990s-

2000s GCC water liberalisation programs that evoke the politics of it (e.g. Ford, 2002). When developing the case of Saudi Arabia, economic journalist Ford (2002) is both clear and illuminating on this point: *“as a result of generally lower oil revenues and a degree of market liberalisation, power and desalination plants were removed from the list of sectors which had been out of bounds to foreign investors until July 2001.”*

However, it is precisely the timing of the privatisation program in the region that indicates that contrary to the literature, and despite the financial incentives that the budget deficit of the late 1990s constituted to privatise, the *implementation* of such programs, or at least the bulk of it in the years to follow, were not forced upon these GCC governments, nor by a situation of near collapse of the rentier welfare system (as the next section will demonstrate), nor because of overwhelming financial constraints.

Despite the severity of the 1980s and 1990s economic times for oil exporting states, none of Kuwait, Qatar or Abu Dhabi had to radically renounce its model of rentier redistributive state. Except readjustments that mainly concerned foreign workers (who lost access to a number of free state services, such as higher education or health cares), spending for the welfare of the citizens was maintained as much as possible (hence the budget deficits), as reflected on the continuously growing curves of Human Development Index of the three emirates over the past three decades, shown on figure 15 below.

Figure 15 - Evolution Human Development Index for the States of Kuwait, Qatar and the UAE, 1980 – 2010



Laurent Lambert. Source: UN HDI (2010), without data for Qatar prior to 2000 and for Kuwait in 1990.

The idea of market-led water reforms being *de rigueur* because Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE were any close to becoming failed states or even failing welfare states does not seem credible. The link between pro-market reforms and the late 1990s budget crises in the region needs to be rethought.

II.2 - A diachronic approach to the water PPPs in Abu Dhabi, Qatar and Kuwait

If the oil fluctuations timeline is compared to the timeline of the implementation of the privatisations, it becomes clear that the rentier states have not been compelled by budget obligations to privatise their water sector. For all concerned countries, the first feasibility studies for market-led reforms in the GCC water sectors date back to the 1990s, at times of

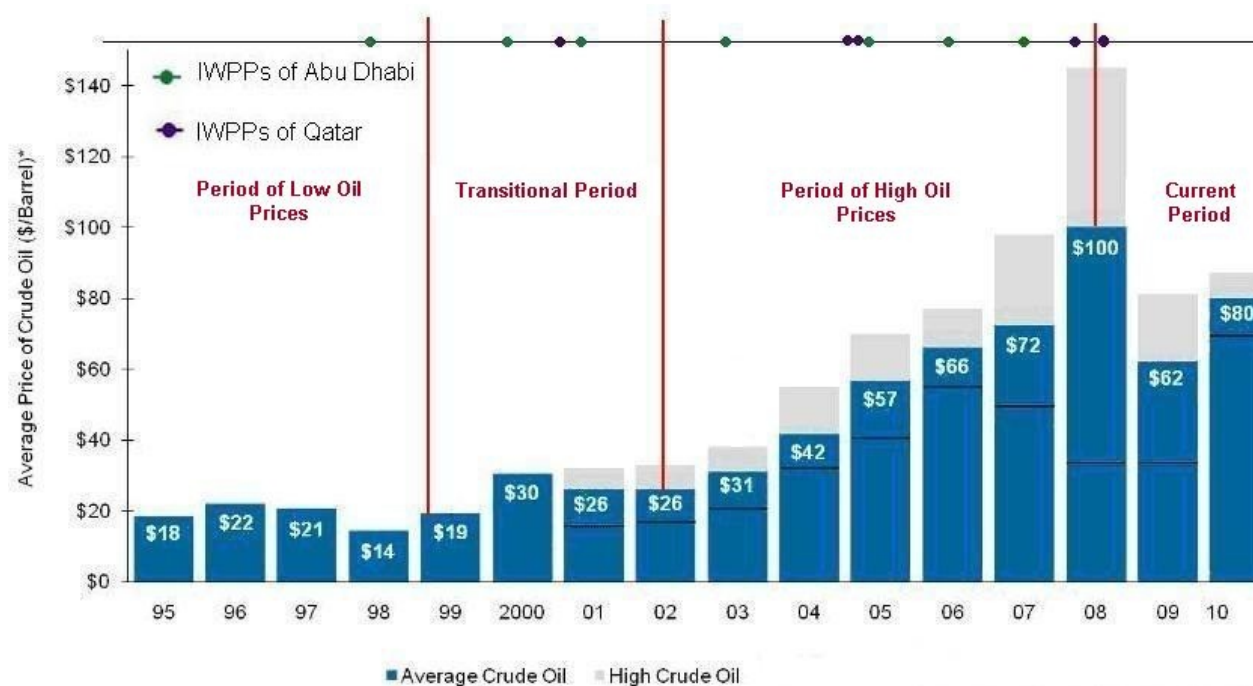
low to very low oil prices and state revenues. But, despite declarations in the sense of privatisations in the mid-1990s, especially in Kuwait, no public private partnership (PPP) in the field of desalination was *implemented* in Kuwait or in Qatar before 2000. Only Abu Dhabi did so.

Qatar awarded in 2001 its first water PPP contract to a private company (AES Corporation), i.e. three years after their all time low level of 1998 and a decade after the institutional framework to do so had been prepared with the creation of the QEWC in 1991. The oil revenues were overall increasing by 1998, and the three studied states could have frozen the process, postponed it to ‘wait and see’, or simply have cancelled it as they did many times with other projects because of oil prices fluctuations. Instead, the governments of Qatar intentionally implemented its privatisation programs in an improving or even excellent economic context (see figure 16 below). This indicates that, for the three states, the deteriorating state budget and the deteriorating annual budgetary situation were not the drivers of the implementation of PPPs.

In Abu Dhabi, the initial process was more complex. The UAE became, in the second part of the 1990s, the most advanced GCC polity in its privatisation program, arguably due to the 1995 Bechtel study on demand forecast and relevant strategies (see Wade et al., 1999) and to the blueprints delivered as an offset service by GIAT Industries in 1994 and 1995 (see Danoffre, 2003⁷⁵). The following year, the government of Abu Dhabi launched the Privatisation Committee for the Water and Electricity Sector (PCWES) and drafted an implementation strategy for the privatisation program, which resulted in the Emiri Decree number 7 of 1997.

⁷⁵ In her LLM thesis on project financing in the Arabian Peninsula, a part of which was published online, Debbie Danoffre (2003) gives further detail about these early stages of Abu Dhabi’s privatisation shift for combined water and power production. This is available in French at: www.memoireonline.com/12/05/34/m_financement-projet-peninsule-arabe0.html#fnref4 (last accessed 3/10/2011). NB: Its translation into English is of an appalling quality.

Figure 16 – Timeline of the IWPPs of Abu Dhabi and Doha and oil prices at the same period



Laurent Lambert. Sources: Global Water Intelligence⁷⁶; Air Tran 2010 Annual Shareholder Meeting.

On 3 October 1998, the first Power and Water Purchase Agreement was signed for the first IWPP of the GCC region. A second one followed in 1999, and a third one in 2000. Shall it lead to the conclusion that these 3 PPPs in the strategic field of water and power cogeneration were due to Abu Dhabi's poor economic situation in the late 1990s?

The emirate of Abu Dhabi faced, in much better conditions, the 1995-1999 period of depressed oil revenues than many other oil exporting governments for several structural reasons. First of all, during that period, the population of Abu Dhabi was by all standards small (under a million), while being one of the top 10 oil exporters in the world.

The emirate of Abu Dhabi had also, by the mid-1970s, a policy of investment abroad of a significant amount of its revenues (in average 20%) through what would be called today a sovereign wealth fund (SWF). Because even today Abu Dhabi's SWF (considered the world

⁷⁶ NB: the first IWPP by Abu Dhabi represents the year of the call for proposal, not its implementation (in 2000).

largest one with 600+ billion US\$) remains opaque and poorly known in terms of assets and policies, this chapter will not elaborate on this point. It suffices to mention that, between 1995 and 2001, (a period of low to moderate oil revenues), the GDP of the increasingly diversified UAE economy (of which Abu Dhabi is by far the largest emirate and pays 80% of the federal budget) grew at an estimated 8.4% per year on average⁷⁷. The government of Abu Dhabi's relatively safe financial situation in the late 1990s was also manifest in its loan to neighbouring Saudi Arabia to face this difficult financial period⁷⁸.

Last but not least, the bulk of Abu Dhabi's IWPPs (5 out of 8) as well as the partial privatisation of other segments of its water sector (e.g. technical services, distribution) took place during the 2002-2008 oil boom period during which Qatar, Kuwait and Abu Dhabi received more hydrocarbons revenues and foreign direct investment than ever before.

Conclusion

The GCC water governance systems display a broad regional pattern, primarily shaped by the rentier state paradigm that has been framing the social-political life since the independence. This chapter has shown that there are clear theoretical tensions between the objectives, values, and practices of rentierism, and those of the good governance and effective water governance development paradigms. However, the review of the role of rentierism over the desalinated water governance in Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City confirmed what the limited literature related to good (political and economic) governance in the GCC states had noticed: policy changes in line with international principles of governance have taken place since the 1990s (e.g. Ehteshami, 2003; Gray, 2011; Najem, 2003; Wilson, 2003).

This normative international discourse has played a role in favour of reforms in the

⁷⁷ Gibert, Maraut, Telle, 2005, p.27.

⁷⁸ UAE political anthropologist Dr. Khaled Al-Dhahiri explained during an interview in Abu Dhabi how this loan had symbolised much more than a feeling of economic achievement for the UAE population, since Saudi Arabia had considered with disdain and scorn its smaller GCC neighbour since its independence in 1971.

urban water affairs. Increased efforts for increasing transparency, sustainability, and the fight against corruption are good examples of new trends that used to be foreign to the GCC rentier cultures not long ago. The partial privatisation of water production and other segments of the water sector show that drinking water appears decreasingly as an instrument of wealth redistribution and clientelism in the eyes of water professionals and the ruling elite, but as a precious and costly commodity to rationalise. However, one also needs to note that only some elements of the good governance and effective water governance paradigms have been selected and implemented. While the participation of private actors has been highly encouraged by the authorities in the desalination industry for instance, no real room has been made yet for a truly influential participation of the civil society to decision-making processes, for instance. The rentier paradigm seems also to limit the reach of the privatisation reforms themselves: in all three case studies, the State has remained the main shareholder of the IWPPs and no water authority aims to completely phase off subsidies to the water sector.

Another important conclusion is that with a similar international context of fluctuating oil prices/state revenues, the three oil-exporting polities of Abu Dhabi, Kuwait and Qatar have known a diversity of outcomes in terms of water governance reforms (or ‘non-reforms’ in Kuwait) that demonstrates that there is no structural rentier determinism over the governance of urban water services because of a high dependency on hydrocarbons revenues. This chapter has also shown that, contrary to the general literature on commodity-dependent countries (e.g. Al-Rumaihi, 1996; Hunter, 1986; Karl, 1997; Najem, 2003; Roberts, 1987; Sick, 1998), there is no direct causality between the late 1990s low oil revenues in Abu Dhabi, Qatar and Kuwait and the privatisation programs conceived at that time but mostly implemented the following decade, at a time of higher oil revenues.

With these water reform projects, ideas to fully implement a demand-side water management, or to make the Nationals pay for their water bills, are seriously being studied

and lobbied for by technocrats all over the region. Does that mean that the gradual liberalisation of water signals the end of the prevailing rentier paradigm for the GCC water supply governance? It seems unlikely in the short term, because, again, rentierism can produce inertia and deter reforms as seen in Kuwait. The rentier-ruling bargain aims at political stability and to preserve the welfare privileges of the water consumers. To do so, it can play against the State's economic rationality over water affairs. Rentierism constitutes on the social-political level a barrier to change and reforms. Could the GCC governments produce a fully liberalized model of urban water governance? This is not sure. But as will be seen in the next chapter, some deep structural reforms in the region indicate that there is indeed such a common vision among the GCC member states.

Chapter 7

The Influence of Regional Energy Integration on the Privatisation Process of the Desalinated Water Services in Abu Dhabi, Qatar and Kuwait

Over the past two decades, the trend of privatisation in the GCC gradually made the cogeneration of electricity and desalinated water – traditionally gathered under the same public institutional umbrella – thriving commercial sectors in Abu Dhabi and Doha (Dumortier & Lambert, 2007; NCBC, 2009). Because of their exceptionally close links on the industrial, institutional and commercial levels, major reforms in the governance of energy must mechanically affect the governance of municipal desalinated water supply in the GCC, but no academic literature has yet supported this claim.

This chapter will investigate how the dynamics of regional gas and electricity integration in the GCC have affected the governance of desalinated urban water supply in Abu Dhabi, Doha or Kuwait City and whether it constituted a driver of or a barrier to the privatisation reforms of this sector. The first section examines how regional energy integration in the GCC has affected the governance of the indispensable massive energy supplies for the desalination and electricity cogeneration sector. The second and last section examines how - by enabling the development of new energy mixes - the regional energy integration in the GCC has begun to deeply change desalination's business models. This research is based on the triangulation of the energy literature, interviews of local actors and the limited local data available.

I – Regional energy liberalisation and the new regional scale of desalinated water governance: the contrasted cases of Abu Dhabi, Kuwait and Qatar

To examine the changes of the governance of the urban desalinated water supply induced by the regional energy integration in the different cases of Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City, this section will first investigate how the regional gas integration has added a new scale of governance to the local desalinated water supply, then by appraising how consequential it is for the local water governance in Abu Dhabi more specifically, before shedding light on the rationale behind the gas liberalisation in the region. The last sub-section will investigate whether the regional power integration has been initiating a process of full liberalisation of the power sector and – through cogeneration – of the desalination sector in the region.

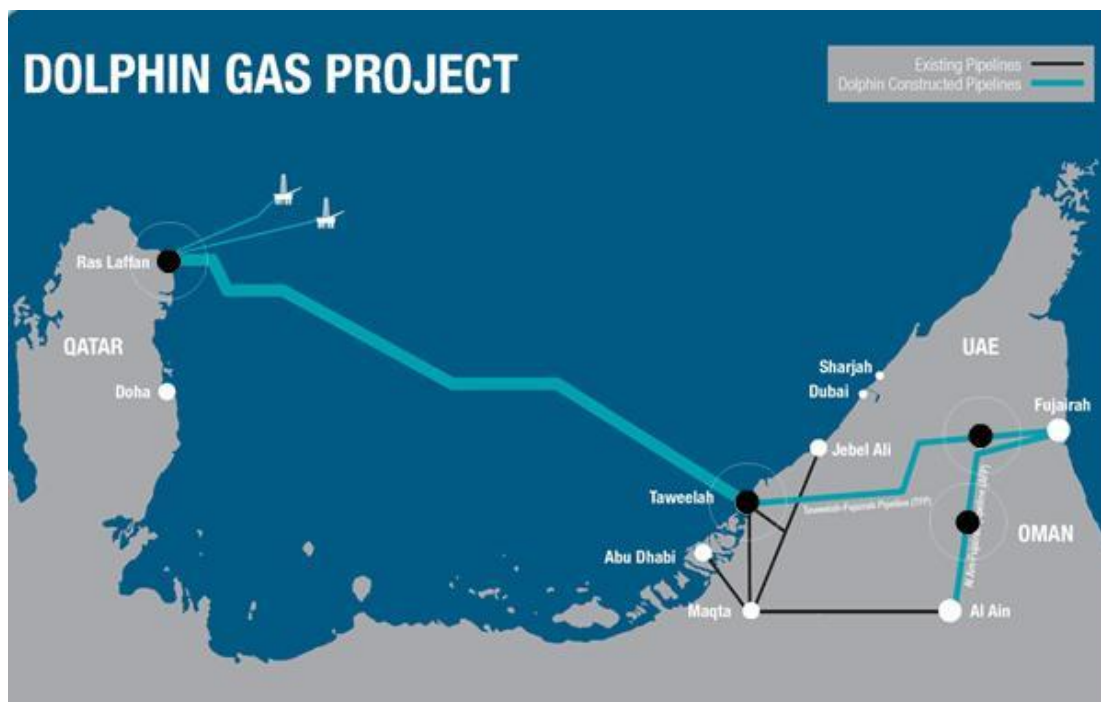
I.1 - The Dolphin gas network and the GCC desalination governance: a new era for the participation of private and foreign actors?

The Dolphin gas network is more than a simple GCC trans-border pipeline. The company is involved at almost every stage of the gas value chain. From the exploitation of raw gas from Qatar's North Field⁷⁹, to the dispatch to its customers within the UAE federation and the neighbouring Sultanate of Oman, it includes the onshore processing and the transportation of refined methane (i.e. the privileged fuel for cogeneration plants and other industries) from Qatar to the UAE-based Dolphin gas network, as shown on map 1.

Dolphin Energy Ltd is a for-profit international joint venture, a PPP established in March 1999 between the government-owned Mubadala investment Fund of Abu Dhabi, for 51 percent, and by two foreign private oil companies, Total (France) and Occidental Petroleum (USA), for 24.5 percent each.

⁷⁹ Discovered off Qatar's coast in 1971, the North Field Covers 6,000 sq. km and is considered the largest non-associated gas field in the world. The North Field reservoir has allowed Qatar to become both the main regional exporter of gas and the world's largest exporter of liquefied natural gas (LNG) (For more information on Qatar's gas resources, ambitions and strategies, see Dargin, 2008; 2011)

Map 3 – The Dolphin Gas Network in Eastern Arabia



Source: Dolphin Energy Ltd.

According to the website of Dolphin Energy Ltd.⁸⁰, the GCC gas network was realised in order to “*create long-term economic wealth and new business opportunities for GCC citizens*” by supporting “*long-term industrial growth*” in the UAE and Oman. However, this initial ambition should be contrasted with the quantities of gas supplied (2 billion standard cubic feet a day) which are significant in the absolute, but far from enough to quench the UAE’ and Oman’s growing thirst for natural gas to fuel their rapid industrialisation and growth in cogeneration demand (see Dargin, 2008; Dziuban, 2011). With the Dolphin gas supply though, it is an indispensable share of their fuel supply for desalination and power cogeneration that has been significantly privatised with two foreign private shareholders: Total and Occidental Petroleum. Worth mentioning, this process of privatisation of the desalination fuel supply is nowhere evoked on Dolphin Energy Ltd’s website, nor on any of the shareholders’ websites, despite the strategic importance of desalination for the GCC

⁸⁰ www.dolphinenergy.com, last time visited on January 7th 2010.

polities. Does it mean that this new opened governance to private and foreign actors has not translated into a more transparent governance⁸¹?

Common trend of regional energy integration, different governance strategies

Water governance can be approached through the vision, values and legitimacy that steer a polity's executive bodies. While management on the one hand is more concerned with achieving technical-administrative goals in an efficient manner, with given resources, means and constraints; governance on the other hand, can be seen as "*setting the stage for management, the process of selecting policy options among competing values, translating them into goals, means and processes to [ultimately] be 'managed'*" (Pahl-Wostl et Toonen, 2009, p.8). This approach proves useful in analysing and differentiating the energy and desalination governance visions and strategies of Kuwait, Qatar and Abu Dhabi.

In Abu Dhabi, French energy company Total, though a minority shareholder in Dolphin Energy Ltd, has become through the trans-border gas network a totally indispensable actor in the local governance of water and energy. Prior to the Dolphin gas grid, Total was already a shareholder of the IWPP 'Gulf Total Tractebel' and an important actor of the energy industry in this emirate. It is now involved in the oil and gas exploration, consulting and exploitation, along the comprehensive Dolphin gas value chain and Dolphin fuel supplies as well as the final desalination and electricity cogeneration through the IWPPs. This means that a foreign and private actor has been authorised by the authorities to become an omnipresent actor in the highly strategic double sector of desalination and electricity cogeneration. This also means that via the regional gas integration, another key segment of Abu Dhabi's desalination industry has been opened to private and foreign participation. In terms of

⁸¹ During field research between 1st September 2008 and 22nd June 2009, the author contacted Dolphin Energy Ltd for an interview a total of 10 times, by email, telephone and even 2 visits to the offices in Abu Dhabi and Doha. The company only answered once to the demand, but ultimately cancelled the interview. All other energy companies participated in the interview process.

strategic orientations and governance values, this is not a neutral choice, nor a consensual one in the region.

Kuwait for instance, though being equally in need of foreign natural gas and investment for its growing cogeneration needs, is not regularly supplied from abroad by any gas pipeline. The only omnipresent energy actor in Kuwait's desalination sector are the fully State-owned Kuwait Oil Company (KOC, for fuel supplies), the Ministry of Energy (for the fuel regulations, allocations and prices) and the Ministry of Water and Electricity (for strategic planning, water production, distribution and sales). A regular informant in Kuwait, Alain Langlois, the then Managing Director at Total Kuwait, explained the enduring position of a majority of Kuwaiti MPs to manage the national oil and gas resources by themselves as much as possible, with KOC being in charge of virtually everything. Alain Langlois explained that International Oil Companies (IOCs) have been attributed 'only' modest consultancy opportunities because of a mix of suspicion towards foreign companies and a desire to remain independent⁸². It should be noted however that a decade ago, the Kuwaiti leadership had (briefly) expressed its interest in benefitting from a gas pipeline from Qatar, but due to the Saudi opposition to this project, the deal had to be cancelled. Kuwaiti authorities have however never tried to reinitiate this process despite a thaw in ties between Riyadh and Doha. Kuwait has also not pushed for the reopening of the gas pipeline that supplied it with Iraqi natural gas in the late 1980s, after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq. To remain independent as much as possible in terms of sovereignty while minimising its cogeneration fuel costs, Kuwait's national oil company has reduced its gas flaring along oil exploitation. During 2005 and 2010, flaring has been reduced from 17% down to 1.75% of its gas

⁸² These explanations support those given by the above-mentioned high officials of the Ministry of Water & Electricity.

production, according to the World Bank⁸³, and KOC intends to further reduce flaring to less than one percent, despite being already one of the world's lowest flaring oil companies. The cost of such a complex technological achievement is however not communicated by the company. It is very likely it would be more expensive than importing gas from the low-cost gas reserves of Qatar.

Qatar remarkably, despite its total gas self-sufficiency (it is the world's largest LNG producer and exporter), follows the strategy to consistently work with international private actors, in order to attract foreign investments and military protection from larger states (see Dargin, 2007). For the Dolphin transborder gas pipeline, Qatar authorised for the first time since the GCC states' independence a completely foreign international joint venture - Dolphin Energy Ltd - to build infrastructures both off- and on-shore Qatar and to operate on several wells of the North Field reservoir, i.e. Qatar's largest gas asset. This was in continuity of previous policies and operations, since Qatar's main actor in the field of energy, Qatar Petroleum, follows the official policy to conduct oil and gas exploration programmes and new projects with major international oil and gas companies mostly through Exploration and Production Sharing Agreements (EPSA) or Development and Production Sharing Agreements (DPSA)⁸⁴. Noteworthy however, all gas supplies to Qatar come from its own on- and off-shore resources, over which it remains sovereign as a State. The dependence on foreign stakeholders is thus relatively reduced compared to Abu Dhabi.

⁸³ See 'Kuwait joins effort to cut emissions from gas flaring', March 4 2012, available at: <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:23133983~pagePK:34370~piPK:34424~theSitePK:4607,00.html>

⁸⁴ See Qatar's National Oil and Gas Company's liberal discourse on its website at: www.qp.com.qa/en/Homepage/AboutUs.aspx (Last accessed on 18/08/2011)

I.2 - How meaningful in terms of liberalisation of desalination governance is Abu Dhabi's greater overture to new actors through Dolphin?

To appraise how consequential the changes in the region's water governance are, one has to consider the gas network's four main customers:

- Union Water & Electricity Company (UWEC), which produces and supplies water and electricity to the UAE's northern emirates;
- Oman Oil Company, which then supplies industrial customers in Oman, including desalination plants;
- Dubai Supply Authority (DUSUP) which supplies among other customers the Dubai Electricity and Water Authority;
- Abu Dhabi Water & Electricity Authority (ADWEA), which supplies gas fuel to a subsidiary, the Abu Dhabi Water and Electricity Company (ADWEC);

Because ADWEC is Abu Dhabi's unique supplier of gas fuels to water and electricity producers (as well as "*Single Buyer and Seller*" of power and water productions by Law No 2 of 1998), the water and electricity producers in this emirate have indirectly become dependent on a foreign resource, Qatar's natural gas, and thus on Qatari authorities. At the end of year one of the gas deliveries (in 2008), the gas supplies from Qatar represented around a third of Abu Dhabi's total annual need. Though this level has slightly decreased since then with the development of Abu Dhabi's own resources, the dependence on Qatar remains important in a regional context of limited low-cost natural gas availability.

One needs also to appreciate the length of the supply contract between the Qatari authorities and Dolphin Energy Ltd. This plans a minimum gas supply for 25 years, i.e. a long but relatively usual timeframe for gas pipeline contracts, since these infrastructures require significant capital investments⁸⁵. The duration of this PPP contract and the weight of the

⁸⁵ To give an idea of the order, the initial budget of the Dolphin project was of \$3.5 billion and has ever since increased with the development of the gas grid within the UAE and to supply Oman.

investment show that this pipeline is definitely not a temporary solution to meet an immediate gas shortage, but a long-term investment and a strategic commitment.

This existing dependence on foreign gas and the repeated demands of the authorities of Abu Dhabi for increased gas supplies from Qatar reflect a strategic departure and change in State rationality and values from the previously dominating post-independence ambitions of self-sufficiency over the strategic sectors of energy and water. Abu Dhabi is by the way not an exception in the region since Dubai, the Northern Emirates and Oman have made public their will to import more Qatari gas to meet their growing desalination and power demands⁸⁶.

I.3 – Regional policies of gas liberalisation for economic optimisation

The emirate of Abu Dhabi, like the emirate of Dubai or the Sultanate of Oman, is supplied with natural gas by the Dolphin pipeline while, paradoxically, being endowed with substantial hydrocarbon resources. Abu Dhabi and Oman are even major LNG exporters. But these polities have voluntarily chosen to buy (and depend on) low-cost foreign gas supplies from the Dolphin gas network to meet growing demands in their respective industrial sector (especially water and electricity cogeneration). The objective is to be able to re-allocate their own oil and gas resources to overseas markets, which are significantly more profitable than their subsidised domestic markets, as seen in the previous chapter.

Concerning the economic rationale behind Qatar's decision in 1998 to sell pipelined gas regionally (rather than selling 100% of its productions through LNG exports at a higher price), Evans (2009) explained that with long-term agreements, Qatar assures itself a "*solid*,

⁸⁶ The pipeline's current 2 billion scf/d supply was severely needed by Abu Dhabi when the Dolphin gas project began supplying the emirate in 2007, bolstering the emirate's total gas domestic supplies by a third as already mentioned. But the pipeline has been designed to deliver up to 3.2 billion scf/d of refined gas and Abu Dhabi and other customers are looking forward to receiving the additional 1.2 billion scf/d. Qatar's further supply is currently conditional on a future agreement between Dolphin Energy Ltd and the Qatari political authorities. The latter decided in 2007 to postpone the increase in gas supply for a period to assess the geophysical condition and evolution of the North Field reservoirs. This moratorium was initially installed until 2012, but later extended until 2015 by the Qatari Authorities. See *The gas glut reaches Qatar*, Natural Gas, January 2010.

regular income stream”. The Dolphin Energy gas pipeline, completely financed by the UAE and international private actors, could be seen as a ‘free’ strategic investment for the Qatari authorities when, in the late 1990s, Qatar was looking for project finance to develop its national gas industry. The author would like to mention that there is chronic instability of gas prices on the spot market (i.e. the international market) contrary to the fixed prices of piped gas supplies, as well as Qatar’s geopolitical situation. In case of a conflict involving Iran - which could temporarily block the Hormuz straits - the Dolphin gas pipeline could provide Qatar his unique safe outlet⁸⁷.

Over time however, there has been a cost for Qatar, proportional to the difference between the revenues from pipelined sales (at only 0.75 \$/mmbtu) and the LNG spot market prices, which have never been under 2.70 \$/mmbtu since 1999 (date of the agreement to launch the Dolphin project), and even reached 13 \$/mmbtu in 2005 and 2008. Is this high difference in prices precisely why the authorities have repeatedly postponed the end of the moratorium they unilaterally decreed over increasing gas exports? At least until 2015 thus far, but with no firm and definitive limit of time⁸⁸.

Counterintuitively, though Qatar is at the heart of the regional gas integration as the gas exporter, the regional energy integration does not seem to have had any significant direct influence over Qatar’s desalination industry, and it appears from local informants in the hydrocarbons industry and cogeneration sector that this was not at all an aim of the Qatari authorities. Qatar’s regional energy integration seemed to have had ambitions only in terms of optimisation of energy trade. One may also speculate that by triggering foreign companies to invest and operate its offshore natural resources for the Dolphin gas network, Qatari

⁸⁷ The war opposing Iran and Iraq in the Gulf waters lasted 8 years and Iranian forces used to target tankers from most Arab countries. Some were eventually put under an American pavilion for their protection.

⁸⁸ The commercial prices for any potential increased gas supplies are under discussions and interviewees in Abu Dhabi and Doha agreed that it is the main but unofficial issue behind the current moratorium. Ibrahim Al-Sulaiti, Qatar Petroleum’s Asst. Manager for Refining & Manufacturing Ventures, explicitly explained to the author that these issues were primarily political, rather than geostructural in nature.

authorities received revenues and expertise that must have helped develop their national gas industry and by so doing, its gas-fuelled desalination industry. But this hypothesis is so far un-documented and needs to be investigated in a separate research.

Independently of the issue of the main aim and driver of regional energy integration, the commitment to the liberal economic doctrine according to which economic optimisation of the energy resources shall prevail over other considerations was explicitly defended by the Emir/Head of State of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, during Doha's 8th Forum for Democracy, Development and Free Trade. He explained that a stable environment was instrumental – so not an end in itself as after independence - in order to “*support the development process, encourage investment, attract capital, provide new job opportunities and increase the flow of trade.*” Importantly, he warned that “*non-optimal exploitation of resources would undermine the foundation and pillars of development*”. It was based on such a liberal vision of economic optimisation of the resources that the first project for regional energy integration, the Dolphin gas network, has been realised, despite its obvious tradeoffs in terms of national dependence over energy and desalination for the customer polities, as in Abu Dhabi, Dubai, the Northern Emirates and Oman. There, the governance of desalinated water and electricity supply is now partly dependent on a foreign state's gas supplies and on foreign and private shareholders.

This paradigmatic shift in terms of priority for the desalinated water governance from national self-sufficiency to economic optimisation by regional integration is supported by the recent rejection on economic grounds of a project of a desalinated water interconnection along the Eastern shore of the GCC region⁸⁹, despite its capacity to enhance the region's water

⁸⁹ A brief summary of the feasibility studies was realised by the French engineering company Sogreah in charge of the project. The project was cancelled after studies had shown its low cost-efficiency compared to local desalination. A summary of the report is available online at: www.sogreah.fr/contenu/references/refs_pdf/5_environ_urbain/5_2_distribution_eau/gcc_water_supply_interconnexion1.pdf

supply security in case of local oil spill or industrial incident. Does this mean that all common dynamics concerning water and energy are driven by the aspiration to economically optimise the region's resources? Is the recently-completed project of regional electricity network also an instrument for the liberalisation dynamics? And what is its impact over desalination?

I.4 - The GCC power grid: a “*launch-pad*” for full energy liberalisation?

This second regional energy project interconnected the six GCC national electricity networks in 2012 to create a common integrated network for trans-border electricity trade. To supervise the inter-connection project construction and then manage the network's trade and its assets, the Gulf Cooperation Council Interconnection Authority (GCCIA) was launched in 2001 as a joint stock company⁹⁰. Contrary to the Dolphin project, it is not a public-private company and was subscribed only by the six member States. The market-oriented and economically liberal culture of the GCC Interconnection Authority (GCCIA) is however apparent in its form (a joint stock company), but also in its communication, implementation strategy and vision.

According to the GCCIA's CEO, this regional power grid tries to solve the tension between “*how to bring about the lowering of electricity costs, yet, become attractive enough for [foreign and private] investors to invest on power projects*”⁹¹. In its corporate communication available online, the GCCIA defines six objectives that can be summed-up as follow, following the same order:

1. To connect the members' networks to supply electricity to any member in case of emergency;
2. To reduce the costly need for electrical reserve of each member state;
3. To “*improve the economic efficiency*” of the national power systems;

⁹⁰ The GCCIA's Articles of Association and By-Laws were approved by a Saudi Royal Decree (No. M/21 on July 29, 2001), since the joint stock company's headquarters are based in Saudi Arabia. The authorised share capital of the Authority was fixed at US \$ 1,100,000,000.

⁹¹ Quote from “the CEO Statement”, available on the GCCIA website (www.gccia.com.sa, last visited on November 21st 2011)

4. To enable the exchange of electricity *“in such a way as to serve the economic aspects and strengthen the reliability”*;
5. To coordinate with the member States’ companies and authorities and improve their *“efficiency of operation”*;
6. To follow up and make use of the best international technological innovations.

In this discourse, strongly marked by the ideas of ‘efficiency’ and cost-effectiveness, the purposes of the GCC power integration appear to be chiefly aiming at economic objectives (points 2 to 6), while improving the member countries’ power sector thoroughness (points 3 to 6), and insuring energy supply security for emergencies and peak demands (point 1 and 2). Here again, the changes that it can imply for the desalination sector do not seem to have been primary, if at all considered.

The strategy for implementation also reflected the predominantly economic concern and ‘cost-effectiveness’ approach⁹². The project was divided into work packages to maximise the competition for the international biddings so as to obtain competitive prices and the best technical solutions for each segment. No special treatment seems to have been reserved to any local GCC company, as used to be the case in the region not so long ago for such major contracts. All the GCC countries seemed eager to change local practices to abide by and to benefit from the rules of the WTO they all have joined within the last two decades.

The GCCIA’s official literature shows that the Inter-connection Authority has a bold liberal vision for the GCC energy sector on a long-term basis. After a gradual liberalisation of the member countries’ domestic sectors and a development of leading regional producers, based on local competitive advantages, the GCCIA plans that the common power market

⁹² According to the authorities, this approach managed to obtain *“wide participation by International contractors in the shared implementation (...) in an efficient and economic manner. (...)The lowest evaluated Tenders, taking into consideration combination discounts, were then recommended for award of contract.”* (Al-Mohaisen et al., 2007).

should be strong enough to subsequently export to neighbouring Middle Eastern countries and even North Africa⁹³.

These elements are clearly not targeting social or environmental benefits, as other regional energy integration projects generally claim in pair with the expected economic outcomes, but are essentially oriented towards an economic optimisation of energy resources and power trade, and the liberalisation of the GCC electricity sectors. The changes that it may imply for the desalination industry do not appear to have been considered important and this issue was not addressed. Nevertheless, beyond the liberalisation dynamic that has been described, the GCC regional energy integration has also had some impacts on the technological and organisational aspects of the GCC desalination industry and its governance.

II - Regional Energy Integration, new energy mixes and the emergence of new desalination business models

This section will investigate the direct influence of the GCC regional energy integration, first over the national energy mixes and subsequently over the local business models of the desalination and power sectors.

II.1 - Regional energy integration's influence over national energy mixes

The GCC interconnection grid aims at transforming the scale of power generation and electricity marketing, from national to regional. With a larger market, the regional power grid enables the commercial development of new forms of electricity generation, especially from the renewable and nuclear energies: the former requiring alternative markets to optimise and compensate the unpredictable quantities of generated power, and the latter requiring a market large enough to be cost-efficient.

⁹³ This is unambiguously expressed in a GCCIA presentation which states that “*The GCC Grid is a fundamental step leading to the liberalisation of a Regional GCC and Pan-Arab Power Market*” (see GCCIA, 2007, slide 21).

II.1.a - The emergence of renewable energies

Only Qatar disposes of sufficient domestic gas supplies to maintain its current energy mix without jeopardising its desalination and power cogeneration model in the medium to long term. Technocrats of both Kuwait and Abu Dhabi are looking forward to diversify their domestic energy supply for power generation and desalination, with cheaper and less polluting resources than their oil reserves or sour gas resources. In 2003, the ‘Abu Dhabi Declaration for Environment and Energy’ called for regional cooperation in the field of energy integration, especially for electricity and gas. The GCC governments have launched in recent years some initiatives to significantly develop renewable energies, especially in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (particularly Abu Dhabi), more recently in Qatar.

In Abu Dhabi, the smallness of the interior market had until recently made it difficult to develop viable alternative energies to hydrocarbons. In parallel to the deployment of the GCC power interconnection grid in recent years, Abu Dhabi launched the Masdar Initiative⁹⁴ to develop renewable energies in the country and abroad on a commercial basis. In 2008, it launched its first commercial concentrated solar plant (CSP) of 10MW, and is currently constructing a 100MW CSP, named Shams 1, which should be the first in a series of very large solar power plants. While the participation of the renewable energies in Abu Dhabi’s energy mix was close to nil in early 2008, these solar projects and other renewable energy projects are contributing to Abu Dhabi’s strategic goal of generating 7% of its energy needs from renewable sources by 2020⁹⁵. It is a remarkable figure for a young country⁹⁶, all the more for an oil exporter. By contrast, the governments of Kuwait and Qatar have not yet started any renewable energy production. Kuwait, because its heavy bureaucratic and

⁹⁴ The Masdar Initiative is a subsidiary company of the Abu Dhabi’s Mubadala wealth fund.

⁹⁵ See Abu Dhabi’s official roadmap for long term development, Abu Dhabi Vision 2030, available at: <http://gsec.abudhabi.ae/Sites/GSEC/Content/EN/PDF/Publications/economic-vision-2030-executive-summary-mandate2,property=pdf.pdf>

⁹⁶ Developing countries are not legally bound to reduce their GHG emissions under the Kyoto Protocol.

parliamentary machineries have only recently produced some of the feasibility research reports that had been commissioned in 2004⁹⁷; Qatar, because its exceptionally immense and low-cost gas reserves make all other forms of power and desalination cogeneration far from being as competitive⁹⁸. Qatar has only recently launched small pilot projects, prior to or while hosting the internationally mediated 18th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. However, renewable energy there will not replace gas as the main source of energy, even if its power demand is locally increasing very fast. Renewable energies should thus remain marginal in the national energy mixes in Qatar and in the inter-connected GCC countries because of their costs compared to (Qatari) gas-fuelled cogeneration. But the GCC inter-connection grid has also enabled Kuwait and Abu Dhabi to develop nuclear power generation capacities, unquestionably the most significant regional change in the GCC national energy mixes and for desalination.

II.1.b - The GCC nuclear programs

In December 2006, the GCC Secretariat announced the six member states' intention to collaborate on a joint nuclear research initiative. A feasibility study for nuclear electricity and desalination production was initiated to establish a common research program under the supervision of the GCC general secretariat and in cooperation with the IAEA⁹⁹. To speed up the development of their national nuclear capabilities, the UAE and Kuwait launched the year after their independent national nuclear programs. Their rationale to produce nuclear energy is simple. The UAE federation has been producing 98% of its electricity and water from natural

⁹⁷ Interview with Dr Salem Alhajraf, Program Manager for renewable energies at the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR), by the Kuwaiti daily newspaper 'Arab Times Online': www.arabtimesonline.com/NewsDetails/tabid/96/smId/414/ArticleID/163566/t/Kuwait-targets-renewable-energy-sources/Default.aspx (last accessed on 06/09/2011)

⁹⁸ Though more cost-efficient than oil and most liquid fuels, solar energies are not yet more cost-efficient in the GCC region than the subsidised natural gas for generation and cogeneration (Krane, 2010; Bloomberg White Paper, 2011).

⁹⁹ The GCC countries were keen on emphasising the peaceful purpose and the transparency of their process, as there were suspicions of GCC military ambitions for this atomic program in response to the perceived Iranian nuclear threat (Starke, 2007).

gas and the rest from liquid fuel, but with a demand for desalination and power production growing respectively by 6% and 9% in yearly average, it was estimated in 2008 that natural gas supplies (both domestic and from the regional Dolphin network) will only be sufficient for 49-65% of this requirement and that renewables could supply at best 7% of the needed power by 2020¹⁰⁰. This represents a major gap that requires an alternative source of energy, hopefully at a lower cost than crude oil. In Kuwait in 2010, an average of 12 per cent of the daily oil production was not allocated to foreign exports but burnt to meet local electricity and desalination needs, costing over \$4 billion per year at current oil prices. With a power demand growing at a conservative estimation of 7% annually, the power stations should require as much as 20 per cent of the national oil production in 20 years¹⁰¹, which represent as much oil not economically optimised through exports. Importing significantly more coal – currently used marginally in the UAE and Oman - was an option rapidly dismissed by the GCC countries for both supply security and environmental reasons. Because of these resource and financial forecasts from the water and electricity sector, both Abu Dhabi and Kuwait have favoured the development of the nuclear energy for economic reasons.

In the 1970s, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia had already considered the use of nuclear power generation. In 1991, five Northern African Arab countries had commonly requested a regional feasibility study for nuclear desalination to the IAEA that was rapidly followed by a demand from Saudi Arabia. But nuclear power and desalination cogeneration never developed in the region, despite repeated positive feasibility studies (See Kupitz, 1995; Ragheb, 2011) and a regional background of growing water needs. The main issue in the 1970s and the 1990s

¹⁰⁰ See the official UAE document '*Policy of the United Arab Emirates on the Evaluation and Potential Development of Peaceful Nuclear Energy*', published in 2008.

¹⁰¹ Figures given by Bloomberg, based on civil servant Ahmad Bishara's information. See *Kuwait Plans to Build Four Nuclear Reactors as It Seeks Alternative to Oil*, By T. Inajima and Y. Okada - Sep 10, 2010, available at www.bloomberg.com/news/2010-09-10/kuwait-joins-gulf-push-for-nuclear-power-with-plans-to-build-four-reactors.html (last accessed 01/09/2011). However, information from the BP Statistical Review of World Energy for 2011 show that Kuwait consumed 413,000 barrels of oil a day in 2010, i.e. 16% of the annual production, so substantially more than the official 12%.

was related to the oil market's 'boom and bust' economic cycles. Following the 1973 oil prices rise, the high cost of oil-fuelled desalination had provoked some temporary interest for nuclear-fuelled power and desalination plants, but the fall in oil prices a few years later made the heavy capital investments for nuclear infrastructures not competitive anymore with hydrocarbons-fuelled desalination and power generation. The same event happened again in the 1990s. Additionally, nuclear energy for desalination and power cogeneration required a market large enough to be cost-efficient (Kupitz, 1995) while the GCC States - except Saudi Arabia - were very small and their domestic power sectors disconnected. Strong oil prices since 2002 have made the nuclear technology cost-efficient again and the GCC interconnection of the national power grids is enabling transboundary power trade and scale economies. Furthermore, the general forecasts of high hydrocarbon prices for the coming two decades could theoretically maintain a satisfactory level of cost efficiency for nuclear energy.

Abu Dhabi has now the most advanced national program of the region and it should have by 2020 four 1400 MWe nuclear plants operational. The reduced price for desalination is yet unknown, but substantially reduced costs are expected. It is forecasted that electricity should be produced at an estimated quarter the cost of that from gas (WNA, 2011). Coupled with the regional power interconnection, nuclear energy appeared as the best structural solution to face the fast-growing power and desalination demand in the region. However both Qatar and Kuwait rejected this best option.

Qatar, with its very small domestic market (well under one million inhabitants until recently) and its extremely abundant low-cost gas resources, has never been in need of a domestic nuclear project for desalination and power generation, independently of regional capacities to trade energy regionally. In Kuwait, despite the recurrent and severe power blackouts, the population's post-Fukushima fears over the nuclear energy have been voiced in

the Parliament and the Kuwaiti project had to be cancelled by the government¹⁰². Kuwait will eventually be able to benefit from the nuclear energy power production and trade by importing power from neighbouring countries to reduce its level of expensive oil-fuelled electricity production. Desalination could also benefit from this structural change.

II.2 - New energy mixes and changes in desalination business models

With a nuclear industry set to provide in the coming years cheaper electricity onto the GCC grid, and with a rise of renewable energies that do not favour thermal desalination (which requires combustion), the interest in Abu Dhabi and Kuwait for new desalination units with the traditional thermal technologies has been significantly reduced, since it relies on expensive hydrocarbon fuels.

Reverse Osmosis (RO), as a non-thermal technology that can be supplied by renewable or nuclear-produced electricity, appears not only as the most energy efficient desalination technology but also as the most cost-efficient and environmentally friendly technology for desalination. It appears thus as the most relevant technocratic choice to make when using a cost/benefit analysis for decision-making, as is systematically practiced by the UAE's Policy Planning Department, in charge of proposing policies and strategies regarding the most strategic decisions of the country (large investments abroad, diplomatic and military activities, water governance and security, etc.)¹⁰³ Most of its staff - almost exclusively Westerners under 45 - relied essentially on cost-benefit and commercial analyses for decision-making, environmental and military affairs alike.

¹⁰² At the beginning of summer 2011, the Deputy Prime Minister Mohammad Al-Sabah announced to the concerned MPs that the national nuclear project had been cancelled. See the Kuwait Times, July 12, 2011 at www.kuwaittimes.net/read_news.php?newsid=NzI3MzU0ODM5OQ==

¹⁰³ The author visited this Department and met with Plenipotentiary Minister Lana Nusseibeh, Director of the Department, and several advisors to the UAE Ministers. Over five months, the author had a correspondence with staff from the Department via emails and phone calls, and came to the Department in September 2010. Interviews of Kahramaa and QEWEC desalination management staff were conducted in Doha's Headquarters between December 2008 and January 2009.

It is in that general administrative and political context, Abu Dhabi's RSB forecast that most desalination plants to be built in the emirate in the future will be RO plants (See RSB, 2011). The desalination and power generation will thus eventually become two separated industries, and the successful model of semi-privatisation of the sector's additional capacities by IWPPs will eventually not be possible for new capacities. However the existing IWPPs are planned to function over the next two decades at least.

The nuclear power plants are already part of a PPP deal (60% Abu Dhabi-owned, 40% for the foreign private partners), but the PPPs for a separated desalination industry could be more difficult to initiate. The desalination industry is likely to become much less attractive than the high-growth power sector: 9% in yearly average against 6% for desalination in Abu Dhabi over the past decade. Will this lead foreign private actors to neglect local desalination projects? It is likely that private actors – local, regional and international ones - will at least try to renegotiate new commercial terms for their participation in desalination projects.

In gas-rich Qatar, the regional energy integration does not seem to have a *direct* impact over the sector, as confirmed during separate interviews of professionals of Kahramaa and QEWC¹⁰⁴, and gas-fuelled power and thermal desalination cogeneration will logically follow the same current business model: building additional capacities through the formation of mixed Qatari-international joint-ventures. The privatisation of the sector should thus be cautiously continued under the form of PPPs for thermal IWPPs.

In Kuwait, the local political system, with the regular paralysis of the executive by the parliament, makes prognoses of change fairly unreliable. The recent abandonment of the national nuclear program and the absence of any concrete renewable energy project shall logically sustain the predominance of the hydrocarbons-fuelled thermal desalination and

¹⁰⁴ Interviews of Kahramaa and QEWC desalination management staff were conducted in Doha's Headquarters between December 2008 and January 9.

power cogeneration model, though the current situation appears environmentally and economically unsustainable. Yet deliveries by tankers of foreign Liquefied Natural Gas ordered by the Ministry of Water and Electricity for the last three summer seasons to meet the annual power peak demand seem to artificially sustain this expensive and polluting hydrocarbon-fuelled Statist model. The new possibility to import power through the GCC interconnection grid should theoretically bring some relief to the summer power crises (when cooling systems require a lot of electricity but water demand is low because of the vacations abroad), but as all the GCC members face their peak demand during this peak season, the regional grid might not be able to provide the radical change expected in Kuwait. The desalinated water governance seems paralysed and victim of the overall political blockage and dysfunctioning of Kuwaiti politics, almost isolated from the dynamics of regional energy integration.

Conclusion

The GCC's founding Charter stipulated that “*(t)he basic objectives of the Cooperation Council are: To effect coordination, integration and inter-connection between Member States in all fields in order to achieve unity between them*” (GCC, 1981, article four). Over the last two decades however, it has been more diversity than unity that has best characterised the evolution of local water and power governance within the region. Our three case studies have illustrated that the regional energy integration in the GCC has so far provided significantly different results over the local desalinated water governance in Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City due to several factors, such as the local endowments in low-cost energy resources of course, but also local politics to a great extent, and decisively the evolution – or not - of the local political philosophy towards greater liberalisation of the desalinated water and power sector.

Kuwait – whose strong Parliament has consistently refused most neoliberal reform projects - has privatised none of its desalination plants or fuel supplies while adhering to the power interconnection grid. In the pro-market, Abu Dhabi on the contrary, the regional energy integration dynamics has participated in the expansion of a liberalising, market-oriented and now cross-border desalination governance. Qatar also benefitted commercially from the regional energy integration and foreign companies' investments. But unlike Abu Dhabi, its desalinated water governance has not evolved towards a multi-scale water governance, since its gas supplies will remain domestic ones, exploited in partnership with foreign companies, but under Qatar's complete territorial sovereignty.

These three different cases show that despite a potential common interest in regional energy integration, the different governments' political orientations remain fundamentally important in shaping the different governance visions and strategies vis à vis the private and foreign actors. It also shows that this is not the regional energy integration in itself that initiates the liberalisation of an energy sector or the multiplication of the scales of water governance, but rather local politics and the local trust in private and foreign stakeholders to rely on for greater economic performance. This also contradicts WEC's (2005) idea that it is the apolitical structural force of the 'market availability' that drives regional energy integration. It is the degree of faith in and commitment to neoliberal strategies (pronounced in Abu Dhabi, hindered in Kuwait, cautious in Qatar) that takes over sovereignist considerations and thus enables the participation of new public and private actors as well as new local, national and/or international actors to the energy and desalinated water governance.

This chapter investigated whether and how regional energy integration was a driver of privatisation through PPPs for desalination. Though it appears to have been a driver of change for desalination management - by transforming the techno-economic parameters of energy demand and supply -, it seems that it has not been a driver of change for desalinated water

governance. The market-oriented reforms linked to the energy integration appear to owe to the same change in governing rationality than desalination: favouring economic optimisation for the water and energy sectors. The Dolphin gas project and the GCC power grid were realised because it made sense to every stakeholders on an *economic* basis, not on pan-GCC ideological grounds, nor for environmental reasons. This “*commercialist*” approach to regional energy integration (Vacchino, 1981) chosen by the GCC states has thus acted more as a factor, or a *medium* through which Qatar and Abu Dhabi have continued and expanded their liberalisation process of their water sector by privatising their fuel supplies to desalination plants and by terminating the state monopoly over project financing for gas supplies infrastructures. In other words, regional energy integration did not *drive* desalination's privatisation, but a similar commercialist governing rationality enabled it to further its privatisation dynamic through the energy integration.

Regional energy integration in the GCC has also shown that it holds the potential to significantly alter the parameters of technology selection for local desalination, since it enables the redefinition of local and national energy mixes, with new sources of energy being imported and new domestic productions becoming commercially viable. This has enabled the emergence of nuclear and renewable energies to be developed, thereby seriously challenging the historical preference for gas-fuelled thermal technologies, as in Abu Dhabi for instance. This is expected to produce in turn changes in terms of most adapted business model for future desalination units due to the separation of desalination by RO on the one hand and power production on the other. At the scale of the GCC region however, this has so far played only a small role. But as the trade of energy within the region is recent and far from mature, it is still too early to know how the authorities and actors of the desalination sector will react in the medium to long term, and what should be the lasting commercial consequences of regional energy integration over desalination.

There is no doubt however that regional energy integration has been instrumental in the desalinated water sector's ongoing redefinition of the roles of public/private actors regionally, but also for the local/regional/foreign actors over some newly multi-scale water governance models, as observed in Abu Dhabi, but also in gas-importers Dubai or Oman for instance. There is an increasing participation of new networks of actors - though again, differently according to local circumstances –, marked by a growing participation of private and foreign fuel-suppliers and energy infrastructure shareholders. Some of which can become major actors of the local desalination governance.

In Abu Dhabi and Qatar, the ambition of economic optimisation of the domestic resources through the regional liberalisation of the water and energy sectors seems to be taking over the former top priority of self-sufficiency. However, all over the GCC sub-region, the strong subsidies to desalinated urban water production and supply appear as an obstacle for further privatisation of the sector. Are the authorities able or even willing to challenge the current ruling bargain that provides free or almost free water to the GCC citizens? In the context of the Arab spring, this seems unlikely. Examining this matter would certainly be a way to assess what is now the strongest factor for policy-making and water reforms: the oil rentier ruling bargain that provides free water, or the authorities' recent changes in political philosophy that promotes economic optimisation? Does this new political philosophy reflect a major shift in the political culture of the larger region? A divorce from post-independence politics? As Kuwait's elected Parliament systematically opposes any significant departure from its sovereignist and State-centred water and energy government strategies, it appears more important to investigate to what extent the water reforms – or their absence - should be attributed to the local political culture and its dynamics.

Chapter 8

A diachronic approach to market forces and institutional change in Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City's urban water governance:

From early settlements to the rationalisation decade (late 18th century – early 1990s)

Both this chapter and the one following will demonstrate that urban water governance models in the cities of Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City have been significantly framed and re-framed by these cities' respective political cultural forces and dynamics, key regional events, as well as by a significant and multi-faceted British influence, both before and after independence. This chapter will particularly shed light on how foreign influences and the local political cultures of Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City have produced these cities' respective models of modern urban water services, from the late 18th century to the early 1990s. This will help to contextualise and bring insight as to how these elements might have been counter-forces and even barriers to more recent water privatisation reforms.

To do so, this chapter has been divided into two parts. The first section focuses on the political culture, societal organisation, and water management nexus' historical evolution in Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City. It exposes how their respective historical development and political cultures' main *tendances lourdes* have been framing the provision of urban drinking water services until the 1990s. The second and last section explain how the framing forces of the post-independence models (1961/1971 – 1990) have also acted as barriers to the reforms more recently.

The different political cultural forces, that have produced the respective water services governance models of Kuwait City, Doha and Abu Dhabi and transformed them over time, will now be investigated for the period of local state formation and until the 1990s, when there was a shift towards more market-oriented water governance.

I – From tribal customs to Empire-led modernisation to State water sovereignty: the long evolution towards public water institutions and services

To designate the traditional (i.e. pre-oil) organisation, values and norms of the water resources management prior to and during the establishment of these cities, we can convincingly speak of a governance of water, since this has long been characterised by a horizontal organisation of the networks of actors. But, as will be detailed later, the political cultural influences of the British Empire and Arab nationalist ideologies have driven a centralisation of water management, nationalisation of the resources, and a monopolistic role of the modern State under the increasing influence of oil revenues and rentierism. Nevertheless, despite these deep transformations of the water governance, the water models of Kuwait City, Abu Dhabi and Doha have all remained - though in different ways - largely shaped by tribalism.

I.1 – A note on this chapter's specific methodology

This chapter is a reconstruction of the historical evolution of the social, political, and water governance in or around the cities of Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City from the early 19th century to the early 1990s. It was built on a number of primary and secondary sources, on several books and reports on water policies and infrastructures in the Arab world, several interviews of local social scientists, and field observations of the main realisations related to water. If the chronological material and data have been collected from existing sources and interviews, the comparative approach and, more importantly, all the analysis of the social political governance and water governance and their evolution have been produced by the author.

The primary sources are essentially composed of the British archives on water development, technical documents of the ill-fated Shatt al-Arab-Kuwait pipeline project, photographs from diverse collections, and Lienhardt's 1950s' anthropological observations in Kuwait and Abu Dhabi. Though modest in their individual contributions, and scattered

among a large number of more general books, the secondary sources proved more important. The two known writings focusing on the history of water in the Gulf shaykhdoms are Guingand's (2009) booklet on water in Kuwait before the oil era, and a State-funded book realised by the Centre for Research and Studies on Kuwait and the (then) Ministry of Energy Electricity and Water (CRSK/MEEW, 2005). They are both invaluable contributions to the field, since they provide abundant information with a clear timeline. But, except for their mention of the Iraqi threat on Kuwait's sovereignty, their main limit is the depoliticisation of water in terms of water rights and control of the resources, of conflictual values for its management, or of the changing social-political organisation and its impact on the water governance. In other words, there is so far no political ecology of water in pre-oil Eastern Arabia, and the above-mentioned questions will be tentatively addressed in this chapter, though they would deserve - to be treated in depth – to be the main object of another research.

The history of water has been poorly investigated in the Gulf shaykhdoms, so most of the secondary sources used, do not focus on water resources or water government. They periodically refer to it, but primarily deal with the social and/or political conditions of the shaykhdoms prior to independence and shortly thereafter (e.g. Abu Hakima, 2004; Al-Ghunaim, 2000; Chrystal, 1995; Heard-Bey, 1999; Zahlan, 1989). This chapter also draws on a small number of water-related books and reports dealing with other topics than its local management and governance, such as Islamic water artworks (e.g. the Agha Khan Foundation, 1980; Blair, Bloom et al., 2009) or regional water policy issues, with limited details on Gulf countries (e.g. Mutin, 2005).

It is worth mentioning here that Abu Dhabi, Kuwait City, and Doha have not benefitted from the same level of academic study, particularly regarding water. The Qatari water governance has been comparatively neglected by modern historians and social scientists, as well as by the former foreign authorities, i.e. the Ottoman Sultanate (see

Anscombe, 1999) and, after World War One, the British Empire (see MFA, 2003), with little of importance to support this research found in their archives. Non-written sources of information therefore proved most useful.

Insights from conversations also strengthened the narrative and helped to confirm or downplay various literary based findings. A deeper understanding of the evolution of the water governance in and around the cities of Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City was obtained through interviews and discussions with local historians, anthropologists, geographers and retired diplomats; most particularly Mohammad Abdalnasser, Monique Guingand, Frauke Heard-Bey, Yusef al-Kandari and Oliver Miles

Finally, field observations in Abu Dhabi, Qatar and Kuwait (e.g. at Abu Dhabi's *Qasr al-Hosn* fort and Kuwait City's ostentatious 'water towers') confirmed and complemented the various writings used to construct the following comparative historical evolution of the water governance in these three polities' urban and political centres.

I.2 Tribal societies, water and the early settlements of Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait

Located on the arid low-lying, flat and semi-arid coast of the Arabian Peninsula that extends from Kuwait to the North to the emirate of Ra's al-Khaymah (UAE) to the Southeast, the three cities of Kuwait City, Doha and Abu Dhabi have never benefitted from a permanent surface water body or aflaj irrigation systems. This resource limitation has naturally influenced the location and nature of human settlements.

I.2.a Tribal settlements and control of freshwater

There are old debates over the reasons behind these cities' specific locations and emergence. Some attributed them to the important role in their development of trade and geography of contraband (some Gulf settlements having been outside of the Ottoman zones of taxation), to the Gulf pearl industry, while others have put forward the presence of freshwater

resources when the hinterland was suffering from limited water resources and drought years¹⁰⁵. The founding myths, and official history of the city of Abu Dhabi, constitutes a case in point. They are directly related to water resources, and offer a good insight into the prevailing nexus linking tribes, water, and the establishment of political authority on the Gulf coast prior to the British era.

The Bani Yas tribal confederation, who established a settlement on Abu Dhabi Island in the late 18th century, traces its origins to Marib, in Yemen. Like several other tribes, it left this area after a flood had destroyed the major irrigation dam and made this prosperous agricultural region a barren land (Blair, Bloom et al. 2009, pp.8-9; Moore, 2011). Their establishment on the island of Abu Dhabi in the late 18th century would have happened after the mythical discovery of a freshwater source by a group of hunters following a gazelle (*dhabi* in Arabic) as mentioned in chapter 2. A rare and precious resource at that time, a watchtower was rapidly built in order “*to protect*” the water source, according to official history (e.g. Nowell & Crowley, 2001, p.19) – arguably taken over by the leading tribe in a political ecology perspective.

Over the 19th century, new fortifications and towers surrounded the water source, eventually constituting the Qasr al-Hosn, the fortified centre of political power of the emerging Abu Dhabi¹⁰⁶. On the poster next page, the second photo from the top illustrates the extent to which the fort surrounding the source constituted a dominating defensive infrastructure over the island of Abu Dhabi at the beginning of the 20th C.

¹⁰⁵ This is discussed concerning the large 'Anaza tribal confederation introduced in chapter 6, its journey from Central Arabia and the establishment of the ruling families of Bahrain, of Qatar before the rule of the Al-Thani, and of Kuwait. See on this point for instance Abu Hakima (2004, chapter 1) and Al-Ghunaim (2000, pp.20-21 and 41-43).

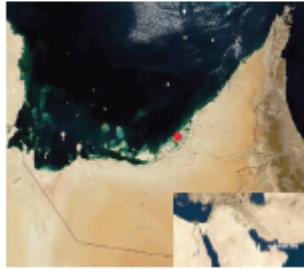
¹⁰⁶ This mythical history of Abu Dhabi is referred to in a variety of sources: governmental sources like Hellyer et al. (1999) or like Abu Dhabi's Authority for Culture and Heritage, at www.adach.ae/en/portal/qasar.alhosnfort.aspx, with a specific perspective on the *Qasr al-Hosn* fort built around the island's freshwater source (website last accessed 13/08/2012). There are also a few scholarly sources such as Lienhardt ([1957] 2001) or Maitra and Al Hajji (2001).

A Political Ecology of Abu Dhabi: the History of Qasr al-Hosn

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Background

Qasr al-Hosn (Qasr al-Huṣn) is an old fort in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates. Originally built in the 18th century as a watch-tower protecting a freshwater source, later used as a Royal Palace, today it is preserved in the centre of Abu Dhabi.



A century ago, Qasr al-Hosn was an imposing, dominating, centre of military power and resources allocation, especially fresh water, pastures, pearls, and, after world war II, hydrocarbons.

In recent years, the old fort has become almost invisible in the urban environment of Abu Dhabi. It is dwarfed by oil-financed skyscrapers, and its past role seems to be unknown to most.



Questions

1. How did the ecological role and meaning of Qasr al-Hosn change over time?
2. How did those changes frame, or were framed by, the social and political developments of Abu Dhabi?

Methodology

This project aims to advance the body of scholarship that illustrates the relationship between anthropised nature, power and political modernization.

• **Political ecology approach:** examining the power relations over the use, control and allocation of natural resources.

• **Historical approach:** tracing the changes over time by critically engaging with primary sources.

History of Qasr and Abu Dhabi

Late 18C	Mythical discovery of freshwater and establishment of the first tower
1820	General Treaty of Peace (with Britain)
1855-1909	Reign of Zāyid bin Khalīfah and expansion of the fort
1958	Discovery of oil and modernization
1971	British withdrawal and emergence of UAE

Role of Qasr

Material & Military

- Protecting water resources
- Expanding sovereignty

Political & Diplomatic

- Centre of decision-making
- Proximity to Britain

Identitarian

- National unity

Changes in Abu Dhabi

Tribal Wars

Bani Yās' rise

British influence

Oil concessions

Economic development

Political modernisation

Preliminary findings

• The Fort was not only the "symbol of authority of Abu Dhabi and (...) of the ruling Al Nahyan family" (Maitra & Al-Hajji, 2001), but also Abu Dhabi's centre for decision-making regarding the access, usage, and allocation of natural resources and their revenues.

• The Fort played a major role in the affirmation of an increasingly more centralized governing system that allowed Abu Dhabi to become more than an island of poor fishing villages, and to effectively rule over larger territories and their resources: the fort was central to the expansion and political modernization processes.

Next steps

Did the initial takeover of a strategic freshwater source on the island with the construction of the Fort lead to the Al-Nahyan ruling family's centralised control over the Emirate's hydrocarbon resources? If yes, is there a regional pattern between fresh water and oil control?



Was the recently-built and highly-visible Emirates Palace made to replace the pre-modern Qasr al-Hosn in Abu Dhabi's urban/political landscape?

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In Kuwait, interviewee Monique Guingand explained that the ruler Shaykh Jaber Al-Sabah built the Dasman palace directly next to a known natural depression where rainwater is accumulated. If the palace was not heavily fortified itself, its water and wealth were nevertheless protected from hostile tribes by the city wall near it, and that can be seen in the background of the photograph below.



Photo 2. The Dasman palace in Kuwait in the 1920s - 1930s. The palace was built around one of the few natural depressions where rainwaters concentrate, as attested by the presence of trees on this arid coast.

Source: Collection of the Centre for Research and Studies on Kuwait.

In the small village of Doha in the late 19th century, there is no known equivalent of Abu Dhabi's fort, or of Kuwait's Dasman palace being protected by the close city wall. However, the 1893 major victory of the Al-Thani (the current Qatari ruling family) against the Ottomans is attributed to Shaykh Qasim Al-Thani's forces taking over, and militarily defending Doha's very limited water resources.

The Ottomans sent troops. In the ensuing battle, Qasim's forces managed to defeat the Ottomans. By capturing Doha's well, Qasim was able to force the release of his brother and the notables.

Source: Chrystal (1995, p.32).

Contrary to a form of oriental despotism, where large hydraulic infrastructures were constructed to collect and import large quantities of water over long distances for potable and irrigation purposes (Wittfogel, 1957), the Gulf coast tribal settlements of Kuwait and Abu Dhabi featured essentially a large infrastructure of a defensive nature aimed at protecting the limited water available that had been appropriated by the shaykhly family from the leading tribe. Not by a State or a learned bureaucracy. Interviewee Monique Guingand explained that everyone (from within Kuwait) could use the freshwater from the depression behind the Dasman palace. In Doha and Abu Dhabi too, the rulers must have allowed tribesmen from their tribal confederation to fetch water to the wells, on the one hand because Islam demands to respect the needies' *Huquq al-sharb* (literally, 'right of drinking') as highlighted in chapter 2, but more basically because the legitimacy of the shaykhs' leadership, and the expansion of the settlements, depended on the collective access to potable resources.

When Kuwait, Doha and Abu Dhabi gradually evolved from settlements to coastal villages (over the 18th C. for the former, by the 19th to early 20th C. for the two others), the pattern of water resources management remained simple. It was, within each tribe, materially basic, communitarian, and transparent. In all three cities during the 18th century, virtually all water wells supplying potable water respectively belonged to a particular tribal group or extended family. This pattern can be characterised as 'restricted communitarian': i.e. neither belonging to an individual, nor to a whole urban community, but to a specific community defined upon kinship. According to the few studies focussing on water before oil (i.e. the British Archives, 1995, Vol.1 and 2; Guingand, 2009; CRSK/MEEW, 2005), virtually all water works, however small, followed the same pattern of family ownership as described concerning Kuwait during the 19th century:

“Besides house reservoirs and water containers, Kuwaitis dug a number of large and small ditches specifically to collect flow water following thunderstorm rainfall, which is common in Kuwait. These ditches were about thirty in number distributed in different neighbourhoods, each named after a Kuwait [extended] family, such as Al-Abdul-Razzaq, Al-Awazem, Al-Roudan, Al-Meshari (...)”

Source: CRSK/MEEW (2005, p30).

The power configuration among the tribesmen was almost completely horizontal, participative but not necessarily integrative. In the arid and harsh environments of the Peninsula’s Eastern coast, water was not only very limited, but also often brackish, making freshwater a precious resource. Town dwellers devised several schemes and techniques to capture and store the limited rainwater available (see Codrai, 1990, p.100; CRSK/MEEW, 2005, pp. 29-32; Guingand, 2009; Al-Mohannadi, 2004). But these were uncoordinated *ad hoc* family initiatives, and the freshwater harvested did not last long. Except these few limited initiatives, Codrai noted that “*every drop needed had to be hauled manually from hand-dug wells*” (1990, p.100).

There was no written code as to how, or how much water should be fetched by a family, but great value and careful attention was paid to the wells and the resource. Tribal customs imposed harsh punishments on people who harmed a water resource, intentionally or by negligence¹⁰⁷. Under tribal law, a person found intentionally polluting a well could be condemned to death. Within the urban community at that time, justice was the responsibility either of a tribal elder, or alternatively the Hakim, i.e. the ruler, later called Emir (Heard-Bey, 1999). Beyond this judicial authority for crimes and disputes over natural resources, the ruler had no specific right over them at that time; only over his family’s or his tribe’s property. There was no form of oriental despotism, and there could not be.

¹⁰⁷ Discussion with political anthropologist Dr. Khaled Al-Dhahiri, October 2008, Abu Dhabi.

As mentioned in chapter 6, the Bedouin and tribal cultures used to give great value to the idea of independence of a clan or tribe *vis à vis* other tribal groups or the Hakim. The ruler had the authority as the leading tribal figure, a just and wise Muslim for justice, and a community representative to foreigners. But he could not coerce people into forced labour, for instance to collectively build or maintain large-scale water infrastructures. In all three cities, there was very little bureaucracy until the 20th century (mainly dealing with tax collection) and, for all important decisions, the ruler had to perform the Islamic obligation of *shûra* (consultation) through opened meetings with all important community members, from the tribes and the merchant families. Any resident also had the right to express his opinion at the ruler's majlis. As mentioned previously, this constituted a fundamental Islamic and tribal institution from which depended, to a good extent, his tribal legitimacy and personal reputation. In these pre-modern urban settings, a ruler was a *primus inter pares* and could rarely be a despot, for the simple reason that he could not afford the risks to be one in an unstable tribal political environment.

I.3 - Growth of the settlements, water crisis, and the market initiatives

At the end of the 19th and early 20th century, the transformation of the coastal settlements into small cities, the resulting over-exploitation of the wells (becoming particularly brackish¹⁰⁸), and the 1907-1908 years of drought jointly transformed water into a long-distance tradable commodity. It has been imported from a few locations around the Gulf. Iraqi freshwater, from the Shatt al-Arab River particularly, has been transported on especially-affected boats and sold on the local *sooq al-mâa* (water market) in Kuwait (Al-Ghunaim, 2000, p.117; British Archives¹⁰⁹ 1995, volume 2; Heard-Bey 1999; Zahlan 1989, p.85), as

¹⁰⁸ In the mid-1950s, Peter Lienhardt ([1957] 2001) stressed the local water resources' brackishness in Kuwait and Abu Dhabi and concluded that both cities may not have been built on these locations because of the presence of these water resources, thereby contradicting the founding myth of Abu Dhabi.

¹⁰⁹ By British archives (1995), we refer more particularly to the two volumes entitled 'Water Resources in the Arabian Peninsula 1921–1960', published by Cambridge Archive Editions. See www.archiveeditions.co.uk/titledetails.asp?tid=123 (last accessed 14/08/2012).

shown on photographs 2 and 3. Sometimes, this Iraqi freshwater could be sold as far as Abu Dhabi for the few families that could afford it (Lienhardt, 2001, pp.114-115).

During the height of the pearling industry in the early twentieth century, Kuwait was then by far the largest of the three coastal cities, with an estimated 50,000 inhabitants in 1914¹¹⁰. Given the limited local resources, this required significant imports of freshwater and the organisation of its market, initially without any state interference.



Photo 3. Water boats in Kuwait (1937). Water was brought in water boats from the Shatt al-Arab, around 90 km North from Kuwait, and delivered to the townspeople on the port or at the water market.

Source: Zahlan (1989, p.85).



Photo 4. Mules carrying imported freshwater in Kuwait harbour. Freshwater from the boats was also transported by donkeys and mules to be sold on the water market or directly to individual houses.

Source: W. Thesiger's photographs.

¹¹⁰ This statistic was found in the general course on Kuwait's urban history of Macalester University, available at: www.macalester.edu/courses/geog261/kuwait%20city%20changes/city%20planning.html (last accessed 29/08/2012) Author and exact date unknown.



Photo 5. A 'Kandari' carries freshwater for sale in Kuwait city (ca. 1950)

Source: Parks (2012, slide 3), from the private collection of Francis Hadden Andrus.

From all of the written evidence gathered, it appears that in the early 20th century, the recent but rapidly extensive practice of water imports, and development of a water market implied two closely related new trends in Kuwait: on the one hand, the commodification and monetisation of water transactions and, consequently, the running on commercial lines of the cities' water affairs.

The Kuwaiti town-dwellers could not ignore the growing commodification and monetisation of water transactions and difficultly bypass them. If Lienhardt (2001) noted in the 1950s that *"water at the well is invariably free, and poorer people in the towns who cannot afford to pay for the transport [by water carriers] collect their own, as do most families in villages"*, it is however important to seriously nuance this statement. Interviewee Monique Guingand explained that water from the wells could be free for some indeed, but not available for everyone. She explained that some water wells were locked, for instance in the place named Shamiya (now in the old centre of the metropolitan area). These water wells – generally brackish ones – may have been opened only to some known persons; family members or fellow tribesmen, not to everyone.

Water imports in Kuwait also implied the running on commercial lines of the urban community's water affairs, by different corporate actors, such as the boat owners, or the city's water carriers, rather than mostly on a kinship basis as in the past. Some elements indicate that the tribal and commercial approaches to water were not at odds, but had become complementary. Interviewee Yousef Al-Kandari, lecturer of anthropology at Kuwait University, confirmed and shed some light on Guingand's (2009) claim that the Kandaris, (a small tribal group that had come from Persia at the beginning of the 20th century), were occupying the professional niche of water carriers in the city of Kuwait, as shown above on photograph 4. Members of the family of the interviewee had themselves worked as water carriers. The occupation of this professional niche on such a tribal line was so strong that their name, 'Kandari', became associated with water carriers. This marriage of tribalism and commercial entrepreneurship was in line with what Kuwaiti anthropologist Al-Haddad (2009) had emphasized, i.e. tribes are pragmatic and adapt to defend or promote their private interests. In this case, a tribe had managed to adapt to the merchants-led change in water governance, and to fully integrate into a niche of the new economic water governance.

In the case of Doha and Abu Dhabi, some water could punctually be imported from Qatar's hinterland, Bahrain's offshore karstic sources or sometimes from the Persian coast or the Iraqi Shatt al-Arab (Heard-Bey, 1999, p.185; Lienhardt, 2001, pp.114-115; State of Qatar MFA, 2003, p.16). But, unlike Kuwait, nothing indicates that it was ever institutionalised commercially, or that it constituted the major part of the water consumed in the two cities, as in Kuwait.

Despite these market-led changes, the social-political organisation remained essentially tribal in Abu Dhabi, Doha and – to a lesser extent - Kuwait, as indicated by the literature, and confirmed by interviews with anthropologists Frauke Heard-Bey, Khaled Al-Dhahiri and Yousef Al-Kandari.

As a consequence of both the corporate and tribal/family initiatives in the water governance, there was no such thing as a centralised water policy, no State water services, and no grand water work being realised, despite the unifying political figure of the ruler and the growing local need for freshwaters. A good illustration of this absence of State services for water is the 1914 personal initiative by the ruler of Kuwait to buy a desalination plant for commercial purposes. The Shaykh Mubarak Al-Sabah wanted to put an end to the growing water dependence of Kuwait from Iraq of his shaykdom and to benefit from this lucrative trade. He decided to do so by investing into a distillation machine, which he purchased from the Indian Viceroyalty to sell desalinated water on a commercial basis. But, after several years of delay, the first experiments were disappointing, and the cost of the distilled water happened to be more expensive than the imported water from the Shatt al-Arab, despite the Iraqi taxes on it (Al-Ghunaim 2000, p.117; CRSK/MEEW, 2005, pp.38-41). Confronted by this lack of commercial competitiveness and the perspective of economic loss, the project was abandoned, and the machine resold through the British to a protectorate in Southern Yemen (CRSK/MEEW, 2005, pp.38-41).

Kuwait thus depended on water imported from Iraq's Shatt al-Arab River until 1953, when the emirate could acquire a more efficient desalination plant (CRSK/MEEW, 2005, pp.33; Guingand, 2009). Meanwhile, the ruling elite's commercial private interest in the local water market did not disappear, and another commercial enterprise was launched by the Kuwaiti Emir Shaykh Abdullah Al-Salim Al-Sabah in 1939 to massively import water from the Shatt al-Arab with a large and private fleet of dedicated boats. It is important to highlight that the absence of a *public* water service was not due to a total absence of social cohesion among Kuwaitis, or a refusal to develop modern institutions for public affairs. The Kuwaiti tribes had commonly waged several wars as Kuwaitis, and had built and later rebuilt a city

wall protecting the city¹¹¹. In 1911 and 1921, two modern schools had been created to supplement Kuwait's traditional Islamic madrasah system. Last but not least, the municipality of Kuwait was founded in 1930, and in 1932 the first members of the city council were elected. Six years later, elections were held for the first legislative council.

From all of the evidence gathered, it seems that the water affairs of the Kuwaitis were perceived, from at least the 19th century, as a sector based on family/tribal small initiatives and also, albeit in more recent times, commercial entrepreneurship. The pursuit of national water self-sufficiency, or of a subsidised modern water service for all Kuwaitis was then simply not the main objective: water at that time was considered a market. The ruler's initiative had been a commercial enterprise, and it had failed commercially and disappeared. It was in this context that private actors, including the Ruler, had invested in an estimated 50 dedicated boats to supply the Kuwaiti water market in the late 1930s, with the Kuwait Water Company alone operating 45 of them and supplying the city with a minimum of 70 000 – 80 000 gallons of freshwater per day in the 1940s (estimations from the CRSK/MEEW, 2005, p.33), with Kuwait City's population being estimated around 70,000 people in 1946¹¹².

By contrast, in Doha and Abu Dhabi, both located much further South from the Shatt al-Arab (the unique permanent river along the Gulf), there was no such institutionalised long-distance water scheme as in Kuwait. It can be assumed that both cities were penalised by the high costs of the long-distance water imports, and increasingly suffered from the brackishness of the local waters, as directly witnessed by Lienhardt ([1957] 2001) in the UAE, or by interviewee Muhammad Abdul-Nasser in Northern Qatar from as long back as the 1960s.

¹¹¹ Highlighting the astonishing rapidity of the construction of the second wall while under the threat from the Ikhwans of Al-Saud in 1920, Abu Hakima explained that "*the wall could not have been completed had it not been for the unfailing support and personal involvement of each and every individual Kuwaiti, man or woman, in the construction of that wall*" (2004, p.133) [Underlining mine]. More generally on battles waged as Kuwaitis and on the collective creation of fortifications, see Abu Hakima (2004, pp. 132-136).

¹¹² See the above-mentioned Macalester University's course on Kuwait City's urban development.

In the small peninsula of Qatar, the inhabitants of Doha could benefit from freshwater wells located in its hinterland, but the island of Abu Dhabi is situated 160 km from its own hinterland oases of *Al-Ain* ('the source', in Arabic). There was no road and no motorized vehicle during the first half of the twentieth century, and Heard-Bey ([1983] 1999) assessed that this journey through the desert in pre-oil Arabia could take as much as three weeks for nomad families to travel. It appears logical that such a long journey required more precious commodities to be transported than simply water to be profitable.

Bahrain had been a relatively close location to both Doha and Abu Dhabi for potential fresh water shipments. But its economic growth during the pearl economic era (the three first decades of the 20th century) and then during the early oil exploration led to a rapid population growth of Manamah, notably with poor migrant workers from Abu Dhabi and Qatar. Consequently, offshore water resources in Bahrain were primarily allocated to the market of Manamah, which increasingly suffered from water stress during the first half of the twentieth century (British Archives, 1995, vol.1, Bahrain). It can be concluded that before the oil era, there was consequently very limited maritime water trade over long distances for Doha or Abu Dhabi compared to Kuwait, and no institutionalised reliance on a foreign water source.

Because the water and sanitary affairs seem to have been worse in the small cities of Doha and Abu Dhabi than in Kuwait, both remained significantly smaller and demographically dominated by tribes from the hinterland, rather than Hadari (urban) merchant families as in Kuwait. In Doha' and Abu Dhabi's respective close hinterlands, the living conditions had poorly changed for several centuries, and were generally far worse than for the Kuwaiti town-dwellers. Frances Gillespie's brief description of the Qatari nomads' access to water describes fairly well their general condition in the Eastern Arabian shaykhdoms at that time.

"Water (...) was a most precious commodity, and even when available was often of poor quality, the wells being sometimes polluted with camel droppings and full of vermin. In the hottest months, some tribes relied entirely upon camel's milk when water was unavailable."

Source: F. Gillespie¹¹³.

For Doha and Abu Dhabi in the early 20th century, there was no significant difference between the cities and their close arid hinterland as to water. As late as the 1950s, Lienhardt (2001, p.114) noted that the brackish water of Abu Dhabi was "*in flavour (...) as bad as some of the worse Bedouin wells*". With the oil discovery in the Eastern Arabian shaykhdoms however, grew the influence of the British Empire in their internal affairs, and the rapid generation of wealth from oil exploration rights. All of these dynamics had a profound effect on water governance.

I.4 - British direct influence, modernisation of tribal politics and the water mission

As shown in the previous chapter, the British Empire – albeit reluctant initially - slowly but increasingly involved itself in the Gulf shaykhdoms' internal affairs by the end of the 19th C. By the time of the First World War, strategic oil interests accelerated, deepening this involvement.

I.4.a – The British-led modernisation and deep change in the ruling bargain

Major British interests had to be defended from other Western nations, particularly the USA, as well as from any internal political turmoil in the shaykhdoms. To reinforce the most cooperative rulers vis à vis rival tribes or clans, the British political agents and oil companies made payments for oil concessions or other services only to the rulers. They were then in charge of redistributing the first oil revenues, thereby creating a dependency without precedence of their countrymen towards them, as well as incentives to attract and/or pacify remote tribes from the hinterland.

¹¹³ Extract from F.Gillespie's 'Bedouin diet', available at www.qatarvisitor.com/index.php?cID=412&pID=1648#hard (last accessed on 13/08/2012).

With the first oil revenues, the rulers of Kuwait and later of Abu Dhabi and Qatar initiated important changes, and gradually departed from their former status of tribal *primus inter pares*, slowly becoming monarchs, surrounding themselves with a growing court and the beginning of a professional bureaucracy, a growing part of whom was increasingly made of British bureaucrats and administrators. But the situation was not necessarily well accepted by the local populations, who resented the preference granted to the limited tribal elite that they could not choose anymore, nor influence as used to be the case. Heard-Bey (2001) described well this British-induced evolution of the rulers/ruled relationship in the case of the Trucial States, but that was also relevant to Qatar and Kuwait (see Chrystal [1989; 1995] and Lienhardt [2001]).

“Since the early nineteenth century the status of an incumbent ruler had usually been much enhanced by the importance which the ‘High Government’ placed on a ‘Trucial Ruler’ to the exclusion of a tribal sheikh in the interior. But from the end of the second decade of the twentieth century, when the decline of the pearling industry spelled great economic hardship for the region, the population in these states, led by the merchants, strongly resented the fact that all the potentially lucrative arrangements and concessions, for which the British government or foreign companies made payments, were agreed exclusively with the rulers. This (...) encouraged alienation between the rulers and their people.”

Source: Heard-Bey (2001, p.119).

To control the partly unruled hinterland of the shaykhdoms, British-trained local armies were set up, which the Emir was in charge of remunerating. In all three countries, it was composed of tribesmen who were under the ruler’s orders. They were not a coalition of willing tribes under a charismatic tribal shaykh anymore, but members of a professional army at the orders of a ruler who could not be removed, except with the (rare) approval of the

imperial power¹¹⁴. The British and the Emirs had created states, albeit pre-modern, but which had gradually gained the monopoly of legitimate violence. With it, the British and the rulers could transform the pattern of property and usage rights as to the land, water, and other natural resources. Most important to them was oil, of course.

The rulers of the shaykhdoms signed various agreements in the inter-war period with the British and/or the companies that London had favourably indicated. Exploration stopped during WW2 in all Gulf shaykhdoms. Then, the development did not occur uniformly or simultaneously in Kuwait, Qatar and Abu Dhabi. Kuwait and Qatar began exporting oil respectively in 1946 and 1949. In Abu Dhabi however, exploration of commercial quantities of oil proved unsuccessful until 1959, and oil was eventually exported in 1962, i.e. 16 years after Kuwait.

I.4.b – The European post-war model of development and the water mission

The Kuwaiti and Qatari oil exports rapidly provoked a construction movement and the building of public utilities. This required an increase in the limited local labour force, and in Kuwait, over the span of a decade (1946-1957), the population tripled essentially due to an influx of Arab migrant workers, reaching over 200,000 inhabitants and dramatically increasing the water demand. With the shaykhdoms' oil revenues, the British helped both Kuwait and Qatar in developing key utilities: a modern hospital, several roads, a few modern schools, new water wells in the hinterland and, in 1953, both states initiated the first desalination plants for their capital city. They were capable of meeting a large part of their capital's water demand and structurally stopped the need to import water from the Shatt al-

¹¹⁴ For instance, Heard-Bey (2001) illustrated such *ingérence* with the choice of the ruler in Kalba in the 1930s which, she argued, “*was entirely a British one*” (2001, p.101). We could also cite that in 1921, Britain had blocked Sheikh Mohammed Al-Qassemi from power in Ras Al-Khaimah, favouring instead the accession of his younger brother, Sheikh Sultan, who became the ruler. Or more central to our thesis, we could cite the case of Abu Dhabi in 1966, and the British consentment to a bloodless coup against Shaykh Shakhbut in favour of his younger brother, Shaykh Zayed, whose views on the need of rapid modernisation were more in line with the British ones (see Lienhardt, 2001).

Arab for Kuwait, or from the hinterland for Qatar¹¹⁵. Of particular interest is that this British-led modernisation of the Gulf city-states' water sector followed by then a welfare state was a model prevalent in Western Europe after World War Two.

Through large, modern, and capital-intensive infrastructures, potable water was increasingly made available by a not-for-profit public entity; the State. The main beneficiaries were, as in Europe, the urban dwellers. The water infrastructures furthermore had been partly designed by Western designers, under the directives of a modern State water department. Remarkably, the British had not linked water to energy in Qatar - despite their close link through desalination. The Kuwaiti authorities – better institutionalised and arguably more independent – institutionally linked it to electricity and to gas in their Department of Water, Electricity, and Gas by 1960 (a year prior to independence). In both countries at that time (1950s-1960s), the State departments in charge of water owned the water infrastructures and were increasingly in charge of managing them by themselves. To do so, these departments in Kuwait and Qatar were staffed with an increasing number of specialised workers (CRSK/MEEW, 2005; Kahramaa's website, History). In Kuwait for example, their number dramatically increased "*from a few tens in 1951 to about 7,500 in 1962*" (CRSK/MEEW, 2005, p.41). Remarkably, in both Kuwait and Qatar, all users of State-supplied water had to pay for this service.

In Abu Dhabi, oil exploration revenues and change came significantly later. In the 1950s, the water situation was very poor, and consequently continued to support a tendency

¹¹⁵ Kuwait's first large desalination plant had a capacity of one million imperial gallons per day, so it can be estimated to represent over ten times what it used to import from Iraq on a daily basis, based on estimations from CRSK/MEEW (2005, p.33) and Guingand (2009). Concerning Qatar's first desalination plant, limited information is available but Qatar's State-owned water and electricity corporation (Kahramaa) provides 1953 as the year of the first desalination plant of the Water Department, with a much smaller installed capacity of 150,000 imperial gallons per day.

See www.km.com.qa/en/corporate/about%20us/corporateinformation/pages/history.aspx (last accessed 25/08/2012)

towards water commodification, albeit modest, as witnessed and recorded by Lienhardt (2001, pp.114-115):

In the 1950s, before any water distillation plant had been set up, sweet water to drink was being sold in the cafés in Abu Dhabi at an *anna* (roughly, then, a penny) per glass. This drinking water for the cafés and some of the houses was imported from the Persian Coast, or from [the hinterland of] Qatar by launch in oil drums and retained some of the flavour of the containers, but it was still much preferable to the local water.

Source: Lienhardt, 2001, pp.114-115.

Even after the delayed first oil exports in 1962, most of the development the British wanted to see happen in Abu Dhabi – to satisfy at minimum the local populations - was postponed because of the extremely cautious nature of the ruler at that time. A man who had witnessed the wealth and decline of the pearl industry, Shaykh Shakhbut was not in favour of massively investing the new revenues of impoverished Abu Dhabi in grand modernisation projects like Kuwait and Qatar (Rabi, 2006, pp.37-44).

This exacerbated the tension between the ruler and the local population, a part of whom had already fled the local poverty in the 1950s and early 1960s to find work in fast-developing Qatar, Kuwait, or Saudi Arabia. Lienhardt (2001), a short-term British advisor to Shaykh Shakhbut in the 1950s, and interviewee Oliver Miles, a former British diplomat in Abu Dhabi during Shaykh Shakhbut's rule in the early 1960s¹¹⁶, converge in their description of the British frustrations at Shakhbut's inability to modernise Abu Dhabi despite some oil revenues and the rising frustrations of the local population. Lienhardt (2001) would write later that the stiff resentment from the poorest towards the ruler could have led them to set the fort aflame if it were not for the 1966 bloodless coup that the British authorised to facilitate his brother Zayed becoming the leader. This is disputed by interviewee Oliver Miles, who denied

¹¹⁶ Oliver Miles was interviewed in Oxford in August 2009, at the Maison Française d'Oxford.

any permission being granted, but explained how relieved the British were, in the Gulf as well as in London, when Shaykh Zayed took over.

Rabi's (2006) well documented study using internal British archives has shown however that London spared no effort through direct and indirect diplomacy with Shakhbut and Zayed to make the former, who stood against London's new developmentalist approach to statehood, abdicate in favour of his brother. Finally, in August 1966, the Omani scouts, whose officers were British, were sent to Shakhbut's fort to take him to a plane for exile in London (Rabi, 2006, pp.49-50). It was not clear if this was chiefly to release the local popular pressure over the Al-Nahyan ruling family, was due to precise British directives, or if it was mostly Shaykh Zayed's own vision that acted as the main driver for a bold and very rapid development era for Abu Dhabi.

Among many large infrastructure projects launched during the late 1960s, such as the electrification of the island (by 1967), and the first modern sewage works, Zayed ordered a water pipeline to supply Abu Dhabi with freshwater from the Al-Ain oases. Fourteen years later, the developed capacity of the desalination capacity on Abu Dhabi Island – in addition to the intensive mining of all known aquifers inland - was so large that the water transfer from Al-Ain to Abu Dhabi was reversed, leading to the oases of Al-Ain being supplied with desalinated water from the coast.

The new desalinated water resource was then free for all in Abu Dhabi, with the state oil revenues completely financing the new desalination industry, and where the Al-Nahyan family regained a genuine popularity through the charismatic figure of Shaykh Zayed. While in Doha and Kuwait, where development had occurred earlier, the policy of charging for water and electricity supply for all was continued in both cities until the 1973 watershed in Middle Eastern economic history, the oil boom.

Despite the time gap between Kuwait and Doha on the one hand, and Abu Dhabi's late but fast-paced developments on the other - i.e. almost thirty years -, in all three capitals new jobs in the expanding states, reliable potable water supply and other urban services appear to have played a role in attracting, 'nationalising', and sedentarising the Bedouin tribes, for the most part in the 1940s and 1950s in Kuwait and Qatar¹¹⁷, and mainly between the 1960s and 1970s in Abu Dhabi. Yet, because the historical developments of each country had been different, all political cultures were not identical. This also meant that the nexus linking tribalism, social-political organisation, and water governance in each city was different prior to independence.

From a strong commercial tradition with increasingly democratic institutions in Kuwait, to a more tribe-centred pattern of water governance with a rising neo-patrimonial Statism in Doha and Abu Dhabi, the only common traits of the water sector in Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City just prior to their independence were the water missions of their British-supported recent water departments, the increasing reliance on desalination and, last but not least, the decline of the corporate actors' influence over local water affairs. These formed the basis of the post-independence water administrations of Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait.

II - Independence, 1973 oil boom and the rentier states' water services

With the continuous rise in oil revenues and independence (1961 for Kuwait, 1971 for Qatar and Abu Dhabi), new visions were driving new water strategies and water allocations, and the acceleration of the State expansion radically challenged the previous forms of water governance.

¹¹⁷ See Al-Zubi's discussion of the sedentarisation of the rural tribes (*al-badoow*) in the Middle East cities over the mid-20th century (Al-Zubi, 1999, especially pp.40-51).

II.1 New statist visions and water strategies

While the Eastern Arabian Shaykhdoms had suffered in previous centuries from a lack of freshwater resources and of the absence of a State to develop the sector, after the 1960s-1970s independence, significantly several elements led to the production of new water visions, and Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City experienced a radical transformation of their institutional settings and water capacities.

II.1.a The rise of centralised modern water institutions, and the nationalisation of the resource: the end of water governance?

Following the independence, the water departments of Kuwait and Qatar became Ministries of water and electricity, fully responsible for the planning, financing, management, and maintenance of all urban water infrastructures. In the newly formed UAE, the Federal-level Ministry in charge of water had no role to play in the internal water affairs of oil-rich Abu Dhabi, but only in those of poorer emirates of the federation. The Abu Dhabi Water and Electricity Department acted like a ministry, being sovereign over the water affairs and owning the infrastructures and newly nationalised underground resources of the whole emirate.

Around the capitals, the previous ownership of artesian wells and *de facto ownership* of these water resources by families and tribal groups were transferred to the centralising authority. Since, according to the Islamic theology, it is the whole community that legally owns the water resources, the rights of which can be owned, ceded, rented, or sold by individuals, one could be tempted to characterise this new post-independence policy as an Islamisation of the water affairs. There is no known literature on this precise point, but it seems that it was more the political influence of the Western welfare states that influenced the authorities' new vision and policies. For instance, some of this influence might have come through British and European expatriates working as civil servants and consultants. Maybe of

even greater importance at that time was the Panarabist discourse emanating from Cairo, Damascus and Baghdad (Arab nationalist and secular by nature), highlighting the need for Arabs to adopt a modern Arab Statist model of development, as will be shown in later sections.

In all three cities' metropolitan areas, the State (at the emirate level in Abu Dhabi) had completely nationalised the water resources, but had not redistributed water rights. Instead, an increasing number of urban households were provided with water services of a modern city: an expanding sewage system, the first rainstorm drainage infrastructures, and a potable water supply system which grew rapidly to provide, thanks to desalination. In Doha and Abu Dhabi, the mining of the underground resources constituted first a major part of the potable water supply, but, there too, desalinated water rapidly became the most important source for potable uses. In Kuwait, desalinated water constituted from the beginning the main source of urban potable water supply.

With the nationalisation of the natural resources, and the monopoly of the States over their capital cities' water production and supply, and all other segments of the water sector, the post-independence water administrations became vertical and monopolistic, and without the networks of private actors as in the early 20th century. This reflected the prevailing Western European models of urban modernisation of the 1950s and 1960s, and the Arab nationalist models promoted by Cairo or Baghdad.

II.1.b The regional Arab nationalist discourse and grandiose initiatives of modernisation

Mutin (2000) argues that by the 1950s and until the 1980s, there reigned in the Arab world a craze for water developmentalism, grand water infrastructures, and visible technical prowess. This was the period of the largest water infrastructures and projects made, according to Mutin, in order to legitimise the Arab regimes: e.g. the Aswan dam in Egypt, the Tabrouk

and Tabqa dams in Syria, the original Wahda dam and Canal Abdullah in Jordan, Iraq's 'third River', etc. No mention however is made in the literature of the small Gulf monarchies in this regard. Yet, it was in this regional context that Kuwait and Abu Dhabi have also begun to demonstrate through grand water infrastructures the modernity, strength, and legitimacy of their newly independent states.

In the early 1960s, the State of Kuwait's two desalination plants produced freshwater that was delivered to the customers (households, small water merchants, companies) in tankers, the additional cost of which had to be paid by the consumers. Not long after its 1961 independence and its 1962 constitution, the government and Parliament of Kuwait agreed to modernise the water distribution system, and in 1965, Kuwait commissioned European architects to develop 33 water towers with a combined storage capacity of 102,000 cubic meters. These towers, scattered over Kuwait's sprawling metropolitan area, were not only high, large and very visible, but also ostentatious, as can be seen on photograph 6 and 7 on the next page. They still constitute today major landmarks in Kuwait's urban landscape.

Based on both technical documentation (see Agha Khan Foundation, 1980) and field investigations, it is evident that the goal was not to meet in a cost-efficient way Kuwait's infrastructure needs for water distribution. Beyond the expensive cost of US \$26,250,000 as of 1976¹¹⁸, interviewees from the UAE's Federal Electricity Water Authority, which has also used similar designs for water infrastructures in the past, explained the heavy energy cost – not communicated – induced by these European architectures. The water towers needed considerable energy to cool the water down, its reservoirs being directly exposed to the sun¹¹⁹.

¹¹⁸ Based on the figures from the Agha Khan Foundation (1980, p.5), but without any valuation of the land price in Kuwait City. So the figure is probably around a million dollars per tower as of 1976.

¹¹⁹ Over the past two decades, these European designs have gradually been abandoned to the benefit of larger and mostly buried water tanks, protected from the direct solar radiation. The author visited new ones in the UAE's Northern emirates in April 2005.



Photo 6. A group of water towers named 'the Mushrooms' in Kuwait's metropolitan area. They have constituted highly visible landmarks in each of Kuwait City's 5 districts since 1976. They were ordered in 1965 from European companies, without design adaptation to Kuwait's arid environment.

Source: The Agha Khan Foundation (1980).



Photo 7. The 'Kuwait Towers'. Beyond their respective reservoir capacity of 4,500 metres squared each, they constitute a symbol of Kuwait's wealth, modernity, and its rise as an independent economic power. As such, they were intentionally damaged by Iraqi forces during the occupation.

Source: The Agha Khan Foundation (1980).

The city of Abu Dhabi and its surroundings have been landscaped with a large number of trees, green areas, and water fountains, to display the received *ni'mah* (the God-given 'bounty'), a sentence heard several times in the region and which describes the natural resources (mostly oil and gas) and its benefits, like desalinated water. This policy of massive afforestation was part of the more general vision of Abu Dhabi's leadership to 'green the desert'. For this purpose, several dozen million trees were planted in and around the city and

along the roads leading to it and main villages of the emirate. They have primarily been irrigated with brackish groundwater, and increasingly with unconventional water resources from the capital. The total cost of this greening policy is unknown, but over the decades certainly several billion dollars for all of the hydraulic infrastructure, sewage treatment, aquifer and desalinated water transfers, the trees imported and the manpower employed over the more than 330,000 hectares of forest that have been planted. Abu Dhabi, with its fountains, parks, and green areas, could boast by the 1990s to be a 'green city' by Gulf standards.

The ostentatious water mission of the authorities of Abu Dhabi was not confined to the city and its surroundings. In the 1970s, in the absence of any permanent river in Abu Dhabi, the Emir of Abu Dhabi Sh. Zayed decided on the construction of a large and modern dam in Yemen, close to the ruins of the ancient Marib dam, thereby commemorating his tribal confederation's Yemeni origins¹²⁰. This major work illustrated the development, modernity, and wealth of Abu Dhabi, while displaying Arab and Islamic generosity towards a poorer 'sister Arab nation'. This grandiose project probably also aimed to show the newly-gained strength of the young UAE federation, a few years old at the moment of the initial planning, and only 15 years old during the inauguration of the dam, in 1986. Through costly and impressive projects, water was a powerful tool of manifestation of wealth and modernity for the political authorities of both Abu Dhabi and Kuwait City during their post-independence.

Qatar however, has not produced such symbolic water works for both the Statist modernisation and propaganda purposes during its post-independence period, but only an incremental increase in the desalination capacity and distribution network extension. Yet an exception to Qatar's utilitarian approach to water policy is the practice in Doha, as well as in

¹²⁰ In the UAE, the tribal confederation of the Bani Yas had kept very much alive the memory of their Yemeni tribal origins as it is mentioned in the Quran (surat Saba, verses 15-16), giving to its Arab tribes, including the ruling families of Abu Dhabi and Dubai, an undisputable corroboration of their noble tribal origins.

Abu Dhabi and Kuwait City, of large water fountains disseminated throughout the urban landscape.

In the aridity of these cities and their hinterland, where the evapotranspiration makes the environment arid, the post-colonial state discourse of God-blessed abundance was expressed through a series of large and surprising water fountains serving as landmarks, as can be seen on photographs 6, 7 and 8 of Annex C. These fountains generally had local themes, depicting artefacts of pre-oil life in these countries, most probably to counter the widespread claim during the Arab Cold War that the small oil-rich emirates were recent and artificial creations of the British.

II.1.c The less apparent European influences

The end of the direct British political authority and the independence of Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE, as well as their accession to the Arab League in the early 1960s and 1970s, did not mean the end of European influence on the Gulf water affair. Nor did it bring about the departure of British consultants and technicians from Kuwait, Doha or Abu Dhabi. If one looks at the historical organigrams since independence of the ministries, the Ministers in charge of water have been local Arabs in all three countries (e.g. CRSK/MEEW, 2005, pp.15-16), but there have always been key British and Western consultants, advisors, and technocrats participating effectively to the water management and its organisation.

Interviews with water professionals in Abu Dhabi, Doha, and Kuwait City have confirmed that they have been active players in the post-independence modernisation of the water sectors of the three cities. For instance in Kuwait City, a Sr. American consultant and a Sr. British civil servant, who have both been working with the Ministry of Water and Electricity for several decades, explained that there had always been a local need for experienced technicians and experts, especially to handle complex operations or import new technologies, standards,

and procedures. They explained that the traditional answer of the authorities to keep on increasing the employees in their ministries had never solved the problem. The Kuwaitis newly employed through this system at the Ministry of Water and Electricity were not competent in the skills required, and almost all water professionals interviewees in the Ministry recognised this as a long-term problem.

In interviews for this research, expatriates were much less open and forthcoming in Abu Dhabi and Doha, but it was easy to observe still today a number of Westerners, and particularly British advisors for governance and regulation operations in Abu Dhabi's Regulation and Supervision Bureau (RSB), working as upper level technocrats, contrary to Kuwait. There is no reason to believe that there were fewer Westerners after independence in Abu Dhabi and Doha than before, especially as Abu Dhabi and the UAE as a whole had no university prior to 1982, and could not train the local workforce for the water sector. Qatar had no science college prior to 1977, and no engineering college prior to 1980¹²¹. Interviews with medium to high-level Nationals showed that almost all senior level technocrats from among the Nationals had been trained either in Europe or the USA. Even with human resources trained abroad, the small populations of Abu Dhabi and Doha ensure foreign workers were always needed.

Even among high level Arab expatriates from Lebanon, Egypt, or Jordan, higher education level studies had often been completed in Western institutions, with a significant role played by the American Universities of Cairo and Beirut. Through these education channels, Western ideas are likely to predominate, influencing the water vision, values, and practices of Abu Dhabi, Doha, and Kuwait City. Despite the rivalry between revolutionary Arab republics and British-supported Arab Monarchies between the 1950s and late 1970s, the

¹²¹ See Qatar University's historical development at <http://www.qu.edu.qa/theuniversity/history.php> (last accessed on 17/09/2012)

Arab nationalist ideals and Western influences, particularly British, should not be seen as conflicting.

As already mentioned, both the post-World War Two Western European model of welfare state and the Arab nationalist movements promoted statist models of development and an idea of water mission with large and modern infrastructures. The growing oil revenues during the 1960s, and especially the 1973 oil boom, made that vision affordable, with a generous supply-side water strategy in all three newly independent States.

II.2 - Rentierism, new water allocation, and supply-side strategies

Desalination in the Gulf cities, although increasingly costly due to the energy consumed in the process, represented a fast-growing source of freshwater after independence. Paradoxically, its price to the consumers did not increase, but the costs were absorbed by the new rentier states.

II.2.a - The new water allocation

In the cities, a reliable modern water supply, along with other urban services, as well as jobs in the growing State apparatus were used as tools to woo and 'nationalise' some Arabian nomad tribes, and definitively settle them down. According to interviewee Al-Otaibi, geographer at the University of Kuwait, generously supplying good water to all of the urban citizens was one of the political moves made to attract and fix some Bedouin tribes when the ruling families needed to secure their loyalty and use their political conservatism against more cosmopolitan and potentially pro-Cairo or pro-Baghdad Arab nationalists among their town-dwellers.

Outside of the urban areas, administrations allocated water rights - not ownership – broadly along the previous tribal lines but to individuals to exploit the newly nationalised resources with regulated and (more or less) monitored wells. Subsidised motor pumps were

used to boost agricultural production (Caponera, 1973; 1976). Interviewee Al-Otaibi explained the particular significance of this policy in Kuwait, where the State wanted to settle populations along its Northern and Southern borders, to demonstrate its effective sovereignty vis à vis larger and threatening neighbours, namely Saudi Arabia and Iraq¹²². In Abu Dhabi too, some rural areas were disputed with Saudi Arabia, and have been provided by pipeline abundant desalinated water resources from the desalination plants close to the capital. In Qatar however, desalinated water transfers to agricultural regions have not been documented. Yet jurists of the Qatari Ministry of Justice showed in their archives that one of the very first laws of the independent State of Qatar in 1971 aimed at regulating the use of water wells for agriculture; an activity continuously encouraged and subsidised with bonified loans, trainings, seeds, etc. since independence and until now.

It appears from the interviews and literature that in all three countries, the water sectors' deep evolution had new and specific objectives, in contrast to the commercial nature of the water sectors in the first half of the century: the sedentarization, nationalisation, and control of the tribes and their allegiances. The city was not anymore the remote centre of power fed by countryside work and enriched by the collected taxes, but the city was the provider of freshwater, seeds, and technologies to the poor peasants.

II.2.b - Rentierism influence on water fees between 1971 and 1990

Prior to independence in 1971, desalinated water supply in Doha had been paid for by all consumers since the early 1950s, as in Kuwait City. But, with the increased oil revenues, particularly by 1973, the Ministries in charge of potable water supply in Doha and Kuwait did not require any payment of water fees to finance their activities and expansion projects. Yet both countries reacted differently. In Doha, where the leadership was unchallenged by any

¹²² Interview with Pr. Al-Otaibi, Professor of Geography at the University of Kuwait.

democratic institution, the ruler abandoned the fee as part of the rentier ruling bargain, as discussed in chapter 2. In Kuwait, where the power was shared between the Emir and Cabinet on the one hand and the National Assembly on the other, the tariffs for water and electricity were never abandoned as a trade-off against democratic rights. But the Assembly never voted any increase of the tariffs either, and it has for 40 years remained frozen at 600 fills per 1000 gallons and 2 fills per KW. In Abu Dhabi, water was already free for households, and remained as such during the 1970s.

During the 1980s, at a time of depressed oil prices but steady demographic growth, a distinction was made in charging for water in Abu Dhabi and Doha between Nationals (the minority) and foreigners. The latter in both cities paid a small fee, flat and cross subsidised for their water consumption. In Kuwait by contrast, the frozen fee for all remained the same.

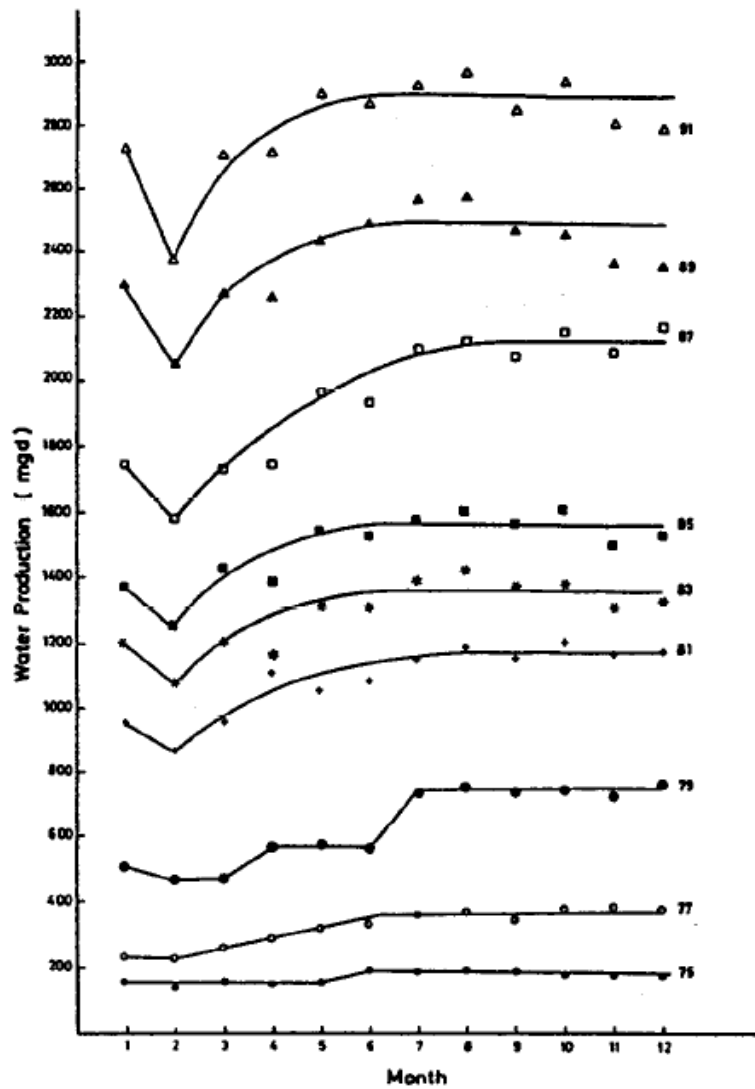
II.2.c - The supply side water strategies

In post-independence Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City, the cities and their hinterland have continuously received new water infrastructures to augment the water supply capacity. The 20-fold increase in the price of oil between 1973 and 1981 enabled the massive use of desalinated water and development of supply-side policies in all three cities while underground resources were used for agriculture in the hinterland. Seawater desalination in or close to the cities rapidly began to supplement the underground brackish and freshwater resources used in the hinterlands (FAO, 1973; 1978), but these resources have nevertheless been continuously mined to almost total depletion along the coastline in a few decades (FAO, 1997; 2009). Despite the highs and lows of oil revenues, and the high costs associated with desalination, the authorities of the three cities have continued their supply-side strategy (no shift has ever been recorded) and the necessary capacity building. Abu Dhabi is a good example of these three cities' general common supply-side desalination model.

Not long after independence, three large desalination plants were being operated in Abu Dhabi to meet the fast growing needs of the 1970s. All of the plants were state-owned energy-intensive Multi Stage Flash (MSF) evaporation distillers. The desalination production in Abu Dhabi has been increasing fast and in significant quantities between 1975 and 1991, as can be seen below on figure 17. The only brief decrease of water production in Abu Dhabi occurred on an annual basis, during the rainy winter period, as visible on figure 1. By the 1980s, this annual winter decrease was accentuated due to the decrease in electricity production, along which has been cogenerated most desalinated water in Abu Dhabi, as well as in Doha and – to a lesser extent - in Kuwait. In the latter city, cogeneration has not known the same level of success due to a lack of natural gas available.

The main issue in the water cogeneration strategy has been that, during periods of high demands in electricity, water was also produced in great quantities alongside, even if it was not needed at that time. Another consequence of the supply-side strategies focusing on capacity increase and neglecting water demand management was the absence of reservoirs capable of containing all of the water over-produced during the summer in Abu Dhabi, Doha, or Kuwait City. Some water professionals in all three cities (though interviewed in 2008 and 2009) acknowledged that most of the summer over-productions have been discarded off into the Gulf water. A practice that has remained despite the radical and multi-dimensional change brought into the Gulf cities by the invasion of Kuwait in 1991.

Figure 17: Monthly and biannual variation of water production in Abu Dhabi emirate in the period 1975-1991



Source: Shams El Din A.M., S. Aziz and B. Makkawi, 1994.

Discussion

This chapter's comparative approach to the evolutions of Abu Dhabi', Doha', and Kuwait City's water sectors since their early establishments has revealed that they are not the mere product of the availability of natural resources, economic means, or technology. E.g. the emerging State of Abu Dhabi chose to massively invest in desalination years after its first oil revenues, while Kuwait had invested in it decades before, prior to its oil exports. In the Gulf cities, as in the rest of the world, politics can be at the heart of water governance. But does politics drive all the water governance changes? The review of the historical evolution of

Abu Dhabi, Doha, and Kuwait city has revealed that the roles of the community, the public authority, and private actors in the Gulf cities have changed several times over the past century. The first major transition happened in the early 20th century and was exceptionally apolitical. It was due to population growth and resource diminution in arid coastal environments. It led to the development of a Gulf-wide international trade of freshwater and to local water markets; the 'market solution' apparently imposed itself due to the growing water crisis. Later, multiple drivers of change emerged: major changes in Gulf politics (the increasing British interference and eventually the independence), oil revenues and dynamics of State rentierism, foreign models of water development, and regional events. These drivers of change – which have interacted in a complex way – were almost all due to external dynamics. Does that mean that the local actors of the water governance were 'driven' towards new models without any agency over these changes?

The early 20th century organisation, values, and norms of the water resources management characterised a proper form of governance of water, with a horizontal organisation of the networks of actors and complementary scales of water management. Families and tribes, interdependent local and international market actors (e.g. the 'water boat' companies) and – to a lesser extent - the local ruler and his limited administration participated to this pre-modern yet complex water governance. Following the oil discoveries and greater British involvement, new foreign technologies and a new statist approach to development have driven a deep change in local water management and organisation – with a radical expansion of the rentier State. Freshwater development was direly needed, and the rentier political system became the political framework for the development of all urban services.

Though Arab Nationalism contested the British and Western influences, its own modernist ideology and statist approach to development only reinforced the (then) British-supported State-led development of water resources, and urban water supply in all three cities.

After independence, the joint influences of Arab nationalism, major oil revenues, and rentier state dynamics were the drivers of change towards a completely centralised water administration within each emirate's capital city, and of emirate-owned monopolies over water resources and urban supply. This model lasted over three decades all over the region, until the 2000s. What has then produced the end of this statist model? As seen in chapter 6, it was not a fall in oil revenues. Was it instead a change in political leadership or in political culture?

The historical participation of the Kuwaiti population into its political governance has played a role in making freshwater supply available to most with public (i.e. State) investment. Is it also this popular participation in politics - a central tenet of Kuwait's political culture – that is responsible for its absence of PPPs for water production during the 1990s and 2000s? The 1990 invasion and looting of Kuwait is considered as a watershed in Gulf political History. Has it also been one in the Gulf cities' political economy of urban water services?

In line with the literature on water politics in Southern Arabia (e.g. Limbert, 2001; Lichtenthäler, 2003), this chapter has also shown that the nexus linking tribalism, potable water governance, and urban authority in Abu Dhabi, Doha, and Kuwait city has radically changed over the twentieth century. Similarly to Oman and Yemen, and despite deep local transformations, the water models of Kuwait City, Abu Dhabi and Doha have all remained - though in different ways - influenced by tribalism. Because of a solidarity based on identity for instance, Nationals of Abu Dhabi and Doha can enjoy free freshwater supplies, while foreign workers have to pay for it. This triggers several questions. How influential was tribalism over the 1990s-2000s market-oriented reforms? In a context of increasing economic rationalisation of the sector, has tribalism produced new ways of influencing water politics?

Chapter 9

Political-cultural drivers, counter-forces and barriers to the 1990s-2000s pro-market governance reforms of urban water services

The political culture of a large city is never homogeneous. DiGaetano and Strom (2003) propose that a local political culture is composed of “*competing narratives and discourses about the proper roles and purposes of public policy and authority*”. Ramsey (1996) argues that the outcome of this constant competition is critically important “*because government action is shaped by the story that gains the ascendancy*” (1996, p.96).¹²³ Building on Ramsey (1996), DiGaetano and Strom (2003) conclude that a comparative cultural approach to local politics could yield remarkable explanatory elements “*of how historically and socially embedded systems of values enable certain modes of governance to persist in the face of structural change*”, as mentioned in Chapters 2 and 3. It is this capacity of comparative political-cultural analysis to explicate the peculiar cases against a relatively homogeneous structural background that will enable, in this chapter, the identification and critical appraisal of specific political-cultural drivers, counter-forces and barriers to change that have been competing to reshape the urban water services models in Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City by the 1990s. On the other hand, this chapter’s political- cultural approach will expose the reasons why these cities display a common set of features that characterises them despite global forms of convergence in urban water services (Bakker, 2010; Budds, 2005; Harvey, 2005). Finally, this will also enable us to critically appraise Najem’s (2003) claim that two forces of political culture have driven good governance reforms – including

¹²³ Ramsey gives the example of the American city politics where privatism has generally been preponderant, but where can be found examples of ‘progressive cities’ where more communitarian ideological constructions could – temporarily at least - take over privatism (Ramsey, 1996, pp. 96-97).

privatisations – in most developing countries since the 1990s, i.e. crisis of the State's legitimacy and transmission of Western liberal values.

The first section of this chapter will explain why consumers constituted neither a driver nor a barrier to water governance reforms and privatisation, and explain this total lack of public debate and popular mobilisation over these issues in Abu Dhabi, Doha and – to a lesser extent – in Kuwait City, in contrast with the popular mobilisations against such dynamics seen from Bolivia to France and across the world over the past two decades. The second section of this chapter will shed light on (post-)modern cultural dynamics that have favoured market-oriented water governance reforms. Finally, this political-cultural approach will explain why among the three GCC capital cities of this study, Kuwait City alone has never developed any Independent Water & Power Producer (IWPP).

I - Political cultural reasons for the absence of public debates on water governance reforms and privatisations: the consumers as non-actors?

Effective participation of civil society in water affairs is often considered as a proxy for water governance (e.g. Garande and Dagg, 2004; Empower, 2007; Manzungu and Mabiza, 2004). In Abu Dhabi and Doha, however, the reforms of the urban water sector and, more particularly, the shift towards an increased role of the private sector in freshwater production were not the outcomes of any recorded formal consultation of the cities' inhabitants, nor of any known poll, according to our interviewees among the water professionals in the two cities. In Kuwait City as well, there has never been any known national debate over such a privatisation process, yet, paradoxically, every time the government has attempted to implement similar initiatives since the mid-1990s, a coalition of (elected) MPs successfully blocked the process. This raises two important questions: what were the political-cultural reasons that explain the absence of a public debate or consultation with consumers when the GCC governments tried

(successfully or not) to initiate market-oriented water reforms? Have the populations played a role in either supporting or objecting to the reforms?

I.1 – Desalinated water as a political non-issue?

Qualitative exploratory interviews at the beginning of the field investigation in each city indicated¹²⁴ that most interviewed foreigners among blue collar workers and professionals had very limited knowledge of the local water sector, as later confirmed by the water professionals interviewed. Most of the poorest and wealthiest foreign workers interviewed in Abu Dhabi and in Qatar, for instance, did not know what was their potable water institution, respectively the ADWEA or Kahramaa, because their water bills were paid directly by the company that employed them. They naturally did not show much interest in knowing more. Among the segments of the population who knew the main institution of their local water sector, i.e. Nationals and foreigners who had to pay their water bills, the dynamics of privatisation – and of dependence on foreign energy supplies in the case of Abu Dhabi – seemed also unknown.

Newspapers in these three countries focus invariably on the issue of large and unsustainable local patterns of water and electricity consumption, eventually their costs for the country and, to a lesser extent, on the security of water and power supply. But they rarely address water governance reforms and appear to only refer to the conclusions of conferences held in the region or to the reports of large consulting firms. The latter have invariably been supporting since the late 1990s an increasing participation of the private sector into the water and electricity sector.¹²⁵ In Kuwait in addition, there are editorials and opinions of the readers

¹²⁴ These interviews did not constitute a statistically representative poll with a large number of interviewees, but explored through dozens of qualitative interviews with open questions to which extent various segments of local populations knew about the privatisation and what were their opinions on it.

¹²⁵ For a good example in English of support given to the privatisation of the water and energy sector, read Aya Lowe's *Privatisation of utilities needed to meet rising demand*, Gulf News, June 14, 2011, UAE. The article reformulates a report of the firm Deloitte which explains the need for foreign investments in the local

calling for general policies of privatisation (i.e. not focusing on water), as a means to save the overwhelmed and inefficient welfare state.¹²⁶ But in none of the three countries' English or Arabic press has an editorial been found to *debate* the issue of water privatisation or the water sector's institutional reforms.

One obvious explanation put in plain words by interviewee Al-Dhafiri, a social scientist at Kuwait University, is that water "*is not an issue in Kuwait*". For him, as well as for several interviewees among the social scientists and water professionals in the three cities, because there is a free or cheap continuous supply of water, at a sufficient quality standard for everyday needs, there is no politicisation of the sector and consumers are not interested in it. Water appears as a non-issue. An interviewee from the ADWEA's Regulation and Supervision Bureau in Abu Dhabi explained that despite their efforts for transparency and attempts to engage the consumers through their website (the address of which is indicated on the back of the bills), they received "*very limited response from the public*", supporting the idea of a general lack of interest and involvement of consumers.

Field observations of several communities (in public and private spheres) showed also that water conservation seemed far from everybody's pre-occupations, as reflected in the easily observable practices of lavish consumption for car washing and lawn watering by Asian domestics for instance, or in the filling in of swimming pools and the practice of Golf by nationals and white collar expatriates alike.

cogeneration sector. No contradictory opinion is proposed, nor any critical explanation is advanced on the consulting firm's vested interest in the advent of new PPPs.

¹²⁶ For an example in English of the kind of unnuanced and ideological positions taken by some local newspapers on the reform of the administration, see for instance Muna Al-Fuzai, *Privatisation is key to salvation*, Kuwait Times, 17th March 2009. The day before in the same newspaper, an article entitled *Public-private partnerships key to health reform* explained how PPPs "*can bring world-class medical knowledge, management skills and capital to the sector, (...) to make first-rate healthcare available to everyone living in Kuwait*". Kuwait Times, 16th March 2009.

More surprising, the semi-directed interviews with water professionals in Abu Dhabi have also shown that those at a relatively low to medium-level of responsibility (e.g. field technician, secretary, production engineer) had no complete understanding of the unbundled institutional functioning of the local water sector. This applied even to those who had been working in the country for several years. In Doha and Kuwait City, where the sectors are less fragmented among various bodies of different functions (production, distribution, billing, sewage retreatment, etc.), water professionals were significantly more capable to situate the institution they worked for within the local water sector. The institution in charge of potable water supply appeared to be better known by the consumers as well.

Even in Kuwait, where plans to reform the water sector have been rejected by the elected National Assembly, fresh water supply does not seem to be an issue, let alone a debated one. It has been very difficult to find any Kuwaiti press article or editorial – in Arabic or in English – supporting or criticising the privatisation of water production or services, though it is a country with a free and highly politicised press¹²⁷. Interviewee Al-Dhafiri commented that “*nobody among the candidates* [to the parliamentary elections in Kuwait] *is concerned about water*”. None of the social scientists interviewed could refer to a debate on this specific topic or on the water governance reforms more generally. Last but not least, the three Kuwaiti candidates to the parliamentary elections met during the field research in May 2009 had nothing specific to say about this topic.¹²⁸ They supported a general program of reforms like all other candidates.

¹²⁷ At the time of the field researches in Kuwait in 2009, there were 16 daily newspapers, for an estimated population of 3,5 millions (as of 2010).

¹²⁸ Among the candidates followed and briefly met for research purposes during and right after the 2009 legislative elections, the two subsequently elected ones were the Liberal Shiite Rola Dashti and Independent Feminist Sunni Salwa Al-Jassar. The non-elected one, a Hadari member of a Merchant family will not be named. None of them had anything specific to declare on or a prepared point to make about the water reform projects. None of these three different candidates had water privatisation as an issue on their political agenda. Generally in the election campaign no candidate apparently took up the topic of water public-private partnerships.

All these elements show that the three capital cities, despite their political authorities' privatisation ambitions and/or achievements in the potable water services, display some common features:

- limited knowledge of and interest about consumers in the water sector;
- little or no interest at all in this sector's functioning among the consumers and a number of low- to medium-level civil servants working in the sector;
- no recorded or known public debate about the privatisation projects of potable water services, which remains a political 'non-issue'.

This absence of debates on the desalinated water governance reforms in Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City informs us that the populations have neither acted as a vocal driver of change nor as a barrier to change, at least not directly. As this chapter's second section will show, this does not mean that any segment of population has never lobbied against some elements of the market-oriented water governance reforms, although in a non-public way. This regional absence of a public debate over the water governance reforms indicates a deeper issue than just lack of interest among consumers and local populations in general.

I.2 – No debate on water governance and the epistemic issue

International organisations tend to use the notion of water governance assuming a relatively shared broad understanding of the concept. Castro (2008) noticed, however, that *"there exist underlying confrontations between rival theoretical bodies of knowledge"* – a point developed in Chapter 2 – *"and political and cultural traditions for which governance has entirely different meanings"*. Orientalist Bernard Lewis has argued for decades that because of different political histories and political cultures, some words of European politics could not be properly translated into Arabic and that only more or less similar notions could

be used for the sake of explanation (Lewis, 1967; 1993, Introduction). If his examples (e.g. *dawlah* for state or *Siyadah* for sovereignty) could be relevant a century ago, the Westernisation of Arabian politics since then has made these examples not only outdated but even contradictory to his theory today, as Chapter 4 highlighted based on the examples of the constitutional monarchy of Kuwait and with democratising Qatar. Yet, Lewis' theoretical point on political terminology is not totally irrelevant and this partly explains the lack of comprehensive studies of and public debate on water governance and its reforms in the Gulf region. This point is expounded in Annex C, which reviews the existing terminology of governance and water governance in Arabic and situates them in the relevant political context. From this review of the translations of governance and water governance into Arabic and their epistemic issues, three main conclusions can be drawn:

- There currently exists no form of consensus on a trans-disciplinary translation of the holistic concepts of 'governance' and 'water governance', thereby impeding transdisciplinary research on this topic.
- Neologisms (e.g. *Hawkamah*) and all other translations seem to remain non-intelligible to the populations and even to a number of concerned civil servants in Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City. When added to the generally low level of public concern over water affairs, this forms a barrier to public debates on and participation in water governance reforms among Arabic speakers in local GCC politics.
- Because several facets of water governance are neither debated nor studied as a whole in a trans-disciplinary manner, the authorities remain completely free to select only some specific issues for their water policy agenda (e.g. efficiency,

integration of international best practices and rationalisation¹²⁹), while ignoring several other aspects (e.g. participation, equity, efficiency or accountability).

As noted in the literature review, some confusion over governance (understood as 'government') exists in English and other languages too (Weiss 2000; Hermet et Kazancigil, 2005), and the absence of a generally agreed-upon meaning for governance is definitely not a unique attribute of Arabic (see Ruhanen et al., 2010 or Rhodes, 2000; 2010). The main problem with modern Arabic today, with respect to the notion of governance, is that there exists no sufficient consensus on any trans-disciplinary translation for the holistic concepts of 'governance' or 'water governance', which, by nature, require to go beyond a single facet of water affairs.

Arab social scientists do not participate either in the vulgarisation of the concept in Arabic or its development for public debates. They do not seem to have appropriated this notion. Research of the neologism '*Hawkamat*' (governance) on Scopus, Google Scholar and (formerly ISI) Web of Knowledge, yields only eight results, and the term '*Hawkamat-ul miyah*' (water governance) provides no hits on all three academic search engines. The reason may be that GCC Arab social scientists, like most of their colleagues worldwide, understand governance as a politicised notion. As noted in Chapter 5, in a rentier society, state-employed technocrats, bureaucrats and researchers alike have obvious incentives to avoid appearing to compete in any way with the state's authority through studies proposing governance reforms or critically analysing State-induced governance reforms. A revealing fact is that among all social and environmental scientists interviewed in the three polities under study, almost only

¹²⁹ Economic efficiency, integration of foreign technologies and institutional rationalization are given major importance in the Abu Dhabi Water Master Plan (2008), for instance, while public participation – though evoked with regard to consumers' awareness – does not appear as a priority. These government-selected priorities – and neglected items – of the efficient water governance discourse were also very apparent during the set of interviews, as will be detailed later.

Northern Americans and Europeans showed interest in research findings. Almost all GCC Nationals or Arab expatriates interviewed only demanded to see what would be written about them before it is published. Fear of expressing critical thinking and widespread self-censorship in Abu Dhabi and Doha could explain the local water professionals' apparent lack of knowledge and interest in the notion of water governance.

It should be noted however, that, contrary to what Lewis (1967; 1993) indicated, Arabic political terminology is very likely to adapt and close the 'gap' with Western political terminology with time, as it did over the last few centuries. Yet crafting translations and fully integrating political concepts from Europe and Northern America into local politics also requires an effort of adaptation that takes time and, of course, commitment. There may not be official and consensual translation of water governance into Arabic due to a local lack of interest in the institutionalisation of a vocabulary made for drastically new forms of politics. In Kuwait City, Doha and Abu Dhabi, the idea of a participative water governance seems to be – for the time being – a case in point.

1.3 – The role of multiculturalism in the absence of debate on water reforms

Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City, some of the GCC's most globalised cities, are largely inhabited by foreign workers of many nationalities. The linguistic landscape is consequently extremely fragmented. Most of the temporary migrant workers are low-skilled Asian labour who cannot speak nor read Arabic, the official local language. They often have a limited grasp of English, the *de facto* lingua franca for the medium to high-skilled expatriates, and between the latter and educated nationals. Yet all the devices introduced by water institutions to receive feedback from water customers in each of the three cities (particularly the water institutions' websites) seemed to assume that the consumers were cognisant enough of either written Arabic or written English to be able to articulate their concerns, complaints or ideas in these languages. The national and local governments of Kuwait, Abu Dhabi and

Qatar have not made the necessary communication efforts to enable foreign Asian workers (the largest demographic group and a major group of water users in all three countries) to contribute to the matters of water governance reforms – even if these reforms may potentially affect all those who use water, paying a water bill themselves or not.

The first section of this chapter has established that in none of the three cities have the water governance reforms been the result of a public debate or public pressure; that market-oriented water reforms appear as a political 'non-issue' in all three cities. It has also noted the reasons for the complete absence of public debate on the desalinated water governance reforms in Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City. It can be concluded that local customers have neither acted as a vocal driver of change nor as a vocal barrier to change. As the next section will show, this does not mean that any segment of the population has never lobbied against some elements of the market-oriented water governance reforms, in a semi-public way.

It should be explained now why the idea of PPPs was successfully implemented in Abu Dhabi and Doha, while similar projects have failed in Kuwait. The next sub-section investigates the political-cultural forces that have pushed – successfully or not – towards such a deep change in water politics and have led to a growing dependence on the private sector for urban water supply.

II – New forces of political culture in favour of water privatisation: technocrats' new liberalism and a rising "*Market Islam*" in the GCC

This section will investigate how two recent trends in the political culture of Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City have acted as forces pushing market-oriented urban water governance reforms in these cities over the past two decades.

II.1 – Technocratic elites' liberalism

After WW2, a learned bureaucratic elite began to come to Kuwait City, Doha and then Abu Dhabi to support and modernise the small but rapidly emerging bureaucracies of these Gulf shaykhdoms. This trend accelerated after the independence, as described in Chapter 8. In the field of potable water in urban areas, the *raison d'être* of the highly skilled expatriates and influential technocrats was to build a modern water infrastructure and a modern state bureaucracy to build an effective public sector with the joint aims of delivering modern water services to all the population and modernising the country. They achieved their hydraulic mission.

The qualitative exploratory interviews done during the field research indicated that nationals in these cities still consider that it is the State's responsibility to provide potable water and electricity services, at a low tariff in Kuwait City, or for free in Abu Dhabi and Doha. On the other hand, the semi-directed interviews with water professionals and other technocratic elites have shown that in their vast majority they do not share this opinion.

Among the Emirati and Kuwaiti administrative and technocratic elites, there is a common idea that the mentality of extravagant water consumption (some of the highest per capita in the world) is one of the direct negative consequences of the comprehensive and very generous welfare state, and that things should change. Echoing outside calls for privatisation and market solutions (most particularly from the World Bank that will be touched upon later on), technocrats as well as members of the ruling elite in all three cities have been working in favour of market-oriented reforms, that have been consistently presented as "*more efficient*" than the government way. For instance a senior technical advisor at Qatar Electricity & Water Company (QEWCo, a company owning several IWPPs), explained that in addition to being more efficient, a privatised water sector is less costly, "*removes some burden*" from the State and "*gives a chance to the private sector*". An interviewee at Abu Dhabi's Regulation &

Supervision Bureau of the water authority explained that in addition to the continuation of the Public Private Partnerships strategy (now producing 95% of tap water), they were considering several ways to introduce water bills to the nationals, so that they are fully aware of their consumption and keep it within a "reasonable" range, as defined by statistical expectations of what an ordinary family normally consumes. At Kuwait's Ministry of Electricity and Water, interviewee Suhaila Marafi, director of the Department of Studies and Research, explained that studies have been made to raise the very low water tariffs paid by all consumers¹³⁰ – a policy that she has been defending for several years. Overall, the water professionals interviewed – especially those at a management level in the three cities – expressed a very positive idea of privatisation, with a keen interest in seeing further PPPs or, as in Kuwait, an effective move towards privatisation. The very limited literature on water policies in the GCC supports this finding.

In 2006, a number of water professionals from the GCC countries, including from water institutions in Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City, published a collective book on water policies in the Arabian peninsula – so far the only one available recently.¹³¹ Their names and professional positions in water and environmental governmental offices of GCC countries were clearly acknowledged, signalling that the authors did not go against their respective institutions and political authorities' visions and broad ideas, for reasons we have explained in Chapter 6 concerning rentierism and self-censorship in GCC cities. Of particular importance, several authors explained their idea of the economic philosophy and principles that should

¹³⁰ Although tap water in Kuwait originates today at 100% from desalinated seawater, the water tariffs in Kuwait have remained frozen since the late 1960s and have not been revised since then, at 600 fills (1.32 GB£ as of 07/10/2012) per 1'000 imperial gallons. In UK for comparison, the average tariff was of 11.36 GB£ per 1'000 gallons as of 2009, though freshwater requires significantly less pre-treatment.

See www.water.org.uk/home/resources-and-links/uk-water-industry/waterprices (accessed 07/10/2012).

¹³¹ In the 1970s, the FAO produced two books entitled « water laws in Moslem countries » that contained chapters describing the water management of the time when wells provided the majority of all water supplies and desalination had but a complementary role overall.

guide the water management in the GCC. In Chapter 2, Brook, Al-Houqani and Al-Mugrin's¹³² position is clear.

"The most important principle to recognise is that water has an intrinsic economic value like any other commodity and should be treated as an economic good. Prioritisation for the use of potable quality water, from whatever source, should be respected in the following order: domestic (drinking), industrial, commercial, agricultural and forestry use, based on economic returns." (Underlining mine)

(...)

"Charging appropriate tariffs for water services is an important component of a strategy for sustainability of water resources in the GCC countries."

(...)

"Private sector and public-private sector partnerships should be encouraged in water management issues, provided that adequate regulatory capacity is in place"

Source: Brook, Al-Houqani and Al-Mugrin(p.17), in Amer, Böer et al. (2006)

This short extract of the book (published exclusively in English though proposing water guidelines for Arab states) illustrates a marked neoliberal influence among water professionals in the GCC on three points:

- There is a call for private actors to effectively participate in the water management, which is something radically foreign to the state-centred and rentier policies that have been dominating all three cities since the independence. It is also foreign – albeit not contrary – to traditional tribal and Islamic usages, which have customarily favoured communitarian management practices.
- There is also a call for a sophisticated legal system for checks and balances to safely regulate the sector, while relying on the rule of law is not a Middle Eastern custom for local practitioners/ insiders, because neo-patrimonialism, nepotism, the general absence of separation of powers and the arbitrariness of justice have characterised the region since the rulers have increasingly been protected against their subjects by the Pax Britannica and oil revenues throughout the 20th century.
- Finally, it expresses an approach to water as a commodity, in line with the Dublin principles, an approach which appears as purely rational and free from ethical

¹³² Michael C. Brook and Huda Al-Houqani worked for the influential environment agency of Abu Dhabi, which has produced Abu Dhabi's water master plan. Abdullatif Al-Mugrin works for the regional organization of the Gulf Cooperation Council, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

considerations, spiritual aspects or religious norms, as traditional Islamic societies would feature (see Chapter 2).

The specific nature of the freshwater supply in GCC cities may partly explain this evolution. Desalinated water is a relatively recent resource and thus poorly regulated by *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence and positive law), unlike streams and other natural water bodies. More importantly, this manufactured water is produced in large-scale desalination plants which, like other industrial products, require considerable investments, industrial facilities, energy supplies and qualified human resources, as well as technology-intensive consumables such as nano-filtration membranes. Despite this industrial setting and high associated costs, the end product is not valued according to market pricing logics and is significantly wasted, thereby devaluing the work of water professionals. Hence the attractiveness among them of the 'international water consensus' (see Chapter 2) and its ideas of introducing market actors and approaches to rationalise the water demand with pricing strategies.

The evolution of GCC capital cities also explains the deep change in the way medium- and high-level water technocrats – Arabs and Westerners alike – perceive their professional *raison d'être*. The GCC States have managed to provide universal access to improved water supply to every household in all three cities. Consequently, the 'hydraulic mission' is over. High level water technocrats are not supposed to be 'hydraulic missionaries' anymore, but cautious managers maintaining the increase in capacity in the most cost-efficient way, as it clearly appeared during the interviews. Water at all costs is not on the agenda anymore, but cost-efficiency analysis appeared key to these water technocrats' decision-making.

Attitudes towards the role of private sector and market have changed not only among high-level water technocrats. Despite a widespread discourse on Muslim populations' inherent

inability or difficulties to change due to its culture, as noted in Chapters 2 and 3, (Sunni) Islam itself has been a catalyst for change towards more market-oriented governance reforms.

II.2 – New Islamic ethics, changes and continuity in time of rationalisation

II.2.a – The long-term influence of Islam in the urban water governance

Chapter 2 has shown that Islamic values and norms have been influencing the water governance in different manners in the Arabian Peninsula prior and after independence. In the urban water strategies and policies of Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City, several elements also indicate the contemporary influence of Islam, more as a popular set of beliefs than as a source of law. For example, the stiff popular refusal of Treated Sewage Effluents (TSEs) for potable water supply has led to a limited reuse of TSEs, mostly for ornamental purposes or some specific agricultural projects. This is symptomatic of the GCC populations' conviction that even fully retreated this water is *najasa*¹³³ (i.e. an impurity), while it is much more broadly used in Singapore or France for instance, where there are not the same cultural influences on water policies.

The customary system of Islamic governance of natural resources is arguably missing however, since the GCC potable water administration ceased to be a community-based water management in the mid-20th century, as noted in Chapter 8. Around the time of independence, the modern rentier states developed in their respective capital city a complete monopoly over water resources and the urban water services. Locally-interviewed Islamic scholars (*'ulema*) in Abu Dhabi and Doha highlighted that a *hadith* (prophetic narration)

¹³³ *Najasa* is an impurity, in this case related to faeces, that is absolutely prohibited to be in direct contact with, even in extremely limited quantities, to remain pure for prayer. Despite the approval by religious scholars of the careful reuse of this resource for potable purpose, authorities have proved unable to do so since the local negative popular belief among Gulf Muslims prevails, as was clearly observed during the field research in public parks irrigated with TSEs, and as was also highlighted by all Muslim water professionals interviewed. A number of these professionals disagreed with this widespread belief and wanted TSEs to be used for high value purposes.

explicitly stated that a monopoly over water is forbidden, thereby apparently supporting Schiffler's (2001) idea that the influence of Islamic orthodoxy over national water policies is generally marginal in Muslim countries these days. Yet none of the Islamic scholars interviewed in Kuwait City, Abu Dhabi and Doha expressed any concern about the State's monopoly over urban water services and its partial privatisation currently going on.¹³⁴ To the contrary, they all explained that this was for the *MaslaHa* ('common good'/'common interest'), and thus was Islamically authorised to the government. Interestingly, this opinion of Islamic scholars assumes that a state-driven privatisation can either lead to the common good, or at least to overall better outcomes than the *status quo ante*.

As touched upon in Chapter 2, Islam – in its mainstream Sunni forms – has never been opposed to the ownership and trade of water rights, to the remuneration of water services, or to the private ownership of some water infrastructures, provided some egalitarian principles are respected. Planhol (1957) had even argued well before the GCC privatisations that “*the islamic water legislation is by the way firmly liberal and in favor of property*”. Yet the position of interviewed local Muslim scholars – some working for the government, others more independent – supporting the gradual privatisation of urban potable water services reflects new dynamics within the contemporary Sunni Islam of the Arab Middle East.

II.2.b - The rise of a ‘market Islam’ in GCC cities

While in *the second half of the 20th century a minority of Islamist activists – particularly Ikhwan offshoots in the Arab region – demanded an Islamic State and expected a state-led approach to modernisation (ICG 2005), a new paradigm of widespread “pious neoliberalism” (Atia 2011) has been advocating for something radically opposed to it since the 1990s. Haenni summarised this new “Islam de marché” in 2006 as “a new value system*

¹³⁴ The author did interviews with a Mufti from Abu Dhabi's religious authority and religious civil servants from Kuwait's Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and Qatar's Center for the Presentation of Islam. Influential Islamic TV preachers, such as Mohammad Al-'Arifi in Doha and Tariq Swaydan in Kuwait City, were also met and provided valuable insights.

which is taking place in the Muslim world around three elements: overture to the market culture (...), moral rigor and, finally, mistrust, even hostility towards the Welfare state."¹³⁵

These attitudes could be observed in Abu Dhabi, Kuwait and – to a lesser extent – Qatar, and particularly as what Husam and Haenni (2007) had described as a “*fascination of Islamic circles for American-style management theories*” and entrepreneurship.

The case of Engineer Reem¹³⁶

One of our main informants on water affairs in Kuwait City was a female water-treatment specialist at the Ministry of Public Works. A trained engineer with more than twenty years of experience, she had attended in recent years several courses of management proposed by Islamic TV preacher and entrepreneur Tariq Swaydan. During several interviews, including at her working place at a retreatment plant on the outskirts of Kuwait City, this educated and practicing-Muslim woman expressed several times her disappointment with governmental practices. She was particularly discontented with the bureaucracy she considered poorly competent and not really interested in innovative ideas or efficiency gains. Political decision-making, be it in the Cabinet, the Ministry of Public Works or the Parliament, appeared to her to deliver sub-optimal results and, in her opinion, many resources (e.g. tertiary retreated waters, human resources and money) were wasted because of these dysfunctions. If such statements from a civil servant are not exceptional, her conclusions, on the other hand, proved more revealing of her specific economic assumptions. Though she did not consider herself an ideological advocate of privatisation, she saw it as a way to efficiently reform the State for the best, even if this could jeopardise the jobs of some fellow Kuwaiti

¹³⁵ Personal translation of “(...) un nouveau système de valeurs qui se met en place dans le monde musulman autour de trois éléments: l’ouverture à la culture de marché (qui appelle à la réalisation de soi et distille une éthique de battant dans les consciences religieuses), la rigueur morale et, enfin, la méfiance, voire l’hostilité, à l’égard de l’Etat-providence”. Quote from an interview with Patrick Haenni, *L’islam et le nouvel esprit du capitalisme*, Propos recueillis par François Lantz, *Alternatives Economiques* n° 243 - janvier 2006.

¹³⁶ Reem is not the real name of this informant and it will remain confidential.

Nationals. Her *désillusions* with the current Kuwaiti State practices led her to consider quitting her job for the private sector, perhaps pursuing business opportunities on her own.

Interviews in Abu Dhabi, Kuwait City and Doha found that almost all Muslim educated civil servants assessed the government (meaning here the ministries, departments, public authorities or corporation) through the lense of corporate benchmarks, especially effectiveness, cost-efficiency and technological modernity (see the discussion on the role given to e-government tools in the GCC in Chapter 6). None of the water civil servants interviewed mentioned that it was the responsibility of the state apparatus to provide jobs for Nationals by staffing its ministries with the unemployed ones, as the rentier states of the region have done for almost half a century. Muslim water professionals rather said that the role of their respective water authority/ministry/corporation was to effectively and cost-efficiently deliver the services it is in charge of and/or to assign them to private actors. Noteworthy, during the interviews, no mention was made of the more traditional values of Islamic work ethics (e.g. social justice, solidarity or loyalty). It is not implied here that these values are not shared by the interviewees, but rather that they were never raised if not eventually touched upon by the author later on in the interview.¹³⁷

Only two Asian low-skilled migrants and two senior foreign Arab engineers expressed opinions opposed to the privatisation trends. For the Arab expatriates, a Jordanian desalination professional in Qatar and a Sudanese civil engineer for the Municipality of Abu Dhabi, the reforms had created changes in their working habits that seemed non-necessary. The country “*still has oil*”, argued the Sudanese senior civil engineer, so why change?

The South Asian low-skilled labourers working for the Municipality of Abu Dhabi (one directly, the other indirectly), and with limited communication skills in English and

¹³⁷ Values of the interviewees could be spoken about during the semi-directed interviews when discussing the liberalisation process, part C of the questionnaire (Annex A), questions 3 and 7.

Arabic, had experienced net salary decreases following the transfer of their respective jobs in cleaning and ornamental irrigation services from the municipality to private companies a few years before, in the mid-2000s. But it seems that this negative feedback, which was marginal compared to the mainstream positive discourse on privatisation, was due to the general situation of foreign workers, perceived either as threatened or already deteriorated following the privatisation of state services, as repeatedly articulated by several interviewees. But none of these remarks come from the most influential group of the local population, the nationals. Only Nationals can vote in the elections and they alone constitute the small citizenry upon which stands the whole political system.

In Kuwait particularly, candidates from the various religious Sunni currents – economically liberal but socially conservative – constitute a major force in politics.¹³⁸ During my field research in Kuwait during the 2009 legislative campaign, the repeated failure of the National Assembly to work efficiently with the Emir-appointed Prime Minister and his Cabinet caused much popular discontent and was presented as one of the main reasons for the regular success of Islamist MPs at the parliamentary elections by local informants. Islamists seemed associated with the idea of a credible alternative for better governance, essentially less corrupt. In this small society (only 50 MPs for slightly over a million citizens), an Islamist figure like Ismail Al-Shatti has indeed been the most emblematic of the Kuwaiti MPs fighting corruption in Kuwait and elsewhere in the region since the early 1990s.¹³⁹

Islamists, the large majority of whom are Sunni Muslims, have been increasingly influential in the parliamentary political process over the past two decades. Most Sunni

¹³⁸ The two main Sunni groups in Kuwaiti parliamentary life are the Islamic Constitutional Movement (a former local branch of the Ikhwan al-Muslimin) and the Salafists from the Islamic Salafi Alliance. There are also independent Sunni Islamist MPs and several Shiite MPs, nine in 2011 for instance. The few 'religious' Shiite MPs are generally elected to represent the interests of this minority, which makes between 25 to 30 % of the Kuwaiti population, rather than for any specifically religious agenda.

¹³⁹ See Al-Shatti's official CV on the website of the (former) Kuwaiti Prime Minister at: www.pm.gov.kw/en/assets/pdfs/Dr.%20Ismail%20AlShatti%20CV%20E-10-1201-1.pdf (acc 19/11/12)

Islamist MPs, like Nassir Al-Sani, Ahmad Al-Du'ayj or Khaled Sultan, for instance, have been overall supporting – and eventually passing – privatisation legislation.¹⁴⁰ Though they all agree on the need to integrate the private sector into the public sector, Sunni Islamist politics in Kuwait is complex, with some MPs being key opposition figures, such as the Salafi leader and entrepreneur Khaled Sultan,¹⁴¹ while others are working with or even for the government. Ismail Al-Shatti is probably the most influential of the neoliberal Islamists of the latter group. After the liberation of Kuwait, he headed the parliamentary team which negotiated with the World Bank its privatisation recommendations (1993-1994). Then he headed the parliamentary group in charge of preparing legislation for the economic liberalisation of the country in cooperation with the World Bank, while heading also the parliamentary team to solve the budget's structural deficit (1994 – 1996).¹⁴² In 2006, the pro-privatisation new Prime Minister Shaykh Nasser carefully integrated this leading Islamic figure into the state apparatus to obtain the support of the Islamists for privatisation. After serving as the Minister of Telecommunications (a sector currently considered for privatisation) in 2006, Ismail Al-Shatti became Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs (July 2006 – March 2007), and then a direct Consultant in the Diwan of the Prime Minister¹⁴³ until the latter's resignation in November 2011. The use of this key neoliberal Islamist figure by Kuwait's top ruling elite to push forward the privatisation agenda should not be seen as an anti-Western gesture at all. As Haenni has explained, Market Islam's core values come from the West which is seen as a model for economic development and efficiency. This foreign cultural influence among neoliberal Islamists, however, has led to controversy.

¹⁴⁰ The detailed results of the vote for the 2010 privatisation law are available at:

www.arabtimesonline.com/NewsDetails/tabid/96/smId/414/ArticleID/153768/refTab/69/Default.aspx.

¹⁴¹ MP Khaled Sultan and his family's portrait by Al-Ahram weekly does support Haenni's (2005) anthropological description of the actors of the rising 'market Islam', as to their entrepreneurial background, Western education, neoliberal orientations and social puritanism. See S. Faramarzi, Salafis in Kuwait, 24 - 30 May 2012, Issue No. 1099, available at: <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2012/1099/re5.htm> (accessed 20/11/2012).

¹⁴² See Al-Shatti's official CV on the website of the (former) Kuwaiti Prime Minister at: www.pm.gov.kw/en/assets/pdfs/Dr.%20Ismail%20AlShatti%20CV%20E-10-1201-1.pdf (acc. 19/11/12).

¹⁴³ Idem.

After the Kuwaiti Prime Minister's advisor Ismail Al-Shatti became an advisor to Tony Blair's faith foundation,¹⁴⁴ the former British Prime Minister was remunerated with £1mn in 2009 to advise the country's top ruling elite on Kuwait's mid- to long-term development strategy.¹⁴⁵ This consulting contract, which was not examined by the National Assembly, unsurprisingly concluded that the country needed to significantly reform and liberalise its economy.¹⁴⁶ Was it a strategy to legitimise the pro-privatisation orientation of the Kuwaiti Prime Minister?

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office highlighted the role of Tony Blair's consulting in the subsequent four-year development plan developed by the Kuwaiti authorities:

Kuwait's £70 billion National Development Plan (NDP), launched by the Amir in February 2010 and approved unanimously by the National Assembly one year later, seeks to make Kuwait a regional logistics, finance and trading hub by 2035. It reflects in large part Tony Blair's 'Vision Kuwait 2030' report commissioned by the Kuwaiti Government. (...)Vital to the NDP is the involvement of the private sector and international partners. Kuwait has made sweeping reforms to encourage and foster Foreign Direct Investment and to build Public Private Partnerships / Private Finance Initiative (PPP/PFI) as a delivery model for most of the NDP's projects. Kuwait's Partnerships Technical Bureau (PTB) was formed in 2009 to oversee its PPP/PFI programmes – beginning with initial feasibility studies and surveys for potential projects. British companies have won 70% of PTB consultancy contracts so far, and the UK is highly regarded for its expertise on PPP/PFI.

A Privatisation Law, passed despite stiff opposition among MPs, will help build private sector capacity to deliver the NDP and also create opportunities for young Kuwaitis outside the, oil-dominated public sector. Under the law, state assets can now be privatised through a public shareholding company in which stakes are offered to Kuwaiti employees (5%), the Government (20%), private investors (35%) and Kuwaiti share-holders (40%) at the IPO

¹⁴⁴ The list of advisors is available on the website at: www.tonyblairfaithfoundation.org/page/who-we-are (last accessed 20/11/2012).

¹⁴⁵ Richard Hall. Kuwaiti finance minister faces questions over deal to pay 'millions' to Tony Blair's company for advising royal family. The Independent, 18 April 2012, www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/kuwaiti-finance-minister-faces-questions-over-deal-to-pay-millions-to-tony-blairs-company-for-advising-royal-family-7654711.html (accessed 20/11/12).

¹⁴⁶ See Blair's report proposes solutions to key issues, 15 March 2010, www.arabtimesonline.com/NewsDetails/tabid/96/smld/414/ArticleID/150962/reftab/96/Default.aspx

stage. State-owned holdings in telecoms, real estate and utilities are currently on the table for privatisation, opening up the possibility of private companies developing, running and benefitting from NDP projects and new opportunities for UK companies in these sectors.

Source: UK Trade and Investment¹⁴⁷

In Abu Dhabi, however, the influence of neoliberal Islamists seems not as strong, if noticeable at all. Abu Dhabi authorities have always filtered the candidates to the (federal) legislative elections. As for Qatar, it has not held any so far. In both polities, the governments have tighter control over the religious currents that it tolerates, co-opting some (a strategy especially used in Qatar) and banning others (particularly in Abu Dhabi). But in all three cities no religious figure met for interview (see Annex B) was particularly supporting a form of statist approach to politics. As to the water privatisation, they rather sanctioned a *laissez faire* approach to what they considered a political issue, i.e. the political authorities' issue. But considering the regional context of both increasingly market-oriented interpretations of Islam and more economically liberal water technocratic elites, why has Kuwait never implemented any PPP in the field of water so far? What has constituted a barrier to the development of PPPs in Kuwait, and not in Abu Dhabi and Doha?

III – With regional changes in political culture, why no PPPs in Kuwait?

Like many authors for other regions, Najem (2003, p.14) has argued that “*the major internal impetus for [governance] reforms*” in the GCC comes from “*a crisis of legitimacy that originates primarily from economic problems.*” As demonstrated in Chapter 6, this theory does not work in Abu Dhabi and Qatar. In the case of Kuwait, where there has been indeed a legitimacy crisis since the 1990s, it will be shown that – contrary to the idea of Najem (2003) – the crisis has actually acted as a barrier to market-oriented water reforms.

¹⁴⁷ British Embassy in Kuwait, Kuwait: The National Development Plan, 15 Nov 2012, available at: www.ukti.gov.uk/fr_fr/export/howwehelp/overseasbusinessrisk/premiumcontent/405640.html?null (last accessed 20/11/2012).

III.1 – Kuwait’s devastation and the ‘rape of Kuwait’ syndrome

III.1.a The idealised pre-invasion Kuwait

Kuwaitis of different ages often easily express the idea that their country knew in the 1960s and 1970s a golden age. Kuwaitis were indeed members of the richest, most developed and most progressive nation among Arab monarchies, with a constitution and democratic legislative elections being held by 1962. Kuwait enjoyed an immense oil wealth and outstanding diplomatic power in the Arab region and beyond, because of its oil revenues and generous diplomacy¹⁴⁸. Even when the National Assembly had been temporarily dissolved by an Emir (1976-1981 and 1986-1992), the generous rentier redistributive state had always kept the Al-Sabah’s ruling bargain functioning. There was nevertheless some stiff opposition in the 1980s from Kuwaitis who opposed both the 1981 redrawing of the electoral map (which favoured tribesmen loyal to the Emir and vote buying) and the dissolution of parliament in 1986. This dissolution was officially due to security reasons following several bomb attacks in Kuwait, against the background of the Iran-Iraq war during which the emirate diplomatically, logistically and financially supported its Arab neighbour. But on 2nd August 1990, the former Iraqi ally stormed Kuwait, military occupied, looted and annexed it as Iraq’s 19th province. After seven months, the Iraqi troops sabotaged a large number of key infrastructures and symbols of Kuwait (over 600 oil wells, Kuwait’s major desalination plant and water towers, museums, etc.) before withdrawing north of the border. Kuwait’s golden age was over.

¹⁴⁸ King Fayçal of Saudi Arabia is believed to have said, in the 1970s, that in addition to the USA and USSR, Kuwait could be considered a third superpower (Munro, 2006, p.19). If this judgement could appear absurd given the emirate’s inability to defend its territorial sovereignty in 1990, this statement highlighted however the unique diplomatic influence of Kuwait in the Arab region, where it tried to remain non-partisan and to facilitate diplomatic negotiations.

III.1.b The war burden and resentment

The invasion, occupation and destructions have affected almost all dimensions of Kuwaiti life. The fires of the oil wells lasted over 9 months, and produced the world's worst oil environmental catastrophe ever (Husain, 1995). This also constituted as much lost revenues for an economy heavily relying on energy exports.



Photo 8. Kuwait oil wells aflame in early 1991.

Source: Al-Yousifi, from www.evidence.org.kw/ (last accessed 27/01/2013)

The Al-Sabah ruling family had accumulated power since the first oil exports to the point of a family monopoly over politics in early 1990 (Crystal, 1992), but most of its members fled the country and remained abroad during the occupation. It included the then Emir and the current one, then Minister of Foreign Affairs¹⁴⁹. Their common inability to avoid the conflict with a former ally that they had financed and helped being armed, as well as their incapacity to defend the country has tarnished the legitimacy of the Al-Sabah. All these issues and the subsequent disappointments with the post-occupation governments have irremediably affected the political culture of the country. The parliamentary opposition has since then been composed of a vast, eclectic, fluid but resilient and powerful coalition¹⁵⁰.

¹⁴⁹ Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al-Sabah was Minister of Foreign Affairs during 40 years, 63 to 2003.

¹⁵⁰ Kuwait's powerful political opposition to the Al-Sabah-led Cabinet constitutes a particularly heterogeneous and fluid coalition, with for instance tribal representative Shuaib Al-Muwaizri, liberal MP Marzouk Al-Ghanem, Salafi islamist leader Khaled Sultan or leftwing Ahmad Al-Saadun, the former speaker of parliament.

III.2 - Pro-privatisation cabinets, opposition-led assemblies and the paralysis of the political system

III.2.a - The rise of a conflicting political culture

Just after liberation, there was a thriving post-conflict civic culture of solidarity and cooperation among Kuwaitis, but this was short-lived. The overall rapid reconstruction of the country's infrastructures was done with contracts with very limited transparency (there was no elected Assembly) and the local economy and public services were not functioning as smoothly as they did before the war.

In the field of potable water services particularly, the destruction of Kuwait's main desalination plant, Shuwaikh, and of the Um-ul-Aish fresh groundwater facilities provoked a severe and almost two-year long water shortage in Kuwait's metropolitan area. The country meanwhile had to once again rely on freshwater shipments sold by countries of the region. Kuwaitis are reported to have seriously complained to their government over the situation, *"even to the point of street rioting, over the (...) limited amount of water that was available"* (Rothfeder, 2002, p.155). The invasion furthermore had provoked the departure of more than two-thirds of the foreign workers, a large number of whom were skilled Middle Eastern Arab immigrants who had better integrated into the society than any other group, and had sometimes held key posts in both private and public sectors. After the war, political authorities enacted laws and labour regulations to favor Kuwaiti citizens over foreign workers in accessing jobs, for security reasons, and in obtaining better salaries, in order to appease discontented populations. This has caused the departure of an experienced bureaucracy of expatriates, its replacement by a sometimes poorly-trained local human resource and a post-war degradation of public services, as reported by several water professionals, particularly by foreign consultants.

Prior to the return of the Al-Sabah ruling family to re-establish its rule over Kuwait, several declarations and promises had been made concerning the country's liberalisation. Political liberalisation reforms were promised to the pre-invasion political opposition and economic liberalisation reforms were announced to international financial institutions. The World Bank particularly, supported a relatively standard structural adjustment program, as summarised by the USA's Federal Research Department (FRD, 1994): *"The Bank recommended that Kuwait eliminate subsidies, encourage government workers to move to the private sector to reduce serious government overstaffing, liberalise business regulations to promote private-sector growth, and privatise a number of state assets"*.

After Kuwait regained its full sovereignty in February 1991, the government rapidly revamped the commercial laws by Emiri decree (i.e. without vote by the National Assembly) and created a dedicated authority, the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA), to organise, control and monitor privatisations. Shortly after, while there was still no National Assembly being reformed -, the KIA designed a privatisation program to restructure the economy and minimise the dependence on oil income¹⁵¹. Because there was still no fully reestablished urban water supply, the privatisation of water assets was not part of this first program of privatisations.

A majority of Kuwaitis who had been waiting for major political reforms considered the leadership's promises had not been kept. At the October 1992 elections for the restored National Assembly, political parties remained banned and only 15 percent of the adult population could vote¹⁵². Nevertheless the opposition made its first major breakthrough, winning more than 30 seats over 50¹⁵³. The politics of Kuwait was then entering an era of

¹⁵¹ In 1992, the government announced it would first privatise the telecommunications and gas stations.

¹⁵² Statistics from Gresh et Vidal, 2003, pp.353-355.

¹⁵³ Because of the absence of political parties, the definition of an MP as member of the opposition is not firm and definitive, but rather fluid and circumstantial.

ever-escalating conflict between the Parliament and the Cabinet, which gradually began to paralyse the political governance and a number of projects, including reform packages.

The Cabinet had considered making reform packages in the 1990s, with investment in the welfare apparatus (e.g. social housing projects) along privatisation measures to push the Assembly to accept the whole program. But after vote buying, financial crimes and political corruption scandals broke out in the press during the 1990s and the 2000s¹⁵⁴, these political issues increasingly polarised the Assembly, with a strong opposition particularly wary and defiant of any complex initiative from the Cabinet. In 2003 began a series of resignations from ministers after MPs tabled no-confidence motions. The conflictual relationship between the Parliament and the Cabinet (appointed by a Prime Minister chosen by the Emir and staffed with Al-Sabah family members at key posts), dramatically escalated with the February 2006 elections, with 10 Cabinets being formed and five dissolutions of the National Assembly by the Emir since then. In this context the ‘package strategy’ became a more symbolic and self-defeating strategy for the Cabinet, effectively stalling the potable water privatisation projects along the major North Kuwait development projects.

III.2.b Mixed external influences

The MPs’ pressure against the liberalisation vision from the Cabinet has been all the more influential and successful that oil revenues, although low during the late 1990s (see chapter 6), have enabled Kuwait to be protected from the pressure of international aid donors

¹⁵⁴ In the 1990s and 2000s, large corruption scandals were many and included the financial wrongdoings of the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA), the Ministry of Electricity and Water’s substations affairs (over second-hand electrical hardware bought at high price by corrupted Kuwaiti officials), money laundering by US army officers or the recent corruption charges against MPs charged with having been paid by the Cabinet to vote on government lines. On a more regular basis, the practices of state job allocation, government scholarships for studies abroad and healthcare abroad are often attributed based on *wasta* (connection) rather than merit or need, creating a popular distrust towards the state apparatus.

over the past two decades. Their influence in the GCC has been limited over water affairs at best according to the water professionals interviewed in the three cities.

To the question *"Do you think foreign countries (like the USA, England or France) or international organisations like the IMF and the World Bank have been influential in this (privatisation) process? If yes, to what extent?"* (question C5, annex A), the water professionals in the three cities answered very differently and according to no clear pattern. Some appeared surprised by the question, some embarrassed given the political nature of it, some rapidly discarded it with answers such as *"we are not a third world nation"* or *"no, because we do not need them"*. Only at the highest technocratic levels, i.e. Directors of Department or Head of Sections, were mentioned studies done by the World Bank and foreign consultants. But some Directors denied what others confirmed. It seems that the youngest high level technocrats are not necessarily aware of the World Bank reports made in the early 1990s (not accessible to the author), and that the low- to medium-level water professionals are not all aware either. All Kuwaitis interviewed among water professionals indicated that World Bank studies had been performed, but slightly disagreed over their influences. While one director mentioned that their influence eventually stopped at the level of feasibility studies, another interviewee mentioned that the World Bank is *"very influential"*, and supported this assertion with the recent reform of the pension system which has been designed following a World Bank study. Disregarding these studies' temporary influence, they have not been followed by privatisations.

A barrier against the ruling elite's initial idea of pushing forward the World Bank agenda in the early 1990s was the awareness of the popular hostility in the region against structural adjustment programs, which goes against any rentier ruling bargain. Adjustment programs had provoked massive demonstrations and even riots in Arab rentier countries of the region a few years before, as in Khartoum (1987), Algiers (1988) or Amman (1989). It seems

that the government and ruling members of the Al-Sabah have preferred to discard a strategy of direct confrontation with their population at a time of fragile ruling legitimacy; privileging first to postpone the water privatisation project and then to opt for low profile public private partnerships.

One interviewee referred to another long-term element explaining the difficulty to implement a privatisation program in Kuwait: the complex internal politics of the ruling family and the vested private interests of some powerful actors in avoiding market-oriented reforms.

III.2.c - Changes in Al-Sabah politics and the new power of urban tribal politics

Despite the social ruptures known by the tribes over the 20th century (sedentarisation, women's education and relative emancipation, even a remarkable *embourgeoisement* for some), the tribe remains a fundamental social unit and a remarkable political force in Abu Dhabi, Qatar and Kuwait. As developed in chapter 6, more than a dozen major tribes make up around half of Kuwait's one million citizens, but the ratio of tribesmen (*badu*) among Nationals is considered even higher in Abu Dhabi and Qatar¹⁵⁵.

In Kuwait, tribal politics have been mentioned several times as a reason for the lack of privatisation of the water sector. High- and medium-level technocrats of the Ministry of Water and Electricity argued that because Nationals were accustomed to benefit from the (rentier) welfare State, they lobbied through the well-established, organised and powerful

¹⁵⁵ Most GCC Nationals claim tribal roots, but those who settled in the city before the oil revenues of the mid-20th century are considered to be *Hadaris* (urbans) and generally do not organise socially or politically along tribal affiliations, especially in Kuwait. For instance, one informant from a local merchant family explained he would not necessarily vote for or marry with someone from his tribe, though he was perfectly aware of being a descendent from the major Bani Khaled tribe. Qatar by contrast, is often considered to be a tribal country, due to its late urbanisation; Doha remaining a village until the first 1950s oil revenues. Abu Dhabi too, is regionally considered a country of tribesmen (*badu*), since its poverty before the 1960s oil revenues had not enabled the formation of a large class of urban merchants, craftsmen and service providers as in Kuwait or Bahrain.

tribal channels to keep on plainly benefiting from the welfare State and to avoid reforms that could jeopardise these revenues. Paradoxically, it appears that the two emirates with the most advanced privatisation programmes in the Gulf are Qatar and Abu Dhabi, i.e. where tribalism has traditionally been the society's "*building block*" (Heard Bey, 1997, 254). So what exactly is specific to Kuwait's tribal politics? Why have not these forces deterred Abu Dhabi and Doha from implementing their own PPP projects?

In both Qatar and Abu Dhabi – who began exporting oil decades after Kuwait – the tribalism of their respective citizenry has remained more institutionalised and directly integrated into government politics, particularly through the *majlis* consultation, marriages with the ruling family and allocation of prestigious jobs to tribal elites. These tribal practices of consultation and co-option of tribal elites are however not necessarily official, probably because of the negative connotations of tribes and tribalism.

In Kuwait, the Badu have long remained exterior to Kuwait City's mainstream politics. They were gradually integrated into the state security apparatus and informal political strategies of the Al-Sabah during the first part of the 20th century. They were initially considered more loyal to the ruling family than the urban families, who favored more participative politics and Arab nationalist ideas. The tribes-\-ruling elite alliance definitely ended after the resumption of parliamentary politics in Kuwait in the 1990s, due to the tribes' feeling of remaining the lesser beneficiaries of the oil revenues despite their key role on security issues and their major demographic weight in the Kuwaiti society: more than half the citizenry. In contrast, the Merchant families, which constituted less than 5% of the population, had received many benefits from the ruling elite (Al-Zobi, 1999, p.49), so that they quietly renounced their political roles and accepted the Al-Sabah monopoly over politics. This lasted until the 1992 restoration of the elected National Assembly.

The legal reforms for the corporatisation and privatisation of the GCC water sectors started in Abu Dhabi and Doha in the 1990s. At that time, none of them had neither an elected municipal council (Abu Dhabi has not so far), or an elected parliament (Qatar is supposed to hold its first parliamentary elections in 2013). With official *majalis* (i.e. consultative tribal councils) around the top decision makers from the ruling family, the post-independence political systems of Abu Dhabi and Qatar have maintained tribal elites' participation into decision-making circles, but making them and their tribal constituency dependent from the oil-financed patronage system steered by the Emir, the Crown Prince and key figures of the ruling family as well. In other words, instead of powerful parliaments that would have given freedom to tribal representatives, as in Kuwait, Abu Dhabi and Qatar have made the traditional tribal elites dependent on a rentier redistributive system in which their support to the regime's leadership is instrumental to obtain more from the rentier state. By contrast in Kuwait, tribal elites have found that parliamentary politics is the best way to support their constituency's private interests, to obtain the most from the welfare state and to make sure state services will not become paying or more expensive. Abu Dhabi and Qatar's leadership have thus been relatively free to legislate over privatisation without difficulty and to smoothly privatise the water and electricity sector. In Kuwait however, regular informants and interviewed social scientists explained that MPs representing tribes at the National Assembly served the interests of their constituency – not of the *Res Publica* - and followed a “populist” agenda responsible for the absence of privatisation reforms. Tribal MPs have been increasingly allied to the opposition forces against potential reforms of the welfare state since the mid-1990s. This phenomenon of tribal parliamentary politics can be called 'new urban tribal politics'¹⁵⁶.

¹⁵⁶ 'New urban tribal politics' helps avoiding any confusion with Maffesoli's notion of neotribalism, a concept so far not used in GCC contexts but that would show important features of these cosmopolitan societies. Expatriates form concentric circles of cohesion along linguistic lines, national identity, and social-economic

The tribes have won a growing number of parliamentary seats over the past two decades and about half of the 50 parliamentary seats in 2009, during the field research. Their success is partly due to their (illegal) tactic of holding primaries to pre-select candidates, a policy which has caused particular controversy because political parties are banned and political societies' primaries are illegal in Kuwait. The tribal primaries have thus given the tribes a significant advantage over other competing groups or coalitions, the votes of which are split over several candidates. This has also made the tribal representatives more 'democratic' since the traditional tribal elites are not necessarily elected, as within the Al-Motairi tribe in 2009 for instance, producing new tribe-endorsed candidates who are less connected to the country's Al-Sabah ruling elite and also less likely to hesitate to radically oppose to them to preserve their constituency's support.

This analysis, built on interviews of local social scientists and the literature on Kuwaiti politics, has been substantilly confirmed by water professionals from the Ministry of Water and Electricity. Interviewee Suhaila Marafi, Director of the Department of Studies and Research explained that these "*populist*" forces within the Parliament have for instance consistently refused any increase in the water tariff, despite an extremely low water price (generally fluctuating around 10% of its production cost). Suhaila Marafi explained that studies were made to increase the water tariffs, but that the tribal representatives had always been opposed to this idea and even supported the idea that water and electricity should be free to Nationals, as in Abu Dhabi and Doha. The high level of unpaid water bills since Kuwait's liberation (estimated at 40-50% as of 2009 by interviewed water professionals from the Ministry), supports this observation. Against this popular pressure opposing market-led reforms, the Al-Sabah ruling elite has not been consistent in its ambitions, because it was itself embroiled in family politics over it.

status, thereby producing semi-formal networks that are socially structuring and economically important in the foreign workers' strategies to maximise the returns on their expatriation.

Al-Sabah internal politics and the parliamentary paralysis

The Al-Sabah, like most other ruling families in the GCC, is not a monolithic private interest group. The Al-Sabah established themselves in Kuwait in the mid-seventeenth century, but from this large ruling family (more than a thousand members today), only the al-Jaber and al-Salim branches have alternated in holding the roles of Emir and Crown Prince since the early 20th century (see Abu Hakima, 1994). Over the past decade however, the former branch has dominated politics and discontented factions, from the Al-Salim branch and others from the ruling family, have been using the Parliament to oppose policies proposed by rivals in the government, often resulting in political deadlocks, as several local informants explained. This is particularly the case from some factions not having political responsibilities but with important business activities. Some of them have significant vested interests in avoiding the phasing off of subsidies, such as those allocated to water and electricity supply for instance¹⁵⁷. In contrast to early statements made by the ruling members of the Al-Sabah family to the international community during and right after the Iraqi occupation, the USA's Federal Research Division (FRD) noted by 1994 that:

"Kuwait's willingness to implement World Bank recommendations concerning the strengthening of its economy appeared questionable, however. Various of the recommendations would affect significantly members of the ruling family, many of whom engage in the business sector"

Source: FRD (1994).

IV – A possible breakthrough in water privatisation?

Amidst the major political confusion in Kuwait in recent years (e.g. the Constitutional Court has cancelled on technical grounds the latest elections and called back the 2009 Assembly), the Cabinet eventually managed to make the Parliament pass the law 39 of 2010 authorising the first PPP in the freshwater sector. While Abu Dhabi and Doha implemented legal and

¹⁵⁷ For obvious reasons, no name can be given here, but for instance owners of large accommodation for Asian laborers have an important vested interest in not having an increase in the tariffs of water and electricity since they pay these charges for the hundreds or even thousands of workers they accommodate.

institutional reforms in a few years during the 1990s, it took Kuwait's liberal elites more than 18 years to manage to pass a privatisation law (in May 2010), and yet with a majority of the elected MPs voting against it¹⁵⁸. Since then however, this project of IWPP at Az-Zour North (along other industrial projects) has been seriously delayed because the opposition has refused to vote the necessary bill to finance it that was proposed by the Cabinet. The Government of Kuwait has nevertheless repeatedly explained that the project will be maintained and eventually completed.

In May 2011, to appease the tensions in the Parliament and against a background of Arab spring revolutions elsewhere in the region and some demonstrations in Kuwait itself, the Prime Minister Ahmad Al-Sabah proposed to put an end to the utility bills for the Kuwaiti citizens. Meanwhile, the Cabinet still plans to develop PPPs for the urban water sector. This triggers several questions. Is it a strategy to enable PPP projects and eventually increase the water tariffs for the foreign workers who constitute the demographic majority? Is it the latest illustration of the strength of urban tribal politics in the National Assembly? Is it a sign of the victory of a rentier mentality all over the GCC?

Conclusion

In the first multi-author book on good governance reforms in the GCC, its editor Pierre Najem had concluded that the transmission of Western values had been “*moderated in many cases by the generally conservative social orientations of the societies and the respective regimes' ability to maintain tight media controls*” (Najem, 2003, p.14). Less than a decade after, this

¹⁵⁸ In Kuwait, the Prime-Minister-appointed members of the Cabinet can participate to the votes of the Parliament. For the privatisation law, they provided the narrow majority needed to pass the law. See Gh. Nuseibeh, 'Kuwaiti Parliament passes privatisation bill', Risk Watch 17/05/10, at www.riskandforecast.com/post/capital-markets/kuwaiti-parliament-passes-privatisation-bill_503.html (last accessed 06/11/2012).

statement has to be seriously reconsidered. If on the one hand tribal politics, rentierism and some elements related to Islam have remained influential forces within the local political cultures, on the other hand, the region has known fast-paced political, economic and social-cultural evolutions.

The politics and political cultures of the Gulf countries have been affected by the watershed events of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and war against Iraq (1990-1991), the growing cultural hegemony of Western ideas and pro-market norms of governance. Through the satellite TV channels in Arabic, neoliberal values and market-oriented visions of modern Islamic societies have been promoted by religious entrepreneur-preachers such as ‘Amr Khalid or Tariq Swaydan, and have impacted the GCC societies in relatively similar ways than Egypt, as described by Haenni (2005) and other theoreticians of ‘market Islam’ and the related “*pious neoliberalism*”. Even for young Nationals working as civil servants who have never known the British mandate, English represents the language of modernity and it is now dominant in higher education, with recent institutions such as the American University in Kuwait, Georgetown University in Doha and New York University in Abu Dhabi for instance.

As a consequence of this evolution of the political culture in all three cities, the idea of water as a costly commodity to rationalise has replaced water as Allah’s merciful gift or as the product of a modernising welfare state led by a generous leadership. For the local water sectors, this has also meant that calls for privatisation of the desalinated water sector have not only come from outside the GCC cities (such as the World Bank or foreign consulting cabinets), but have repeatedly been made from local and regional actors. Particularly from technocratic elites of the sector, but also from neoliberal Islamists for instance. Paradoxically, in this new modernity of the Gulf cities, tribalism has not faded away but locally regenerated.

In Kuwait, it is the modern parliamentary politics that have given increased power to non-traditional tribal representatives who have consistently refused the water privatisation projects, as part of a broader set of reforms that could jeopardise the Kuwaiti welfare state. These new urban tribal politics – seen as *”populism”* by its opponents – have so far effectively lobbied through well-established, organised and powerful channels to keep on fully benefiting from the welfare State. The latest achievements of these tribal private interest groups - the proposition by the Prime Minister of free water services for Nationals - seems to show that the ruling family does not think it can overcome these popular rentier and tribal forces. It tries to appease and coopt them in order to be able to implement PPPs on similar lines than Abu Dhabi and Doha. This means that in the near future, Nationals are very likely to receive their freshwater for free. The traditional forces of tribalism and rentierism are not fading away at all but effectively shaping the contemporary water governance in Kuwait. When controlled as in Doha’ and Abu Dhabi’s rentier systems, the tribal elites have not opposed the privatisation process which has remarkably developed since the 1990s as seen in chapter 4 and 6.

The competing political cultural forces over the last two decades have given the upper hand to the technocratic elites’ discourse of market-oriented reforms of the water sector. Yet this political victory is not total and cannot be since the ruling bargain opposes the idea that Nationals pay the full price of a costly desalinated water. In this post-modern governance, the ruling bargain remains shaped by the rentier political culture of the modern GCC states. As a general rule, the authorities of Abu Dhabi, Kuwait and Qatar have prioritised the good governance ideas of private sector participation and public private partnerships rather than public participation to decision-making for instance. This is reflected in the absence of public debate of the water reforms in each country, where the water authorities have been operating with very limited interaction with their customers. Surely, the consumers of the urban water supply have not been the drivers of the market-oriented governance reforms. Even the

majority of the Nationals do not seem to worry at all about the water sector and its reforms, as long as it does not threaten the generosity and comprehensiveness of the welfare state. This was against this background that were designed and implemented the programs of privatisation of the desalination units in the GCC urban areas.

Since in Abu Dhabi and Doha, the political cultures remain dominated by a tight political nucleus, i.e. the Emir and a few selected members of the ruling family, it is important to investigate now how the individual agency of these few key actors has influenced the privatisations in these cities, and to compare it with Kuwait where no IWPP for desalination has ever been implemented.

Chapter 10

Investigating the role and individual agency of the top ruling figures in Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City's water governance reforms:

initiators, facilitators or reluctant rentier statesmen?

After the structural and political cultural dimensions of comparative analysis - studied in chapters 6 and 7 for the former, chapters 8 and 9 for the latter - the third dimension of DiGaetano and Strom's (2003) comparative approach to governance is the rational actors analysis. As further developed in chapters 2 and 5, this comparative approach focuses on the individual agency of key actors, such as the mayor of a city and/or leaders of political coalitions. It analyzes the rational political calculus of, and actions taken by, key political actors, based on the strategies they devise, the coalitions they form and the policies they design and implement. While this approach can be criticized for its overemphasis on individual agency and its failure to account for the influence of well-established state structures (e.g. DiGaetano and Strom, 2003; Goodwin and Painter, 1997), as in Europe for instance, it is relevant in the context of the GCC polities however. GCC polities are characterized by both a relatively young and fast-changing state apparatus (as touched upon in chapter 8) and, more importantly, a central role traditionally attributed to the Emir.

In order to appraise the role of these rulers' individual agency over the dynamics of water privatisation in Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City, this chapter will first appraise, through a diachronic approach, the existence of a correlation between change in leadership and change in water supply governance in these three cities. This chapter will then investigate if this reflects causality by examining what have been the roles of the top ruling elites (i.e. their division of labour) in each of the three cities under study over the 1990s and 2000s, a period of significant correlation and of privatisation dynamics in all three polities. The last

section will critically investigate the background and profiles of the key actors of these reforms to better understand their possible rationale in order to confirm the role of driver of change of their individual agency.

It is important to highlight here that there is not – and probably cannot ever be – any firm proof of the personal rationale of a GCC ruler at a precise point in time. Beyond the difficulties inherent in the study of any top political leader anywhere in the world (due to politicized biographies, little or no possibility to meet for an academic interview, etc.), studying the GCC top political leaders represent further difficulties since a large share of their educational backgrounds, schedule and daily activities are not well documented. Consequently, this chapter will investigate first and foremost *whether* the leaders of Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City have led the privatisation dynamic or not, *when* and *how*, more than what was their exact personal rationale to do so. A body of corroborating evidence will nevertheless be proposed that sheds some light upon the GCC leaders' rationale for privatizing their water sector.

To understand the functioning of the three polities' institutional setting and the decision-making processes of water affairs, this chapter is built on the interviews of local water professionals, since their insight provides a more accurate description than the official documentation or the commercial sources of information. Because there is no reliable detailed biography about the current top ruling elite, this chapter dwells essentially on the triangulation of the following sources of information: official speeches, biographies and websites, independent press interviews and business reports as well as field observations and last but not least, local informants' precious insights.

I – Is there a correlation between leadership change and public water policies?

Three figures have been made to put side by side the changes in political leadership and those in public water governance since the end of WW2 in the three cities¹⁵⁹. It can be seen on figure 17 that there has apparently been in Abu Dhabi a strong correlation between change in leadership and change in public water strategy over this period. The succession from Shaykh Shakhbut - under whom no significant public urban water project was passed¹⁶⁰ – to Shaykh Zayed is a case in point. The latter developed the first modern water supply infrastructures on the island¹⁶¹, massively but at a fast pace, to the extent that two decades later the rising modern State of Abu Dhabi had developed a complete monopoly over the urban water supply, as developed in chapter 8. In the early- to mid-1990s to the contrary, shortly after Shaykh Khalifa became *de facto* fully in charge of Abu Dhabi's internal affairs, the development of the first market-oriented initiatives¹⁶² can be observed on figure 17. This seems to indicate a close correlation in Abu Dhabi between *de facto* leadership change and changes in the public water sector since the end of world war two.

By contrast, there is no such apparent correlation in Kuwait City over the same period as can be observed on figure 18 on the next page. Only the nomination of the Shaykh Nassir as prime minister in 2006 appears to shortly precede a series of reforms for privatisation in rupture with the post-independence urban water supply strategy where the State had the monopoly over the sector. However despite the calls for proposal for two IWPPs, as of November 2012 no privatisation project has yet been implemented. So the apparent late water governance paradigmatic shift in Kuwait City is arguably artificial.

¹⁵⁹ Oil activities and the early economic development completely stopped during world war two.

¹⁶⁰ Under Shaykh Shakhbut, commercial and family operations supplied water to most urban households. The 1962 small desalination plant was a private initiative for the oil industry's requirements, and he had opposed most British-proposed development initiatives, as developed in chapter 8.

¹⁶¹ Zayed commissioned the first public desalination plant as soon as he acceded to power in 1966 and then massive water transfers from the interior followed by seven large public desalination plants.

¹⁶² The commissioning of a detailed study for privatisation first, then institutional reforms and finally the commissioning of IWPPs as shown on figure 18.

Figure 18 – Change in political leadership and evolution of the public water governance in Abu Dhabi after WW2

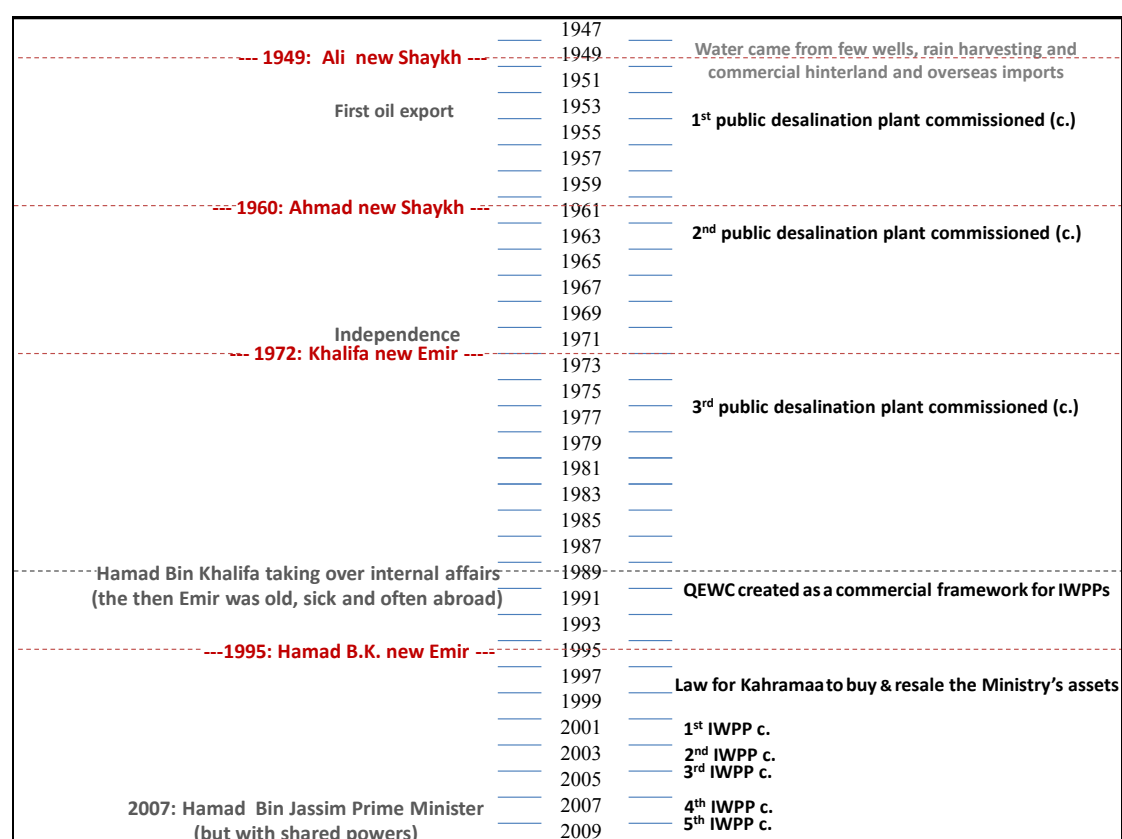
Political change		Change in public water governance
	1947	
	1949	
	1951	
Shaykh Shakhbut ruled alone over Abu Dhabi City (1928-1966)	1953	Water originated from wells, rain harvesting and limited commercial water imports
	1955	
	1957	
	1959	
--- First oil export ---	1961	
	1963	
	1965	
---1966: Zayed Emir of Abu Dhabi ---	1967	1 st public desalination plant commissioned (c.)
1969: Khalifa Chairman of the Exec. Council ---	1969	1 st long-distance water supply pipeline c.
--- Independence ---	1971	
	1973	
	1975	
	1977	2 nd public desalination plant started
	1979	3 rd public desalination plant started
	1981	4 th public desalination plant started
	1983	
	1985	5 th public desalination plant started
	1987	
	1989	6 th public desalination plant started
	1991	7 th public desalination plant started
Early 1990s: Khalifa <i>de facto</i> runs the emirate (Zayed increasingly sick)	1993	
	1995	1994 Privatization Study commissioned
	1997	8 th public desalination plant started
	1999	1996 Privatization Committee launched
	2001	1998 law restructuring the sector
	2003	1 st IWPP c.
	2005	2 nd IWPP
2004: Khalifa Emir of Abu Dhabi	2007	3 rd IWPP
2004: Mohamed Crown Prince	2009	4 th IWPP
		5 th IWPP
		6 th IWPP
		7 th IWPP
		8 th IWPP

Figure 19 - Change in political leadership and evolution of the public water governance in Kuwait's metropolitan area after WW2

Shaykh Ahmad I Al-Jaber ruled over Kuwait	1949	Water came from wells and imports from Iraq
1950: Abdullah III new Emir of Kuwait --	1951	1 st public desalination plant commissioned (c.)
-	1953	
	1955	
	1957	
	1959	
Independence ---	1961	
	1963	
1965: Sabah III new Emir ---	1965	2 nd public desalination plant commissioned started
	1967	
	1969	
	1971	3 rd public desalination plant commissioned started
	1973	
	1975	
	1977	4 th public desalination plant commissioned (c.)
	1979	
1977: Jaber III new Emir ---	1981	
	1983	5 th public desalination plant commissioned (c.)
	1985	
	1987	Major upgrade of the 1 st public desalination plant
	1989	6 th public desalination plant commissioned (c.)
Occupation and destructions	1991	State-led reconstruction of most desalination plants
	1993	
	1995	
	1997	
	1999	
	2001	
2003: Sabah Prime Minister	2003	
2006: Saad I temporary Emir	2005	7 th public desalination plant started
2006: Sabah IV new Emir	2007	
with Nassir Prime Minister	2009	Law on PPPs
	2011	Privatization law
		1 st IWPP call for proposal
		2 nd IWPP call for proposal

In Doha, there is overall limited correlation between change in political leadership and paradigmatic change in public water affairs since the end of World War II. However, by 1989, the emerging (*de facto*) monopoly of Shaykh Hamad (Bin Khalifa) over internal affairs seems to correlate with the first initiatives for public private partnerships for new desalination plants, a policy clearly in rupture with the previous state-led water development and state monopoly over water production as can be seen on figure 20 below.

Figure 20 – Change in political leadership and evolution of the public water governance in Doha after world war two



These three diachronic approaches provide contrasted information on Abu Dhabi', Doha' and Kuwait City's correlation between change in political leadership and change in their freshwater supply governance since the end of world war two. Over this period, only Abu Dhabi shows a strong correlation between the two variables. However the three seem to share over a more recent period (since the early 1990s in Abu Dhabi and Doha; since 2006 in Kuwait) a correlation between change in the leadership responsible for internal affairs and the

development of market-oriented initiatives: detailed studies for privatisation, institutional reforms, calls for proposal for IWPPs and - in the case of Abu Dhabi and Doha - the implementation of these PPPs. So the main question now is the following: does this apparent correlation in Abu Dhabi, Doha and – to a lesser extent – Kuwait City mean causality?

II – Roles among the top political leadership of the 1990s and 2000s

II.1 - From where arise propositions for major changes in the urban water sector?

None of the current three rulers has ever been directly in charge of a water department, ministry, corporation or authority. Unlike the more prestigious ministries of Foreign Affairs, Interior, Defense, Oil/Energy, Finance and Economy, the water responsibilities never benefited from a high-status appeal among members of ruling families. Several reasons explain this relatively depreciatory view:

- During much of the 20th century, carrying water could be a man's profession - prior to the oil era - only if he were from a poor condition, and generally an immigrant¹⁶³, as touched upon in chapter 8.
- Until the 1960s modernization, fetching water for the household was mostly the task of women or a servant¹⁶⁴.
- When water became very abundant and allocated to everyone and without restrictive allocation policies following the 1973 oil boom, being in charge of the water supply was arguably not a significant tool of power and wealth anymore.

The ruling families' top elites (the Emirs, their sons, brothers and nephews) are essentially concerned with their polity's economy, prestige, security and governance. Top decision makers are rarely dealing with water issues – and especially not sewage ones -, nor following very closely their evolutions or proactively engaging the sector as much as they do

¹⁶³ For further information see particularly Guingand (2009).

¹⁶⁴ This was a practice described by all anthropologists having worked on pre-oil Eastern Arabia (e.g. Heard-Bey, 1999; Lindhardt, 2001).

for oil, gas or even electricity generation. Interviews of water professionals have shown that within the usual process of change, innovation and reform of each emirate, the Emir appears at the very end of a long line of bureaucrats and technocrats, and in Kuwait, of the parliament too. All these intermediaries, essentially technocrats, can influence the process. Medium- and high-level water technocrats often select the topics of studies to be conducted by external consultants and high-level technocrats frame the main parameters for the diverse tenders, even if it is generally redrafted by a consulting company or a business Bank, such as Mott McDonald or BNP Paribas¹⁶⁵. Medium- and high-level water technocrats produce also various internal reports and submit recommendations – especially after international conferences - which may go up to the decision-making level of the Minister or Head of the Water Corporation or Authority, and more rarely to the levels of the Emir or Prime Minister/Chief of the executive council.

In all three emirates, the Emir and his second (crown prince or prime minister in Kuwait) consider essentially strategic options, rarely managerial issues, after their own group of technocrats within their diwan (an extended secretariat composed of elite technocrats and long-time advisors) have re-filtered and reinterpreted reports and feasibility studies. The criteria for the selection and hiring of these high-level technocrats themselves, the values they must then use and their individual qualities are thus relatively influential over the decision-making process. These elements will frame how people think and what people think about: i.e. which studies should be made, how reports are produced and what are the criteria upon which final decisions will be based.

As already mentioned in chapter 7, key informants in Abu Dhabi and Doha explained that experienced “*bureaucratic middle-men*” (a word from interviewee political anthropologist Andrew Garner) are not willing to jeopardize their lucrative positions with out-

¹⁶⁵ See for instance Global Water Intelligence, ‘Six sign up for Abu Dhabi WWTP loan’, Vol 10, Issue 9 (Sept. 2009) or Mott’s website at www.water.mottmac.com/news/?id=362616 (accessed 13/11/2012).

of-the-box ideas, reforms or new visions; unless it was specifically demanded of them. Over the end of the past decade, a trend of enabling critical thinking among educated Nationals (commoners included) had been rising in Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait. New ideas were welcome and empowerment was looked after to build the leadership of tomorrow. But this had not happened during the 1990s and early 2000s in Abu Dhabi and Doha, i.e. at the time of the start of the privatisation dynamic. Local informants also explained that nowadays trends following the Arab Spring could lastingly jeopardize the short-lived intellectual overture of the late 2000s. Even in Kuwait, traditionally the most politically liberal country of the GCC, the political landscape has known anti-liberal dynamics over the past year, with the right to gather being temporarily suspended and the National Assembly being dissolved on 7th October 2012¹⁶⁶.

As a general rule, interviews with water professionals and political anthropologists led to the conclusion that technocrats most often propose and/or lobby for relatively limited, probably incremental but slow reforms, essentially of a technical nature, that never propose to radically depart from the conventional pathway. The most radical reforms, such as initiating a process of Public Private Partnership, are proposed (yet not necessarily driven) by actors external to the public institution in charge of water or the top ruling elite.

Strategic orientations and reforms are initiated by the highest levels of decision-making such as the inner circles of an Emir (his diwan or personal advisers), the Prime-Minister/crown prince's office or by foreign actors, such as the World Bank, consulting companies and industrial partners. For instance, the World Bank made the first studies and recommendations to Kuwait's Cabinet (the parliament was then dissolved) for the

¹⁶⁶ See TD Waterhouse and Thomson Reuters, 'Kuwait bans gatherings of more than 20 people amid protests', October 23, 2012. Available at: <https://research.tdwaterhouse.ca/research/public/Markets/CommoditiesNews?documentKey=1314-L5E8LN0ZK-1> (last accessed 27/10/2012)

privatisation of urban water services in 1991 and 1992¹⁶⁷, after the Iraqi occupation and Gulf war and the leadership's expression of interest for liberalisation policies. Eventually, the then Emir Shaykh Jaber III Al Sabah did not push forward this project for reasons mentioned in the previous chapter.

In Abu Dhabi, the crown prince Shaykh Khalifa (born in 1947) received in 1995 a detailed feasibility study for the gradual privatisation of the Mirfa and Taweelah B. He had accepted this feasibility study from the French industrial group GIAT industries as an offset compensation in exchange for the considerable purchase of French military hardware, as already mentioned in chapter 6. It was not directly implemented as such (e.g. the industrial group Giat was not part of the companies involved in the privatisation), but was considered influential over the institutional reforms implemented by 1996 that enabled the development of project finance for the first IWPPs in Abu Dhabi by 1999¹⁶⁸. The Emir, Shaykh Zayed, who had always involved the foreign private sector in the energy sector (as seen in chapter 7), opposed no objection to these PPPs in the water and power sector and promulgated the necessary legal framework in 1998¹⁶⁹.

In Qatar, after becoming Chairman of the Higher Council for Planning in 1989, the then crown prince Shaykh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani put in place a series of institutional reforms to prepare the country for privatisations, especially the 1990 creation of the Qatar Electricity & Water Corporation (QEWCo) to eventually take over the (then) Ministry of Water & Electricity's (MEW) task of desalinated water and electricity cogeneration¹⁷⁰. But the then

¹⁶⁷ There was no access possible to these privatisation studies, the exact number and detail of which remain unknown. They are nevertheless referred to in a variety of documents of that time, such as a 1994 US Congress document on reforms in Kuwait. They have been referred to during my interview with Mrs. Suhaila Al-Marafi, Director of studies & Research at the Ministry of Water & Electricity.

¹⁶⁸ See Danoffre's (2003) LLM dissertation on the development of project finance in the Middle East.

¹⁶⁹ As already explained, the law of 1998 is the key regulation in Abu Dhabi for the restructuring of the water and power sector, the creation of its authority (the ADWEA), the integration of foreign private actors and the transfer and sale of the Abu Dhabi government's assets.

¹⁷⁰ See QEWCo's official presentation at www.qewc.com/qewc/en/index.php/about-us (last accessed 15/11/2012).

Qatari Emir, Shaykh Khalifa Al-Thani, was a proponent of a classic rentier redistributive system and opposed going ahead with such major reforms¹⁷¹. Despite the institutional framework being ready with the QEWC, no IWPP was implemented in Qatar until after the old Emir was removed from power, by his son, in a palace coup. A few years after¹⁷², emiri law n°10 of July 2000 launched Kahramaa and transferred to it the MEW's responsibilities for water and power production, distribution and billing operations, and enabled the purchase of the MEW's assets to be then resold to companies selected by Kahramaa¹⁷³.

Shall it be concluded from these elements that (*de facto*) heads of the executive or foreign institutions have been initiators of water privatisation dynamics, and that the Emirs were either enablers or reluctant rentier statesmen?

II.2 - Beyond the official roles, who has driven the water governance reforms?

Although the most legally powerful political figure is the Emir - who by constitution and by tradition, has the final say on all issues -, he is not always the most influential figure on specific internal affairs, sometimes a great number of them. The Emirs in Abu Dhabi, Qatar and Kuwait can delegate important prerogatives to the crown prince and/or trusted relatives. As a consequence, aiming at understanding the influence of only an Emir over the development of sector policies could be totally misleading. This could eventually result in attributing by default drivers of change to other factors - e.g. to structural ones or to the

¹⁷¹ See Fromherz (2012, chap. 5); Danna Harman (2007a), [Christian Science Monitor](#), March 5, 2007.

¹⁷² The delay between Shaykh Hamad's 1995 rise to power and the 2000 key reforms can arguably be attributed to the gain in stability and the end of the claims to leadership from the deposed Emir and his allies (i.e. some local factions domestically and the Saudis externally), and a sufficient stability after first years when elements of his foreign policy seemed unpopular among Qataris. Al-Rumaihi (1996) argued that Shaykh Hamad's overture towards the Americans and – during the 1990s peace process – towards the Israelis, was deeply resented in Qatar. However Rumaihi does not provide any hard evidence of it nor details of the extent of what seems a credible yet unproven phenomenon.

¹⁷³ NB: given the limited institutionalization and transparency of Qatar until the past decade, the literature on its utility sector is poorly informed and regularly erroneous. For instance the Global Water Intelligence's article 'The Qatari drive for privatisation', Vol 1, Issue 8 (August 2000) is misleading and factually wrong: for instance the QEWC (created in 1990 and which serves as a commercial framework for IWPPs) is mistaken with the regulator, off-taker and distributor Kahramaa (created a decade later, in July 2000). Field interviews and official sources proved to be more reliable sources.

political culture - while the rational agency of another top political figure may have actually been decisive.

Political decision-making in Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait is shared among a limited ruling elite from the three ruling families (Fromherz, 2012; Herb, 1999; Lienhardt, 2001; Ulrichsen, 2008). The rule of the Emirs cannot be safe without a minimum of support and cooperation from different factions of the ruling family (Herb, 1999), particularly among the Emir's close relatives. In some cases, as in Qatar today, these influential circles can include the ruler's spouse (Rugh, 2007; Fromherz, 2012). However, there is an asymmetry of power between and among all the members of the top ruling elite, the degree of which differs from a ruler to another and is due to family clans' and factions' collective strategies as well as individual members' charisma and individual agency.

By the late 1980s, a leadership pattern emerged and seemed to be broadly shared by Abu Dhabi, Qatar, and to a lesser extent Kuwait. The aging Emirs¹⁷⁴ - none of whom were opposed by any elected parliament then - delegated major powers over domestic affairs to the crown princes. In the first half of the 1990s, all three crown princes were equally serving as heads of the government¹⁷⁵, and tried to deal with possible reforms as mentioned above.

In Abu Dhabi and Qatar, the then Emir Shaykh Zayed Al-Nahyan and Emir Shaykh Khalifa Al-Thani, who had begun to delegate powers over internal affairs in the 1970s to their respective elder sons, were significantly aged, reportedly ill and/or not willing to be in charge of internal affairs during the 1990s¹⁷⁶, a time during which both external and internal affairs

¹⁷⁴ The Emirs of Abu Dhabi, Kuwait and Doha were respectively Shaykh Zayed Al-Nahyan (born ca. 1918), Shaykh Jaber III Al-Sabah (born in 1926) and Shaykh Khalifa Al-Thani (born in 1932).

¹⁷⁵ I.e. Chief of the executive council in the emirate of Abu Dhabi; Prime Minister in Kuwait; *de facto* head of the government but not *de jure* because in Qatar only the Emir was Head of State and Head of Government, according to the 1970 Constitution. This was changed with the 2003 constitution.

¹⁷⁶ All recent press sources for both Abu Dhabi (e.g. APS RGMT, 2009) and Qatar (e.g. Danna Harman, Christian Science Monitor, 2007a) converge with the few academic ones that mention this point (for Abu Dhabi, e.g. Gibert, Maraut, Telle, 2005, p.58; for Qatar, e.g. Fromherz, 2012, chap. 5).

were very demanding¹⁷⁷. The Emirs remained the Heads of State and officially represented the country abroad when possible until the official end of their reign: 1995 in Qatar and 2004 in Abu Dhabi. Until then, the new generation of crown princes were in charge of running and slowly adapting the state apparatus¹⁷⁸, which had overall kept on growing since independence, as touched upon in chapter 8.

III – Different rationalities of the 1990s and 2000s elites ruling over internal affairs

This section will show that Kuwait's Prime Minister in the 1990s was not able and probably not even willing to reform and privatize the urban water sector, while on the other hand, Qatar' and Abu Dhabi's younger Prime Ministers, very influential over internal affairs, were eager to reform the urban water services as part of what could be seen as an expensive welfare state in times of weak oil revenues.

III.1 - The influence of generational change on water governance reforms

Peterson's (2001) political analysis of the GCC rulers highlighted the radically different approaches between the "old" and "young" generations. Although this was produced before the succession in Abu Dhabi, this proves useful to understand the role of the latter in promoting water reforms and of the former in trying to avoid it:

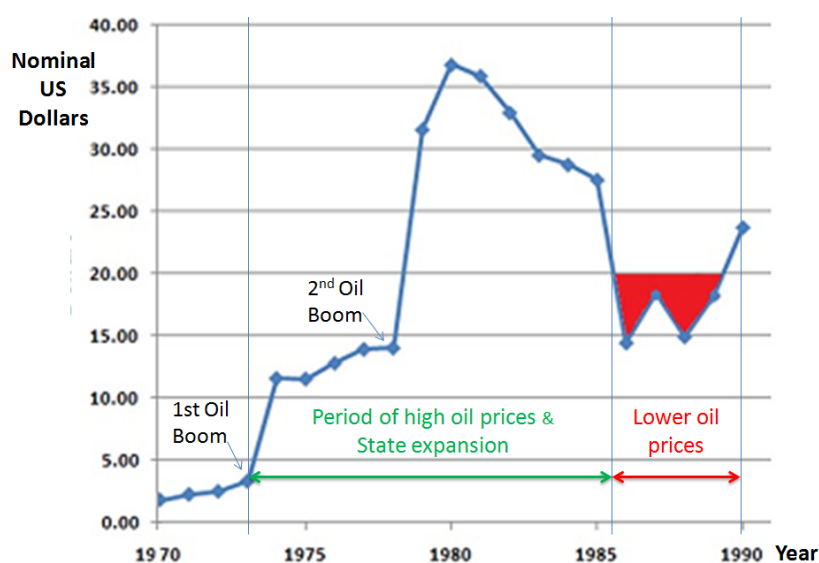
"The older [GCC] rulers were traditionally educated with earlier careers in administrative appointments. Their guiding principles may summed up as building and maintaining consensus, both within their families and throughout their society. The two Hamads [of Bahrain and Qatar], on the other hand, are products of British military education, have served in or supervised their countries' military establishments, and came to maturity in the years after the oil price revolution of the 1970s. They have shown themselves to be reformists rather than maintainers." (Peterson, 2001, p.181)

¹⁷⁷ Among the main crises, risks and challenges of the 1990s figured prominently the 1990 invasion of Kuwait, the 1991 Gulf war, the 1994 civil war in Yemen, the depressed oil prices, the 1997 Asian economic crisis, the 1998 raids over Iraq and risks of escalation and last but not least, the rise of a terror group within and without the Arabian peninsula and later known as al-qaeda.

¹⁷⁸ Both official and independent sources (for Abu Dhabi, e.g. Gibert, Maraut, Telle, 2005, p.58; for Qatar, e.g. Fromherz, 2012, chap. 6) converge on this point too.

Shaykh Khalifa Al-Nahyan (born in 1948) and Shaykh Hamad Al-Thani (born ca. 1952), i.e. the Abu Dhabi' and Qatar's heads of the executive in the 1990s, also belonged to a reformist generation of crown princes, due to their personal experience. The both of them were in their thirties, with an increasing political role beyond the security apparatus, when oil prices became low during the second half of the 1980s as shown on figure 21 below.

Figure 21: Boom and bust of the crude oil yearly price average (1970 – 1990), a GCC perspective



Laurent A. Lambert. Source: BP Statistical Review of World Energy 2010.

They were in their late forties when oil prices fell very low during the late 1990s. Then heads of their respective emirate's government for internal affairs, they were in charge of maintaining as much as possible the welfare state for the Nationals while limiting the overall welfare cost on the State budget. In the 1990s both states had to partly rely on their investments abroad to finance the annual budgets. It appears relatively logical that the two crown princes reappraised to which extent their state budget - and with it the regime's stability - owed to the foreign private sector.

The mid- to late-1980s and mid- to late-1990s economic downturns appear to have durably influenced the leadership of the two crown princes. In the case of Shaykh Hamad Al-

Thani, he declared in 2009 to a foreign journalist that he had kept in mind the fall in oil prices decades before and prepared Qatar accordingly.

Die SPIEGEL: Your Highness, Qatar's economy may grow another 13 percent in 2009, and your people, with a per capita income of €72,000 Euros, are one of the richest in the world. Are people in Qatar even noticing the fact we are currently experiencing a worldwide economic crisis?

Hamad: Of course we feel this. Within one year the price of oil fell from almost \$150 per barrel to less than \$50. This limits our ambitions. But I expected the price of oil to go down one day because we already suffered from this after 1973. When the oil price went up [during the 1970s] we became so rich. People bought a lot of things and they travelled every summer. Then the oil price went down [in the mid-1980s and 1990s] and everything shrank. Since then, I have sought to avoid letting this happen again.

Source: 'Interview with the Emir of Qatar', Spiegel, 29/03/2009.¹⁷⁹

On the one hand, the government of Qatar, under Shaykh Hamad, seriously committed itself to limit the growth of the welfare state's expenditure. Concerning the specific power and water sector, the Kahramaa recorded that *"(f)rom the late 1980's to early 1990's, oil prices slumped on the world market leading to less oil revenue, decreasing the [Qatari State] investments in the development of the country infrastructure projects, and resulted to instability in the electricity system"*¹⁸⁰. On the other, Shaykh Hamad's government worked on the diversification of the economy with an increased participation of the private sector, both domestic and foreign, as touched upon in chapter 7 concerning the development of the gas industry. Shaykh Hamad chose to do so with a younger generation of elites, opened to more liberal ideas than his father's generation, and with factions from the tribal elite willing to implement such reforms.

¹⁷⁹ Quote from 'Interview with the Emir of Qatar: 'We Are Coming to Invest'', Spiegel, 29/03/2009, available at www.spiegel.de/international/world/spiegel-interview-with-the-emir-of-qatar-we-are-coming-to-invest-a-616130.html (last accessed 13/11/2012).

¹⁸⁰ Kahramaa website, History, Available at: www.km.com.qa/en/corporate/about%20us/corporateinformation/pages/history.aspx (last accessed 16/11/2012)

In 1990, Shaykh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani named his younger cousin Shaykh Hamad Bin Jassim Al-Thani Minister of Water and Electricity¹⁸¹, and created, that same year, the QEWC as an institution to develop the first IWPPs, as already evoked. All sources – academic, diplomatic and journalistic - converge however to say that the then Qatari Emir Shaykh Khalifa Al-Thani was in favour of little reform. No privatisation was indeed processed, and only a few thousand foreign civil servants in Qatar lost their jobs in the public administration to alleviate the State's structural budgetary deficit. The situation in the mid-1990s was characterized by a rentier state mismanagement that Prime Minister Shaykh Hamad was not authorized to fully reform but rather to administer as best as possible. In his 1994 economic review of the region, Naaoush explained the structural issue: *“(t)he deficits of the budget and the balance of payments is covered by the revenues from investments abroad realized overall by the company of the son of the Emir”* (Naaoush, 1994, p.27).

A straightforward-thinking man, well aware of the need for reforms and of the critical need of private financing to develop the country's infrastructures and vast but untapped offshore gas reserves, the then Qatari Crown prince Shaykh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani took over the leadership of Qatar in a palace coup in 1995, while his father was abroad. Shaykh Hamad then nominated younger technocrats to key posts. This included his younger cousin Shaykh Hamad Bin Jassim Al-Thani, whom he had placed at the head of the Ministry of Water and Electricity a few years before, to the post of Prime Minister to finally implement the deep reforms. The State services (water, electricity, but also education and health) were not free anymore to foreigners, and by 1999 the latter began to receive their first metered water bills. The new desalination plant that same year was developed by the QEWC as a public-private partnership and as an international joint venture. Since then, almost all new large desalination plants in Qatar have been Independent Water & Power Producers (IWPPs).

¹⁸¹ See Shaykh Hamad Bin Jassim Al-Thani's short biography made by the Brookings Institution at: www.brookings.edu/~media/events/2006/2/18islamic%20world/20060218bios.pdf (last accessed 20/11/2012)

They are fuelled by - and dependent on - the natural gas reserves that have been also developed by PPPs with foreign private companies.

In Abu Dhabi, the situation was initially different since the then Emir Shaykh Zayed authorized a number of reforms during the times of low oil prices: making non-citizens pay a water bill (at that time a cross-subsidised flat rate), the purchase of cheaper foreign natural gas as fuel supplies for water and power cogeneration (as seen in chapter 6) and the growing participation of the private sector to the whole economy. When Shaykh Khalifa proposed a participation of the private sector to the desalination industry based on the above-mentioned 1994 detailed feasibility studies, Shaykh Zayed accepted it and less than two years after signed the Decision No.1 of 1996 to create the Privatisation Committee for the Water & Electricity Sector (PCWES). Its official aims reflected PM Shaykh Khalifa's culture of state management: restructuring the water and power industry; recovering lost economic efficiencies; encouraging private sector investment; developing employment opportunities for Nationals; reducing costs to consumers and maximizing returns from the sale of government-owned assets.

The Privatisation Committee then heavily involved foreign consultants during almost two years to prepare detailed recommendations to formulate plans and recommend legislation to carry out the legal aspects of the privatisation. In due time, the Emir of Abu Dhabi Shaykh Zayed passed the Law No. 2 of 1998 which established the ADWEA, and an Emiri Decree to form its Board of Management under the chairmanship of his other reformist son, Shaykh Diab bin Zayed Al Nahyan. The latter supervised the development of all IWPPs under Build Own Operate (BOO) contracts with major international companies in the field. He remained Chairman from 1999 to 2010; by then, 95% of the desalinated water production of Abu Dhabi had become produced by the IWPPs. While Shaykh Khalifa has always avoided the media,

his younger brother, Shaykh Diab, expressed transparently the aims of Abu Dhabi with its IWPPs during the privatisation process, a few years ago:

"We have gained huge benefits from the sell-off of these five IWPPs. Earlier, we used to heavily subsidize the electricity and water to the consumers (...). Now, with greater production efficiencies achieved by the handing over of these companies to the private sector, we have managed to achieve our desired objectives by diverting budget outlays to other areas instead of spending on subsidies." He added: "We have increased our water and power producing capacities without burdening the government budget¹⁸². This is what we wanted to achieve."

Source: Ford, N. et A. Darwish, *UAE opts for power sector partnerships*, The Middle East Magazine, n° 364, February 2006, p.45.

The fact that it was the Abu Dhabi Prime Minister Shaykh Khalifa who was driving the 1990s and early 2000s reforms (implemented by his brother Shaykh Diab) and not the then Emir Shaykh Zayed is supported by the major reforms Shaykh Khalifa undertook right after becoming Emir of Abu Dhabi in November 2004. The month after, the new Emir Shaykh Khalifa significantly reduced the size of Abu Dhabi's government (the Executive Council) by reducing the number of departments and non-citizen civil servants (APS RGMT, 2009), contracting out a series of urban services to the private sector and pursuing his strategy of public private partnerships for major utilities in new sectors, as for the sewage waters for instance. To underline the ideological nature of such reforms, it is important to notice that it happened during the 2002-2008 period of high to very high oil prices and state revenues. There was no budget pressure due to the economic environment. In Abu Dhabi as in Doha, the privatisation of the desalinated water governance was essentially political, and the political realization of a reformist generation of ruling elites. In Kuwait however, the situation of the 1990s and 2000s ruling elite was significantly different.

¹⁸² This press article mentions that by early 2006, ADWEA had received over Dh35bn from the first four IWPPs.

III.2 - Kuwait's issue of leadership in the 1990s and early 2000s

In Kuwait the political situation differed from Abu Dhabi and Qatar on three main points. First, the 1990 invasion by Iraq provoked a major crisis of the ruling bargain and threatened the Al Sabah rule as mentioned in the previous chapter. Second, unlike his counterparts in Abu Dhabi and Doha, the Kuwaiti Emir could not be distant at all from the running of political affairs after the Gulf War, not least due to the reinvigorated parliamentary opposition to the Al-Sabah family's pre-invasion monopoly over politics. During and after the war, the Emir Shaykh Jaber held many consultations with and concessions to Kuwaiti opposition members, trying to re-establish his personal legitimacy as the country's ruling Head of State. A third difference with Abu Dhabi and Qatar was that the Kuwaiti Prime Minister during the 1990s was not a young and reformist political figure who could gradually take over a growing share of the Emir's burden.

The Kuwaiti Crown Prince and Prime Minister from 1978 was Shaykh Saad Al-Sabah who was born during the inter-war period ca. 1930 like the Emir. Around twenty years older than his counterparts of Abu Dhabi and Qatar, the Kuwaiti Head of the Cabinet was not only from another generation, but he was even in very poor health¹⁸³. When the Emir Shaykh Jaber passed away in 2006, the Crown Prince Shaykh Saad was so sick that he remained the new Emir for only nine days before being impeached by the Parliament on 23 January 2006¹⁸⁴. During the 1990s and early 2000s, the leadership of Kuwait was either unable or maybe unwilling to implement the water privatisations it had announced following its 1991 liberation. The change in leadership in 2006 re-launched Kuwait's difficult process of privatisation.

¹⁸³ When the Emir Shaykh Jaber passed away in 2006, his former Prime Minister became Emir for only nine (9) days before being deposed by the Kuwaiti National Assembly for health reasons. See BBC, 'Former emir dies in Kuwait City', 13/05/2008, available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7399438.stm (last accessed 15/11/2012).

¹⁸⁴ BBC News, Kuwait Profile, Emir: Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmed al-Jaber al-Sabah, available at: www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-14646835 (accessed 19/11/2012).

The current Emir Sabah is also old (born in 1929) yet more resolute concerning privatisations than his two predecessors. Since he inherited a particularly unfavorable political situation¹⁸⁵, his approach towards water privatisation has been relatively low-profile compared to Abu Dhabi and Doha, without major announcements, but with continuous work with a dedicated Prime Minister. Both of them have a professional background in diplomacy, as was reflected in their political strategy.

The current Emir's 2006-2011 Prime Minister Shaykh Nassir Al-Sabah (born in 1940), was over 10 years younger and in better health than the previous long-standing Prime Minister, Shaykh Saad. More importantly maybe, he had decided to push the privatisation agenda with more diplomatic skills and non-confrontational methods: he co-opted a few key neoliberal Islamists and liberal technocrats of the sector¹⁸⁶ and resolutely lobbied the parliamentarians (there is currently an investigation over the corruption of MPs by his Cabinet¹⁸⁷) to pass pro-privatisation legislations. In 2008, less than two years after his nomination, the parliament eventually passed a law for the development of Build Operate & Transfer contracts¹⁸⁸, a possible legal basis for the water PPPs. In 2010, he managed – in a controversial manner¹⁸⁹ – to make a number of MPs and his ministers pass the privatisation law. The following year he issued the first call of interest for Kuwait's first IWPP that pro-privatisation advocates had been preparing for almost two decades, as seen in the previous

¹⁸⁵ As seen in chapter 9, the opposition has been winning the majority of the parliamentary seats almost continuously since 1992 elections. The Emir Sabah Al-Sabah's first Prime Minister, Shaykh Nassir (born 1940), had to resign several times to avoid being grilled by opposition MPs. He was five times reestablished Prime Minister by the Emir until November 26th 2011.

¹⁸⁶ As seen in chapter 9, the Islamist Shatti, a leading figure of the Islamic Constitutional Movement, was 'embedded' in the Prime Minister Nassir's Diwan, and interviewee Suhaila Al-Marafi explained how she was working with them to slowly overcome the Parliament's "*populist*" elements to advance the privatisation plans.

¹⁸⁷ Kuwait MPs seek to unseat Kuwait PM, 09/12/2009, Aljazeera, Available at:

www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2009/12/200912813429353807.html (accessed 19/11/2012)

¹⁸⁸ The law n°7 of 2008 for regulation of build, operate and transfer (BOT) is available at:

[http://en.mof.gov.kw/Desicions/Decree/PDF/Law\(7\)_2008.pdf](http://en.mof.gov.kw/Desicions/Decree/PDF/Law(7)_2008.pdf) (accessed 19/11/2012)

¹⁸⁹ As above mentioned, the 2010 privatisation law was passed with the 15 votes of the Prime Minister-appointed members of the Cabinet, while a majority of (elected) MPs had rejected it.

chapter. But his pro-privatisation position made him the target of the opposition and he had to resign several times over his five years of battle with the opposition to avoid being grilled.

The following and current Prime Minister of Kuwait, Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah continued to pursue this privatisation dynamic and sent out a call for proposals a second IWPP to be made in Kuwait. Since then however, the chaotic political situation in Kuwait has led the Emir to dissolve the parliament and to call for new elections. In the meanwhile, budgets to implement the IWPPs remain to be voted. This may not be easy, since the main desire of most stakeholders for Kuwait today is not economic overture anymore, but political stability.

Conclusions

The gradual liberalisation, privatisation and opening of the water sector to foreign stakeholders in Abu Dhabi and Doha reflect a paradigmatic shift from the post-independence ruling bargain. The ruling elites then tried to legitimize and secure their recent regimes with policies of hydraulic modernization, water self-sufficiency, demonstration of the State's capacity and the Emir's great generosity for all (Crystal, 1995; Gibert et al., 2005; Heard-Bey, 2005). With the 1990s-2000s privatisations of the urban water services, the reformist leadership of both Shaykh Khalifa in Abu Dhabi and Shaykh Hamad in Qatar aim at limiting the costs to the rentier state and at integrating the private sector into the development of a growing post-rentier economy. This one should not be conceived as a complete departure from rentierism, but as an intermediary political economic paradigm, mediating the transition from pure rentierism (as in the 1970s and 1980s) to a liberalized economy, as envisaged in the above-mentioned long term plans preparing the development of a knowledge economy.

In Kuwait by contrast, the various figures of the top ruling elite proved unable or unwilling to develop IWPPs despite some declarations in that sense; they were also unable to

reign in the National Assembly that has now become the actual driver of a no-reform agenda for the urban water services, in order to protect its rentier advantages.

This dichotomy between on the one hand the reformed Qatari and Emirati urban water sectors of Shaykh Hamad and Shaykh Khalifa, and on the other hand the preserved post-independence model of water governance under an aged Kuwaiti leadership proves that Peterson's (2001) analysis of the major role of age/generation and education in determining the "*maintainer*" or "*reformist*" inclination of GCC leaders seems very relevant, at least concerning our three case studies. But the circumstances of accession to important responsibilities by the top political elites as well as their political philosophies are arguably as important. In both Abu Dhabi and Qatar, the personal experience of managing governmental affairs during boom and bust oil economic cycles and the personal convictions of the Prime Ministers concerning the need of neoliberal economic reforms are two reasons why the 1990s of Abu Dhabi and Doha have initiated the transformation of their respective water and electricity sector as soon as they were able to do so.

Finally, and despite trends converging towards the norms of the 'international water consensus' and of the 'effective water governance' concept (participation of the private sector, increased transparency, an emphasis put on effectiveness, etc.), this chapter has shown that the urban water sector of the small GCC states can be steered by - and in the case of Abu Dhabi and Doha, even reshaped by – the agency of a determined leader from the top ruling elite, with or without any agreement from the consumers. In Abu Dhabi and Doha, the power concentration enabled resolute leaders of a younger generation (Khalifa in Abu Dhabi and Hamad in Qatar) to be the main drivers of change of their capital city's water governance. This prime importance of the individual agency of key political figures in the reform of urban water governance leads to several conclusions that the final discussion will now address.

Final Discussion

Reappraising the drivers of and barriers to the privatisations of the local desalinated water governance in rentier and tribal monarchies:

The contrasted cases of Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City

During the second half of the 20th century, the rapidly growing world population increasingly established itself in large cities, leading not only to a great pressure on local freshwater resources but also to a rapid rise of desalination for drinking purposes (WHO, 2011). The coastal cities of the GCC regions, due to their arid environments and large energy reserves available, are the ones that have been relying the most on desalination for urban water supply in the world since independence. Although their post-independence statist model of desalinated water governance has enabled the access to improved water supply to all their city-dwellers and a remarkable social-economic development in only a few decades, several GCC capital cities – such as Abu Dhabi and Doha - have nevertheless privatised their desalinated water sector in the late 1990s and 2000s. This research investigated the drivers of and barriers to these privatisations in the desalinated water services of the GCC coastal cities; more precisely, the study looked at the development of PPPs for desalination in Abu Dhabi and Doha and investigated the reasons behind their absence in Kuwait City.

The first section of this concluding chapter aims to draw together the findings of this research with its conceptual framework, and to propose broader conclusions concerning desalinated water governance, its nature and drivers of change in oil rentier cities. The second section will highlight the limitations of this research, while the third section will present the theoretical implications and policy applications of this research. The fourth and final section will propose directions for future research.

I – Drivers and barriers to change in the desalinated water governance of Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City: research findings in their conceptual framework

This research has provided several new findings and this section will present our most important empirical and theoretical findings through four conceptual points. After having explained the complex dynamics of water privatisation in the GCC capital cities, it will expose the agency of local political cultures and the critical importance of the nature of the local institutional milieu in enabling or blocking privatisations in rentier tribal societies. In a third section, it will expose the cyclical nature of the fundamental reforms in the freshwater supply governance of Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City and what it reveals about these politics and their drivers of change. The fourth and last section will explicate the paradox of the political nature of desalinated water governance in rentier countries.

I.1 - Drivers and barriers to desalination privatisation: the limited influence of foreign structural factors and the politics of rational actors

In line with a significant amount of literature that claims that water governance is fundamentally political, that it is essentially about political decision-making and thus better explained by politics (e.g. Bakker, 2010; Castro, 2007; Franks, 2004; Norman and Bakker, 2009; Reis, 2008; Rogers and Hall, 2003), this research has shown that – despite their monarchical and rentier regimes - the GCC cities are good examples of this theoretical point. The research has exposed the critical importance of a younger and reformist coalition of top ruling elites in Abu Dhabi and Doha that had initiated and implemented the dynamic of water privatisations by installing a coalition of new technocrats and managers (mostly relatives of the same generation) at key places while making the first institutional arrangements for PPPs.

Though the state remains the main actor of the sector, the reformist key actors followed a coherent strategy underlined by a neoliberal rationale. In developing IWPPs, they aimed to benefit from private financing to increase their domestic desalination capacities and to liberalize the economy to create a more durable, post-rentier economy, less dependent on

government revenues and less vulnerable to oil's boom and bust cycles, as reflected in the long-term development plans. This supports Budds' (2005) conclusion that water privatization, in Latin America and the Global South, is instrumental in lubricating the broader neoliberal project of a reformist ruling elite. This overture of the cogeneration sector to private and foreign actors has for instance enabled a regional energy integration so that cheaper gas and electricity supplies can support the local co-generation sectors as well as the development of the broader industrial sector. Regional integration has in turn affected the local governance of desalination in Abu Dhabi and Doha by adding a new scale of governance to the local one and by further integrating networks of foreign and private actors in the governance.

This decisive agency of a reformist elite in Abu Dhabi and Doha confirms with empirical evidence the limited literature on the critical importance of generational change among the top ruling elites as a catalyst for change in political philosophy and major governance reforms in rentier political systems (Peterson, 2001; Wright, 2006). In contrast with Abu Dhabi and Doha, the agency of an older generation of leaders in Kuwait in the 1990s was undeniably not that of a driver of change. This top ruling elite had participated in the emergence and maturation of the rentier state apparatus and after the 1990-1991 disaster, it responded to critics by reestablishing Kuwait's elected parliament – which eventually became the strongest barrier to water governance reforms – and by enhancing its rentier redistributive strategy with highly subsidised urban services.

The thesis has thus exposed that the drivers of change towards the water privatisation in Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City were not structural drivers as advanced by the general literature on drivers of change (e.g. Booth, Cammack et al, 2006; DFID, 2004; ODI, 2007; Tortajada, 2010). It has more specifically demonstrated that the 1990s low oil prices were not the key and decisive drivers towards water PPPs in the GCC capital cities, contrary to the

assumption of the literature on privatisations in the GCC (i.e. Ford, 2002; Luciani, 1994) and commodity-dependent countries (e.g. Al-Rumaihi, 1996; Hunter, 1986; Karl, 1997; Roberts, 1987; Sick, 1998). There was little time correlation and no direct causality between low oil prices and the implementation of PPPs in any of the three cities. Structural factors such as low oil revenues, regional energy integration for low-cost gas supplies, the need of FDIs and foreign technologies to diversify the economy and develop new facilities have probably played a role as incentives towards privatisation reforms in the GCC; yet they were not critical drivers of change and were not sufficient forces of change to lead to PPPs in Kuwait.

I.2 – Agency of the local political cultures and major role of the institutional milieus

This thesis has shown that the complex dynamics of the local political cultures in Abu Dhabi and Doha have overall supported and enabled the market-oriented reforms of the desalination sector. These reforms have benefitted from an increasingly favorable sentiment for free market economics, particularly growing among professionals of the cogeneration sector and among practicing urban Sunni Muslims over the past two decades. This “*pious neoliberalism*” (Atia 2011) that supports privatisations has supplanted the older Arab nationalist dogma that promoted full sovereignty over the nation’s resources and infrastructures, and the development of a strong, modern and monopolistic State for the development of the country.

This cultural paradigmatic shift has allegedly affected the views of the town-dwellers, the Hadaris more in comparison to the Eastern Arabian Badus who have traditionally been less exposed to and influenced by foreign ideological currents. The 1992 reestablishment of the Kuwaiti parliament led to a tumultuous semi-democratic political life in Kuwait where the opposition represents a majority, and where rent redistribution is not renegotiable according to powerful factions and coalitions of key actors, most particularly the tribal MPs. The latter

have consistently stood against market-oriented reforms – including that of the desalination sector – as it was felt that it could jeopardize the rentier (private) interests of their respective tribal constituency.

The thesis has also shown that in Abu Dhabi and Doha however, urban tribal politics could not constitute such a barrier since the local tribal elites have never been empowered or enfranchised through any meaningful elected body.¹⁹⁰ Instead, the ruling elites have always kept the negotiations with the tribes into their pre-modern and personal institutions of consultation, the *majlis* (the open but semi-formal tribal space) and the *diwan* (the formal but closed office). There, the leadership of Abu Dhabi and Doha has continuously distributed benefits such as prestigious posts to loyal tribal leaders and their close family - along more general rentier benefits such as free water services to the Nationals - in exchange of their tribe's complete support of the top ruling elite's policies. The rational choice by the ruling families of Abu Dhabi and Qatar of these semi-modernized institutions for political bargain has made them the capital cities' central institutional milieus, i.e. the complexes of “*political and governmental arrangements that mediate the interactions among the structural context, political culture, and political actors*”, as defined by DiGaetano and Strom (2003). This form of semi-modernized tribal governance has ensured for the reformist top ruling elite that the market-oriented reforms could emerge with no significant political opposition to it, the local native populations of Abu Dhabi and Doha being essentially Badu.

This means that in Doha and Abu Dhabi the top ruling elites have not only initiated the reform process in the early 1990s and then supervised it when dominating the ruling elite as Emir, but they have also maintained the tribal politics into institutional milieus that could only accept their reforms. These institutional milieus had been specifically crafted by the previous

¹⁹⁰ The Federal National Council in the UAE has no authority over the emirate of Abu Dhabi's internal affairs, water sector included, nor has Doha's elected municipal council any authority over desalinated water supply, within or without the capital city.

generation of rulers for a rentier and tribal governance in times of modern politics; but it was their heirs, the reformist younger rulers of Abu Dhabi and Doha, that have intentionally sustained these pre-modern institutional milieus and used the tribal and rentier institutions as levers to be able to process their economic reforms.

With a reconstruction of the modern history of freshwater supply in Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City, this research has also highlighted that their local water governance models had radically changed several times since the late 19th century. There was no old tradition of a state-led water sector. In fact, the growth of the State in this sector was linked to the context of the post-WW2 state-building period and of the post-independence statist approach to development, then promoted by the political influences of Arab nationalism and the late British imperialism. The first one has lost the remnants of its influence with the 1991 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait; the second influence radically transformed itself after the 1970s and began to support privatisations of utilities, particularly through PPPs in the 1990s and 2000s. This influence from the British experience in the post-independence governance of urban services over the GCC elites became fully apparent in the reform process when the Kuwaiti authorities directly hired former Prime Minister Tony Blair to prepare a blueprint for Kuwait's long term economic development. His ideas of a more liberal economy were praised by the then Prime Minister, but so far it has been rejected by the tribal opposition along with all other initiatives to reform the cornerstone of Kuwait's modern political culture, the redistributive rentier state.

I.3 - The cyclical nature of the water governance reforms in Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City's freshwater supply governance

In Abu Dhabi and Doha, the desalination sector has gradually become dependent on international joint-ventures to function in an increasingly comparable manner to the period when the water markets of Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait depended on international

companies' water boats to be supplied with water from other Gulf countries. Today, with large and international private actors and smaller local share-owners being share-holders of the IWPPs, there is indeed a return to the pre-WW2 model of water governance, characterized by a variety of local and international private actors, functioning in interdependent networks of water boats and salesmen at the port and in the city. This renewed dependence of the arid cities of Abu Dhabi and Doha does not stop at a reliance on some networks of local and foreign actors. In the most privatised of these water sectors, that of Abu Dhabi, piped foreign natural gas has arguably replaced foreign water resources as the indispensable foreign commodity for the cities' freshwater supply.

Ironically, desalination –despite its cost - had initially been developed in the Gulf monarchies to increase the local water supply, make the water sector self-sufficient and stop local water dependence from abroad. Today, it is the quest for cheaper energy supplies for water and power cogeneration that has led polities such as Abu Dhabi, but also Dubai, Oman and Kuwait to aspire to energy imports from Qatar, thereby making their desalination sector dependent on a foreign country along with an international network of actors.

Since the 19th century and despite identical environmental conditions of extreme natural freshwater scarcity, some GCC coastal cities have indeed shifted from private to public and to private again, similarly to some European cities such as Bordeaux or London. The British experience in water privatisation and the use of PPPs seem to have significantly inspired the reformist leadership, probably as much as their predecessors had been at the time of the construction of the modern welfare state. This shows first that there is no aridity driver towards a unique system of urban water governance and that the 'hollowing out' trends of the State in terms of responsibility can be followed, similarly to the British experience, by dynamics of 'filling in' and vice-versa. This indicates also that the participation of the private

sector in the GCC as elsewhere, does not constitute an irreversible sovereignty loss, but a contextualized policy led by a leadership currently inspired by a neoliberal vision.

I.4 – The paradox of the political nature of desalinated water governance in the GCC region

Water is not only a source of life and wealth, but also a key indicator of how a society develops, organizes itself, and - through its management and governance- of many norms, values and political cultural elements that characterize it. But desalinated water governance is unique. Because its resource is mainly manufactured from a sustainable resource, namely, sea water, it can avoid being limited to a zero-sum game in terms of allocation, provided the desalination plants receive sufficient energy supplies. And Qatar, Abu Dhabi and Kuwait have very large reserves of energy. Furthermore, water appears as a political ‘non-issue’ to most consumers in the three cities (everyone has access to low-cost drinking water). This thesis has shown nevertheless that desalinated water governance has never been depoliticized, and that some fundamental issues at the core of any water governance model remains: the hydraulic assets control (by which actors?); the infrastructures’ cost to the owner(s) (how much should be invested to cope with the growing demand?); and the price to the consumers (who should pay what and how much of it?). To this, should be added an issue of extreme importance in desalinated water governance, the norms and values deciding the governance of the energy resources.

Chapter 7 has shown that with desalination, the water sector transfers fundamental governance issues to the energy sector, particularly in terms of allocation. Should it aim first at developing domestic water and power cogeneration, even if it penalizes the national export? Should the domestic consumption be heavily subsidised, thereby increasing the opportunity cost? Abu Dhabi, Doha and Qatar have traditionally answered positively to these two questions due to their rentier paradigm. Should this aim at economic efficiency first with

energy allocation reduced and subsidies phased out? Should it aim at sustainability with only gas-fuelled combined cycle and nuclear energy-powered RO technology? Any attempt at reforming the desalinated water services governance produces a competition among different values to provide answers to these issues, particularly energy issues. A major paradox of the desalinated urban water governance however is that few people care about its functioning, but its reform can be extremely political. This is desalinated water politics.

II – Limitations and shortcomings of this research

This thesis has shown that the individual agency of both Abu Dhabi and Doha's reformist leaders constituted the decisive drivers of change towards PPPs in the 1990s and 2000s. However, it cannot be extrapolated from this that all structural changes in these local desalinated water governance models during that period were due to the rational agency of a leader. Nor can it be concluded that these leaders would be powerful enough to reverse this trend and return to a previous State monopoly or follow the recent international trend of remunicipalization (see Pigeon, McDonald et al., 2012; Hall, 2012; Hall and Lobina, 2013). In both the GCC and the UK, since the modern municipal water sector has been privatised, it has never been re-municipalized or re-nationalized.

The research of all three dimensions of analysis was the theoretical framework used to analyze the drivers of privatisation reforms in desalinated water governance. But the rational/institutional agency approach is finally less expounded in the thesis than the other two. There are two reasons for this unbalance. Firstly, the concerned individuals could not be interviewed, and secondly, there is also relatively little written with sufficient rigor on the personal history, values or vision of the current rulers of Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City. Most written works on them are either hagiographies produced by state institutions or (GCC) State-paid 'independent' writers or journalistic, by which is meant non peer-reviewed productions lacking a bibliography, elements of information on the sources and the

methodology. It is unclear whether such essays rely on the above-mentioned hagiographies produced by local authorities, and whether they verify their information. All these elements explain why one cannot venture into the personal histories of the top ruling elites, and one has to limit one's investigation instead to well established facts, and to investigate correlations.

Concerning the structural factors, a major emphasis has been put on the effect of the low oil prices (over-estimated by the literature) on the financial capacities of Abu Dhabi, Qatar and Kuwait to sustain their respective welfare state. Yet there too, a dearth of information has to be acknowledged. Until the past decade, transparency was an official goal only in the State of Kuwait, because of its Parliament. There is limited information on the sovereign wealth funds (SWFs) of Abu Dhabi and Qatar during the 1990s, and no information available at all on the remuneration of the members of the ruling families at that time. Yet both the SWFs and financial allocations to the ruling family members constitute significant adjustment variables for the national budgets. Here too, research investigating in depth the financial situation and other macroeconomic indicators of the GCC states as well as the personal finances of the ruling family's key figures during the 1990s could certainly yield valuable information as to the level of debt of the States and their actual capacities to readjust their finances without any form of privatisation. This could also shed some light on the vested interests that members of the ruling elite had (or did not have) in initiating the privatisation of the water sector. This was a subject we obtained very little information about and which remains to be thoroughly examined.

There are of course inherent limitations to the qualitative methods used to investigate cultural evolutions, such as the spread and influence of Haenni's (2005) "*Islam de marché*" and Atia's (2011) "*pious neoliberalism*". In countries where foreign researchers cannot make large polls to assess the representativeness of some local trends without governmental authorizations (impossible to obtain for a foreign student), anthropological field observations

have been a second-best strategy that does not enable the researcher to assess with precision the extent of an observed phenomenon. Some local scholars found very relevant the above-mentioned literature and hopefully, local researchers will eventually be authorized to assess how widespread is this new trait of the local cultures and how it does affect the local political cultures and the governance of urban services.

Last but not least, the findings on the desalinated water governance of Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City are difficult to generalize: rare are the countries which have at the same time comparable endowments in energy, tribal social structures and so limited natural freshwater resources. But as already evoked, the Arab region displays several cases for which this research can prove useful, e.g. in southern Iraq, Libya, Sudan and Yemen.

III – Theoretical implications and policy applications of the research

III.1 – Theoretical implications

This research provides an original contribution to knowledge in a number of respects:

- It shows that the three main schools of comparative analysis (structural approach, political culture, individual/rational agency) provide complementary information about the urban water governance of different cities and their drivers of change. Researches on drivers of change and/or on water governance should certainly not be limited to structural factors, even in commodity-dependent countries, since it does not reflect the complexity of political dynamics at play in a modern city and can be significantly misleading.
- DiGaetano and Strom's (2003) specific neo-institutionalist integrated approach is thus useful to accurately appreciate the complementarity and respective influences of structural factors, of a political culture and of a leader's individual agency, and to determine which actors and/or institutions drive and which ones hinder change and reforms in specific cases, and not in others despite similar structural conditions.

- This research with three cases from the GCC has empirically shown that DiGaetano and Strom's (2003) integrated framework's proposed sequence of forces leading to change 'structural forces >> political culture >> rational agency' may be misleading in some cases. In the case of the market-oriented reforms of the water services governance in Abu Dhabi and Doha, the main causality sequence was instead 'rational agency >> political culture >> structural forces'. This specific sequence certainly reflects the vast powers vested in the top ruling elite of both polities. In Kuwait by contrast, the post-war rentier, tribal and conflictual political culture has been the dominant and consistent element determining the absence of IWPP. Kuwait's explanatory sequence should thus be considered like 'political culture >> structural analysis (parliamentary blockage for the preservation of the rent redistribution) >> individual agency of a leader (successive adaptation strategies of the ruling elite)'.
- This thesis has shown that changes in the local political cultures in Abu Dhabi and Doha have supported and enabled the market-oriented reforms of the desalination sector, thereby enriching the literature on the drivers of change and the scholarship on water privatisation which give no leading role to the local political cultures and their dynamics, or only that of potential obstacle for/resistance to reforms and privatisations (e.g. Booth, Cammack et al, 2006; McLane, 2012 ; ODI, 2007; Rogers and Hall, 2003).
- The diversity of reactions from the GCC cities to the same structural forces (low oil revenues and growing demands on the welfare state) with in all cases universal access to urban water services and high quality of services being maintained have proved wrong the neoliberal doctrine that 'there is no alternative' but market-led reforms in times of sustained economic hardship. It does emphasize the role of political cultures and political bargaining in institutional change.

- This thesis also shows that in non-democratic or semi-democratic settings, the choice of a specific institutional milieu by the authorities is critical to successfully bargain institutional reforms with the various stakeholders. This is because the institutional milieu determines whether some key actors, structural factors (e.g. the rent) and cultural factors (e.g. the tribal influence) will support the process or will be able to play against it.

III.2 – Policy applications

This research underlines that the study of water politics in the Middle East should not be limited to the difficult resource allocation politics between irrigation for agriculture and the urban demand within a country, or to the hydro-politics of the region's hydrological basins, i.e. the well studied Nile, Jordan and Euphrates-Tigris basins. These are indeed important topics, which should gain in importance given the dramatic depletion of their natural freshwater resources and the expected negative impacts of climate change,¹⁹¹ but social scientists and particularly area studies scholars with insight in rentier and tribal dynamics should further investigate the important issue of urban services and their reforms.

This research has shown that in polities with limited political institutions to publicly voice contradictory ideas or to democratically block an unpopular reform (as in Abu Dhabi or Doha for the time being), the political leader's individual agency remains the main driver of reforms. The apparent modernity of an e-government platform does not replace a Parliament in the making of political modernity, and the pre-modern system of tribal governance does not truly create a form of empowered civil society. Instead, it can even perpetuate networks of patronage that sustain “*old-fashioned leadership dressed up in the garbs of the media and the computer age*” (Baldersheim and Dalloz, 2003). This implies that the international aid/financial institutions which support further integration of the civil society into the decision-making process for a more effective water governance must critically investigate the

¹⁹¹ See Evans (2009); Gao and Giorgi (2008); Drouin and Lambert (2010); Sowers, Vengosh, Weinthal (2011).

nature and dynamics of the institutional milieu where the political bargaining must take place, since an unfavorable one may hinder or block any form of debate and effective participation. Arguably worse, this external support could favor a participation of civil society representatives that could only represent the authorities' directives, while not being able to reflect the private interests of their communities or the preservation of their resources.

Participation alone is not necessarily leading to institutional changes reflecting the sum of collective interests; the critical question must thus remain, 'participation in what'? With newly-elected parliaments in many countries of the MENA region, GCC parliaments gaining new powers and new constitutions being drafted in energy-exporting rentier countries like Egypt, Libya and Syria following the Arab Spring events, this point is of significant importance for the reforms and improvement of the urban water governance in the MENA region and beyond, particularly in rentier countries of the global South.

Another major policy implication of the research findings is that the deeply entrenched private interests of a few stakeholders representing barriers to a communally beneficial institutional change can be overcome or circumvented provided negotiations are situated by the reformists in a favorable institutional milieu, where aid/development organizations or a coalition of local actors for instance can create new incentives to transform the private interest of the few reluctant parties. De-centering governance by resituating its institutional milieu can thus become an important strategy for institutional change and the reforms in urban water governance.

IV - New perspectives for theoretical and applied research

This research is the first comparative research focusing on urban desalinated water governance in the GCC region and there is consequently a large number of perspectives for further research. The following suggestions will be limited to the most directly related ones.

First of all, there is great potential in the further conceptualization of and empirical research on desalinated water governance and its unique features - within or without the GCC-, such as the consequences of its paradigmatic shift from a zero-sum game because of limited natural water resources to a situation where seawater is an unlimited raw material and where energy becomes the main limiting factor.

Of major theoretical importance too is the question of an eventual commodification of seawater or at least a tax proportional to its use. Following the privatisation of the desalination industries and the ideas of rationalization of the sector, the ideas of taxing or charging desalination industries for their seawater intakes as well as the environmental services they may disrupt - directly or indirectly - with their industry is an option that needs to be investigated given the double-digit annual growth of the sector worldwide (WHO, 2011). If in the Gulf region desalination industries that are part of a PPP are still unlikely to be taxed by the GCC governments who are also shareholders (directly or through state-owned corporations), a price for the seawater commodity being used by the private desalination industries owned by the bottled water companies seems a topic worth being developed both theoretically (regarding the ethical dimension and the methods of environmental economics) as well as in applied research. Such research could propose elaborate policies for the concerned authorities in the region and beyond.

There is also a need for other case studies and comparative researches on the urban desalinated water governance in the GCC, especially with non-capital cities. In the case of the latter, it is very likely that the national policies developed may not have been devised to perfectly meet the local needs, contrary to the case of the capital cities. What is the result over them? So far, there is no study at all on the desalinated water governance of secondary but important cities like Jeddah in Saudi Arabia or Salalah in the Sultanate of Oman.

Last but not least, comparisons with other cities, beyond the GCC region, could bring interesting results. Over the past few years, both the USA and Australia have shifted from net natural gas importers to important gas producers. It could be interesting to investigate how this will affect their arid areas' desalination industry and their eventual water governance reforms at the local and federal scales. Such cases could then be compared with coastal cities of gas-endowed states like the UAE or the Sultanate of Oman. This would certainly further highlight the significant role of political culture, locally specific institutions and institutional milieus in the making and remaking of a local model of desalinated water governance.

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Appendix A

Semi-directed interviews with water professionals in Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City

Main themes covered in the interview

The practitioners' perception of

A - The organisation of the water sector

B – The water allocation

C – The liberalisation of the sector

D – The increase of prices?

E - Interviewee's opinions and capacity to participate/influence the policy-making process

Questions (adapted according to the context and interviewees)

A Organisation of the water sector

1 – Can you introduce the purpose and the main goals of [the institution] you work for? [Interviewees' knowledge and perception of the sector]

2 – [For senior staff] what was/were the institution (s) you were working for previously, and its/their purposes?

3 – If changes have to be brought in (e.g. new desalination plants, new technologies, new laws and regulations), where do the ideas come from? Who proposes what?

4 - What is the process through which decisions are made or taken? ... Who decides at the end?

5 - What is the role of the citizens in this process? Are they consulted? What mechanisms are available for them to participate in this process? And the foreign workers/expats, are they consulted?

6 – The population of Abu Dhabi comprises many nationalities and cultures, how do you take this into consideration in your work?

7 - Besides the Minister of Water himself and the Head of ADWEA and EAD, are there people exceptionally influential in the water sector, from inside or outside the water sector? [trying to get formal & informal elements]

8 – What mechanisms of control exist to monitor decision makers and implementers of water policy?

9 – Have you heard of any collaboration between (the institution) and any other GCC institution?

10 - Are there GCC norms or regulations that have to be followed? If yes, how does it affect the water management in Abu Dhabi?

11 – Do you think that changes in the water sector of other countries, including the GCC ones, are observed and taken into consideration for the local water sector? If yes, can you give me an example? Or do you think contrary?

B Water allocation

1 – How is water allocation policy decided, in quantitative terms?
And in qualitative terms (which kind of water for whom?)

2 – Who are the parties involved in deriving water allocation policy? Who is in charge to decide?

3 - Given the future economic development plans, how will water supply and allocation develop over the coming years?

C Liberalisation

1 – In your job, how *concerned/affected* are you by the privatisation of the water sector?

2 – Have you been participating – more or less directly - in the process of privatisation?

3 - Do you think privatisations are positive for (Abu Dhabi)? [Voluntarily vague question] Why?

4 – Who has decided to privatise the water sector in the UAE?

5 – Do you think foreign countries (like the USA, England or France) or international organisations like the IMF and the World Bank have been influential in this process? If yes, to what extent?

6 – Do you think the international context (be it economic or political) has ever influenced the local water sector?

7 – Do you think the consumers are aware of the privatisation process? Do you think they agree?

D Increase of water prices

1 – What do you think of the recent increases of the price of water? [Voluntarily vague question]

2 – What are its causes according to you?

3 – Do you think it is related to the privatisation process?

4 – What do you think is the main goal of these price-increases?

5 - Do you think the Nationals will have to pay their water bills soon? What are the reactions that you expect from these consumers?

(If not mentioned by the interviewee) How do you think it will affect their daily consumption of water?

E Interviewee's ideas and capacity to influence the policy-making process

1 – Why is retreated water not used more abundantly locally? Do you think it should or will increase?

[After the interviewee's answer and if not mentioned] Do you think there are cultural reasons explaining this phenomenon?

2 - How do you think you participate to the process of decision?

3 – Do you think employees of the water sector can influence the decisions taken in the sector?

4 – What do you think of the current organisation of the water management locally?

5 - What would you like to see changing and why?

[Completely opened question]

Basic information on the interviewee

Position:

Nationality:

Age (approximately):

Years lived in [the city]:

Location of the (nuclear) family:

Name:

(For the interviewees who accept to be cited)

Ever worked in or visited any other GCC country?

Appendix B

List of interviews realized in the Gulf region

Abu Dhabi

1st September - 29th November 2008 & 12th - 21st June 2009

Interviews on the social-political, economic and/or historical background

Dr. Khaled Al-Dhahiri, Anthropologist and deputy director and project manager of the new Abu Dhabi National Library, Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage (ADACH), Abu Dhabi: 17th October 2008

Mr. XXX, Department of Municipal Affairs (DMA), Abu Dhabi: 2nd November 2008

Mr. YYY, Director, Department of Municipal Affairs (DMA), Abu Dhabi: 2nd November 2008

Dr. Frauke Heard-Bey, Senior Historian, 'National Centre for Documentation and Research', Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage (ADACH), Abu Dhabi: 20th October 2008

Shaykh Abderrahman, Mufti (Islamic Law Sr. expert), Fatwa Centre, General Authority of Islamic Affairs and Endowments, Abu Dhabi: (meetings in November 2008)

Semi-guided interviews with the cross-country questionnaire

Eng. Mohamed A. Ramahi, Director, Network Services, Abu Dhabi Distribution Company (ADDCO), Abu Dhabi: 11th October 2008

Eng. Jacek Drozd, Engineer, Network Services, Abu Dhabi Distribution Company (ADDCO), Abu Dhabi: 12th October 2008

Fadi Naja, Manager of Water Projects Department, Abu Dhabi Water & Electricity Authority (ADWEA), Abu Dhabi: 18th November 2008

Eng. Mohamed I. Butt, Senior Infrastructure Specialist, Abu Dhabi Water & Electricity Authority (ADWEA), Abu Dhabi: 18th November 2008

Dr. Ahmed M. Helal, Researcher, Water and Power Research Center (WPRC), Abu Dhabi Water and Electricity Authority (ADWEA), Abu Dhabi: 20th November 2008

Anonymity preferred, Regulation & Supervision Bureau (RSB), Abu Dhabi: 21st November 2008

Eng. Mohamed Hajiri, Engineer, Abu Dhabi Water and Electricity Company (ADWEC), Abu Dhabi: 25th November 2008

Eng. Mohamed Dawoud, Engineer, Environmental Agency of Abu Dhabi (EAD), Abu Dhabi: 25th November 2008

Mr. Ismail Khoory, Abu Dhabi Sewerage Services Company (ADSSC), Abu Dhabi: 27th November 2008

Mr. Abdelaziz Ja'ishi, Parks & Recreational Facilities Department (PRFD), Municipality of Abu Dhabi, Abu Dhabi: 6th 27th November 2008

Doha

1st December 2008 - 30th January 2009 & 7th - 12th June 2009

Interviews on the social political, economic or historical background of Doha

Dr. Steven Wright, Assistant Professor, specialist of the politics and international relations of the Gulf region, Qatar University: December 2009

Mohammad Al-Sudani, Secretary, Statistics Authority of Qatar: 4th January 2009

Dr. Abdunnasser, Professor of Anthropology , Qatar University: 12th January 2009

Pr. Muhammad Ali Al-Kubaisi, Professor of Geography and co-writer of the Constitution of Qatar: 12th January 2009

Dr. Andrew Gardner, Assistant Professor of Anthropology, Qatar University: 12th January and 19th January 2009

Dr. Abdullah, Faqih and librarian (i.e islamic law specialist), Library of Doha: 14th January 2009

Mr. Shaykh Abdulaziz Al-Sayid, Anthropologist, Qatar University: 14th January & 21th January 2009.

Mr. Hassan Qassim, Statistician, Qatar Authority for Statistics, Doha: 18th December 2009

Dr. Benno Boer, Director and Environmentalist, UNESCO - GCC: 22nd January 2009

Mr. Shaykh Mohamed Bin Younes, Legal expert, the Ministry of Justice of Qatar: 22nd January 2009

Mr. Ibrahim Syed Jalal, Design Engineer, Retreatment Plant, Stanley Consulting Inc.: 23rd January 2009

Mr. Hussein Idriss, Manager, Ministry of Municipality and Urban Planning (then changing from Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Agriculture): 26th January 2009

Mr. Haji K. V. Abdulla Kutty, Minister's office, Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Agriculture of Qatar:

26th January 2009

Mrs. A. Momeen, Secretary of Fahad Y. Tulefat, Kahramaa: 29th January 2009

Mr. Fahad Yousef Tulefat, Manager, Water Operation & Maintenance, Kahramaa: 29th January 2009

Semi-guided interviews with the cross-country questionnaire

Dr. Kamel Amer, Senior Water Researcher, Department of Agriculture and Water Research: 13th January 2009

Dr. Hassan al-Mohannadi, (then) Director of the Statistical Authority and Assistant Professor in Geography, specialist of water management: 18th January 2009

ANONYMITY REQUESTED, water engineer, Urban Planning Strategic Plan for Doha 2032, UPDA: 25th January 2009

Mr. Nasser al-Kuwari, Specialist of sewage effluents and retreatment, Ashghal (Ministry of Public Works): 25th January 2009

Dr. ?, Director of Research, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Agriculture: 26th January 2009

Mr. Yahya, Engineer, Water and Agriculture Research Centre: 26th January 2009

Mr. Al-Neaimy, Ministry of the Environment of Qatar: 26th January 2009

Mr. Sid, Supervisor, in charge of the Urban Planning Strategic Plan for Doha 2032, UPDA: 27th January 2009

Mr. Hashimoto, Engineer - Urban water specialists, Orient Consulting for the UPDA: 27th January 2009

Mr. Ahmad Darwish, Manager, Water Field Services Department, Water Network Affairs, Kahramaa: 29th January 2009

Mr. Salah Mohammed Ali, Head of Technical Services, Planning Department, Kahramaa: 29th January 2009

Mr. Hussam J. Abounahia, Senior Technical Advisor, QEWC: 11th June 2009

Kuwait

1st March - 7th June 2009

Interviews on the social-political, economic and historical background of Kuwait

Dr. Yacoub Al-Kandari, Assistant Professor of Anthropology, Kuwait University: 25th March 2009

Dr. Otaibi, Head of Department of Geography, wrote on the natural water resources in Kuwait, Kuwait University, 25th March 2009

Miss Monique Guinguand, Independent Historian specialized on water management in Kuwait and Qatar before the oil discovery, Kuwait, 27th, 30th March & 22nd and 23rd April 2009.

Mr. Fawaz Bourisli, Diplomat (and StAntony's College Alumni), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kuwait, Key informant met a dozen times in March, April and May 2009

Dr. Hisham Al-Awadi, Assistant Professor of political science, American University of Kuwait, Kuwait: 1st April 2009

Pr. Gregory Gause III, Visiting Professor of political science, American University of Kuwait, Kuwait: 1st April 2009

Mr. Sâleh Al-Misbah, independent Historian and collectionneur: 2nd April 2009

Mr. Al-Shamlan, retired Historian and collectionneur, 25th April 2009

Dr. Mohammed Al-Haddad, Anthropologist, Kuwait University, Kuwait: 27th April 2009

Dr. Abdelhamid, Social Scientist, Kuwait University, Kuwait: 29th April 2009

Dr. Mohamed Aziz, Social Scientist, Kuwait University, Kuwait: 29th April 2009

Dr. Badr Bin Eisa, Anthropologist, Kuwait University, Kuwait: 30th April 2009

Dr. Al-Dhafiri, Social Scientist, Kuwait University, Kuwait: 3rd May 2009

Dr. Abbas Al-Mejren, Social Scientist, Kuwait University, Kuwait: 3rd May 2009

Dr. Ali Al-Zoghbi, Anthropologist, Kuwait University, Kuwait: 4th May 2009

Dr. Al-Mekaimi, Jurist, Kuwait University, Kuwait: 5th May 2009

Pr. Yousef Garashi, Economist of Energy, Kuwait University, Kuwait: 10th May 2009

Mr. Gary Anderson, Engineer and Consultant, Ministry of Water and Electricity, Kuwait: May 2009

Dr. Mohamed Al-Fili, Jurist, Kuwait University, Kuwait: 13th May 2009

Semi-guided interviews with the cross-country questionnaire in Kuwait

'Engineer Reem', sewage retreatment Engineer, Ministry of Public Works, Kuwait: 31st March 2009

Mr. Mike Wood, Engineer, Ministry of Water and Electricity, Kuwait: 10th May 2009

Mr. Eyad Ali Al-Falah, assistant under-secretary for Technical Services, Ministry of Electricity and Water, Kuwait: 12th May 2009

Miss Suhaila Marafi, director of the Department of Studies and Research, Ministry of Electricity and Water, Kuwait: 17th May 2009

Mr. Mas'oud, Statistician, Department of Statistics, Ministry of Electricity and Water, Kuwait: 17th May 2009

Appendix C

Terminology issue of governance notions in Arabic

After a brief introduction to the context of translation into Arabic of Western notions of governance, several translations of the terminologies currently in use in Arabic will be briefly reviewed as well as their respective semantic shortcomings.

I – The background

In most Arab countries, academic articles on recent foreign notions are written either in English or in French for historical reasons. There are limited translations of the social sciences articles into Arabic, or years later at best. Because the production of Arabic equivalents is a process that happens years after the reception of foreign concepts in English (the water professionals interviewed in the Gulf all mentioned the role of international conferences in this regard), the intelligentsia and/or group of specialists concerned with a given foreign concept has generally been already relatively accustomed to its European version. Also, several translations can be proposed simultaneously. As a consequence, the Arabic-speaking discussants of a recent concept generally refer to the word or notion in English or French at a moment or another to avoid misunderstandings, thereby constituting a jargon that non-specialists cannot understand.

To translate 'governance' into Arabic, there is not a single word with a single, common and known origin as in European languages: from ancient Greek originally

(Κυβερταώ), into Latin (the verb *gubernare*) and Medieval French (*gouverner, gouvernement* and *gouvernance*), into English and other European languages in the late 20th century (Bailly, 1901; Onions, 1966). With several translations into Arabic, out of significantly different roots, there is a concrete problem nowadays to find governance an established Arabic translation of governance.

The notion of governance began to be quoted in an Arab context first in English in the discourses of international organizations and development agencies in the 1990s. In the mean time, 'corporate governance' has emerged as a more frequently used notion in local literature, in English too, often in the context of international companies establishing or developing offices in the region. It was as late as 1999 that the regional office of the World Bank for the Middle East decided to choose and consistently use an Arab term for governance (World Bank, 1999).

II – The various translations into Arabic and their shortcomings

Some of the most frequent translations into Arabic of governance by international organizations and dictionaries – both institutions with a strong normative power - are *al-Hukm* (الحكم), *Hukm al qanun* (حكم القانون) and *idarat ul-Hukm* (إدارة الحكم)¹⁹². In these three translations appears the term *Hukm*, which literally means 'rule'¹⁹³.

In addition to this word can be found the word *qanun* (literally 'law'), when the governance refers more narrowly to the rule of law and fight against corruption. For instance the World Bank's *Hukm al-qanun* (حكم القانون, literally 'rule of law') refers essentially to the

¹⁹² *idarat ul-Hukm* is used for instance in the Arabic version of the UNDP website on the Program On Governance in the Arab Region (POGAR), as can be seen at www.pogar.org/arabic/index.aspx (last visited on 03/07/2012).

¹⁹³ From the same Arabic root come the words 'government' (*Hokoomah*, حكومة), the verb 'to judge/rule' (*Hakama*, حكم), a 'wisdom' (*al-Hikmah*, الحكمة) and 'judge/wise (elder)' (*Hakim*, حكيم). This latter title used to refer to the tribal leader and tribal authority for justice in the Gulf coastal cities before the Eastern Arabian shaykhdoms became emirates under the influence of foreign powers in the late 19th C. See Lienhardt (2001) and Heard-Bey (1996).

notions of state of law and fight against corruption. It does not refer to a structural change of - or challenge to - an established economic and political paradigm in order to radically transform the functioning of the central and vertical Arab states in order to share power with new actors. The goal of the World Bank seemed to be to improve the functioning of existing institutions, with less corruption and more business-friendly environment, rather than challenging by deep reforms the centrality of the state. This does not mean yet that the World Bank did not want to encourage privatisations or public private partnerships, as it has continuously been doing so in the Arab region over the last two decades (e.g. World Bank, 1999; 2003; 2007; see also Woods, 2000).

The translation of governance used for corporate governance is *idarat ul-sharikat* (إدارة الشركات), which literally means 'management of the companies'. But with this latter translation as well as with the above-mentioned UNDP governance translation *idarat al Hukm* - i.e. when the term *idarat* ('management') is part of any translation - the first practical problem is that it obliterates all distinctions between the notions of management and governance, and eventually between water management and water governance. The second and closely related issue is that the political side of governance seems eliminated. This produces a form of neutralization of the governance concept by what could be considered as its 'bureaucratisation'. A phenomenon similar to what Castro (2008) referred to as the "depoliticisation" of governance.

With the word '*al Hukm*' alone (literally 'the rule'), there is a cognitive association with the established state, not with liberalizing reforms at all. This constitutes again a form of 'bureaucratisation' of governance.

A translation for water governance into Arabic is *Al-taHkum fil-miyah* (التحكم في المياه), which literally means 'the control/rule over water'. Here the use of a passive form in Arabic

expresses more the *exercice du pouvoir* over this sector - as a pure *fait accompli* - than any dynamic of change, power fragmentation or power sharing, which would be typical of the governance process or mode of governing.

Because some members of the Arab intelligentsia understood the limitations of the above-mentioned translations of the word governance, a neologism has been especially produced to fill in this epistemic niche: *Hawkamah* (حوكمة). However, informant Ibrahim Taouti – a Human Rights activist and corporate social responsibility (CSR) lawyer in Arab countries – explained that this neologism was used by a limited number of academics, lawyers and specialized practitioners, and remained rarely known beyond these small circles of connoisseurs. During several interviews in Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait City in 2008 and 2009, the neologism *Hawkamah* seemed indeed to echo very little to nothing to the interviewees, and generally produced a same answer: "ya'ny al-Hokumah?" ("You mean the government?").

All other translations of governance which are built with the words *idarat* (management) or *taHkum* (control), refer to clearly non-participatory processes. This echoes and confirms the findings of Rees and Althakhri (2008) who, after reviewing the literature on organizational change in the Arab region, noticed a duality between Western approaches of change management, which generally "emphasize collaborative and participative approaches", and the national Arab models which tend to operate "more directive and hierarchical approaches to management" (Rees and Althakhri, 2008).

All these translations are also very far from a conceptualization of water governance as "highly political by nature" (Franks, 2004), as emphasized by a large number of social scientists (e.g. Currie-Alder et al., 2006; Bakker, 2011; Castro, 2008; Molle, 2004; Rogers and Hall, 2003; Swyngedouw, 2004). Put into a broader perspective, this review of the

governance translations into Arabic seems to reinforce Naim's (2008) argument that the governments of the Arab region are/were afraid of a more politicized governance, which may lead to a diminution or a dilution of power of the state through uncontrolled processes of democratization of the region.

This point seems all the more relevant today that during the Arab spring revolutions, Arab demonstrators began chanting slogans reflecting aspirations to a good governance paradigm (e.g. the end of the elites' corruption and nepotism, more transparency, accountability and citizen participation in public affairs, etc.) and rapidly ended up calling for a "*fall of the regime*" for this purpose. Even in the much more stable emirates of Abu Dhabi and Qatar, who have been making steps towards increased democratic participation since the late 1990s¹⁹⁴, the good governance paradigm and its sister notion of water governance seem to be a too politicized paradigm for conservative technocrats and water technocrats (on the self-censorship of foreign technocrats and administrative employees, see chapter 6). A case in point is the Cairo-based Arab Water Council (AWC).

The AWC presents itself and its capacity-building mission as "*non-political*"¹⁹⁵. Here this term does not mean non-partisan since the AWC member countries were single-party systems or banned political parties at the time of its creation. Political regimes in the Arab region – at least until the series of revolutions by 2010 -, have tried to avoid any uncontrolled political forum for political debate.

In recent year, a noticeable progress concerning the possibility to debate water governance in Arab countries has been the creation of one of the few places in the Arab world – and the only one in the three emirates studied - where water governance is taught and talked

¹⁹⁴ Among other reforms, Kuwait granted women voting rights in 2005, the UAE increased the numbers of electors for the FNC in 2011 and Qatar held municipal elections that same year.

¹⁹⁵ See the AWC's Mission description on its website: www.arabwatercouncil.org/index.php?CMS_P=35. Last visited on 29/06/2012

about: the Abu Dhabi-based 'Arab Water Academy' (AWA). Though its courses on water governance are being taught in English¹⁹⁶, it gathers water technocrats from Arab countries to discuss several issues constituting the concept of water governance. Nonetheless the use of 'water governance' in English or of the above-mentioned Arabic neologism '*Hawkamat-ul miyah*' (حوكمة المياه) on AWA's website may limit the impact of their dialogue and communication to the restricted circles of attendees, mostly high-level water technocrats. The impact in terms of broader public awareness over the concept of water governance among Arabic-speaking populations should remain fairly limited on the short to medium term.

¹⁹⁶ See the Arab Water Academy's website on this topic, at www.awacademy.ae/id12.htm, last visited on 29/06/2012.

Appendix D

Exposing God's blessing and legitimizing the State with water:

Examples of post-independence fountains with pre-oil themes of local history in Abu Dhabi, Doha and Kuwait city



Photograph 7 (left) and Photograph 8 (right). The "old fountains" of Abu Dhabi and Kuwait (late 1970s) depicting the traditional Arabic coffee pot of Eastern Arabia.

Source: Anne Marie McQueen



Photograph 6. The pearl fountain on Doha's corniche represents one of the main sources of revenues of the Qatari peninsula's coastal villages at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Source: photograph from www.aboutqatar.info (last accessed 30/08/2012)