

**Canadian Planning Knowledge in the Middle East:
Transferring Toronto to Amman and Vancouver to Abu Dhabi**

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Résumé

Des urbanistes canadiens provenant de Toronto et Vancouver ont fait valoir leurs connaissances et expertises professionnelles dans des villes du Moyen-Orient, telles Amman en Jordanie et Abu Dhabi dans les Émirats arabes unis. S'inspirant de divers champs de connaissances, tels l'étude des politiques publiques, l'administration du savoir et l'urbanisme, cet article interprète les échanges professionnels entre Toronto et Amman ainsi que Vancouver et Abu Dhabi à la lumière des débats sur les flots transnationaux de savoir. Il examine l'effet des conditions structurelles et des différentes cultures reliées à l'urbanisme sur les échanges de connaissances entre agents porteurs et receveurs de savoir. Les distinctions entre les différents types de transactions interpersonnelles entre ces agents vont permettre l'exploration des conditions favorisant l'adoption des connaissances faisant l'objet de transferts transnationaux.

Mots clés : transfert du savoir, diffusion du savoir, agents porteurs de savoir, « Vancouverism »

Canadian Journal of Urban Research, Volume 21, Issue 1, Supplement pages 1-28.
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ISSN: 1188-3774

Abstract

Canadian urban planners from Toronto and Vancouver have lent their planning knowledge and professional expertise to cities in the Middle East like Amman in Jordan and Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates. By drawing on disciplines such as public policy, knowledge management and urban planning, this article places the Toronto-Amman and Vancouver-Abu Dhabi scenarios within the theoretical and empirical debates on the contemporary cross-national knowledge flows. It investigates the impacts of the structural conditions and the planning cultures on the transactions among individual transfer agents. The distinctions between the various types of interpersonal transactions among the transfer agents also facilitate an exploration of the different modes for the adoption and adaptation of the transferred planning knowledge.

Key words: knowledge transfer, transfer agents, diffusion, Vancouverism

The vestiges of colonial planning across many a city in the developing world stand as a testament to the cross-national transfer of planning policies and practices. Nowadays, the cross-national transfer of planning knowledge is attributed to unprecedented global interconnectivity (Healey and Upton 2010; Sanyal 2005a). The attempts to pin down the flow of planning knowledge in the planning literature have focused on the relationship between large-scale structures namely, the political and economic arrangements that influence individual and collective choices (Friedmann 2005), including the postcolonial power relations (Ward 1999; Ward 2000). This literature has also emphasized the institutional planning cultures, or ‘the collective ethos and dominant attitude of professional planners [...] toward the appropriate roles of the state, market forces, and civil society’ (Sanyal 2005a). Others have addressed the individual roles of the transfer agents (Healey 2010; Ward 2002) and their cross-national mobility (McCann 2011). Yet little research has investigated the transactions at the level of (and among) the structures, planning cultures, and agents, and how they impact the transfer of planning knowledge. This article therefore asks: how do structural conditions and planning cultures influence the transactions among transfer agents? How do these transactions in turn impact the adoption and the adaptation of the transferred planning knowledge?

In order to address these interrelated transactions, this article investigates two case studies: Amman in Jordan and Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates, where Canadian urban planners from Toronto and Vancouver respectively have been involved in the development and implementation of urban planning policies and practices. Seeking to establish criteria for comparison and generalization, we draw on the public policy, knowledge management, and urban planning literature. From them, we extract criteria that distinguish between

the types of transactions among the transfer agents on the one hand, and the types of the adoption and the adaptation of the transferred knowledge on the other hand. Instead of merely listing the differences and similarities between the Amman and Abu Dhabi scenarios, this approach facilitates an investigation of the reasons behind them.

The View From Public Policy

Policy transfer refers to 'a process in which knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in one political setting (past or present) is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in another political setting' (Dolowitz and Marsh 2000: 5). This process requires producers, senders, facilitators, and recipients some of whom may play multiple roles and are known as 'transfer agents' (De Jong and Edelenbos 2007). They are either the international experts who, through their direct professional relations, carry ideas and practices across borders, or the local experts who acquire the knowledge from them, and who are also dubbed 'pulling in factors' (De Jong and Edelenbos 2007: 703). Often, the latter utilize their expertise to selectively pick what they find relevant and useful to their own contexts (Ibid.). In order to explain the roles of the transfer agents, the public policy literature draws on the international relations (IR) constructivist theories of political science according to which, the legitimacy and exclusive expertise of the international experts bestow 'an authority' on them (Barnett and Finnemore 2004: 68). Additionally, and as highly esteemed international experts, these transfer agents often become figures 'in authority' by holding key positions in the acquiring context (Barnett and Finnemore 2004: 68, 25-26). The combination of both types of authority empowers the transfer agents to create, form, and endorse knowledge (Barnett and Finnemore 2004: 68, 31).

While Diane Stone (2004: 545) distinguishes between the 'soft' transfer of norms and the 'hard' transfer of policy, she nonetheless considers the former 'a necessary complement' to the latter. Indeed, the IR literature explains that by introducing international standards, these international experts prepare their peers in the acquiring context to become 'norm followers' of 'best practices' (Barnett and Finnemore 2004: 68, Finnemore and Sikkink 1998: 902). Rose (1991: 6) further elaborates on such best practices and defines lesson drawing as the transfer of 'concrete and specific' programs from contexts to improve existing ones. He accordingly devises a five-stage evaluation tool that explains the various choices of adoption and adaptation of norms and policies. His scale begins with copying, which occurs when the acquiring context merely 'adopts intact programmes' from other contexts. The next three stages include variations of adaptation whereby emulation entails 'adoption' albeit 'with adjustment for different circumstances' of one particular policy or program from another

context; hybridization results from a 'combination of elements' from policies or programs from two different contexts; and synthesis combines the 'familiar elements' of policies or programs from three different contexts or more. Lastly, the scale ends with inspiration where programs in various other contexts stimulate 'a novel programme without an analogue elsewhere' (Rose 1991: 22).

The View From Knowledge Management

Polanyi (1966) refers to the knowledge that cannot be articulated as 'tacit knowledge', while Nonaka (1991: 98) considers the knowledge that may be codified, communicated, and shared as 'explicit knowledge'. Because the transfer of tacit knowledge requires conveying it from one human brain to another (Campbell 1987), its transfer is grounded in interpersonal interactions between its senders and receivers (Dalkir 2005; Tomassini 2001). Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) explain these interpersonal interactions. According to them, the socialization represents the first of these interactions, which typically occurs among individuals during which the senders transfer their tacit knowledge. Next, the receivers share this tacit knowledge with others through externalization, but once it is shared, this knowledge typically undergoes some combination with pre-existing knowledge. This combined knowledge is then operationalized through learning by doing and thus new practices that are context specific emerge (i.e. tacit knowledge) (Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995: 62, 72).

In order to evaluate these interactions and particularly, how recipients capture knowledge from the senders, Dalkir (2005: 95) proposes a scale of four types of knowledge capture. The lowest on the scale is grafting, in which specific practices, such as technology, are transferred (Ibid: 95). It is then followed by vicarious learning, which occurs when an institution observes the practices of other institutions, with particular focus on 'techniques and procedures.' Next, experiential learning involves 'learning by doing and practicing,' and lastly, inferential processes entail an 'experimental [and] deductive,' and as such very localized, learning process (Dalkir 2005: 96).

The View From Urban Planning

Similar to public policy and knowledge management, the urban planning literature also distinguishes between the theoretical concepts and the planning practices (Ward 2000). The cross-national transfer of planning practices is considered more challenging because of the particularities of each planning context such as land use patterns and land ownership policies (Kunzmann 2005; Kunzmann 1994; Masser 1986).

Not surprisingly then, most planning arguments underscore the structural compatibility between the transferring and the acquiring contexts in

order to avoid the monopoly of the former over knowledge (see for example Amin 1976; Friedmann 1967; Kunzmann 1994; Leichter 1979; Masser 1986). Structure here refers to the political and economic arrangements that influence individual choices, and consequently, the planning culture (Friedmann 1967; Hall 1996). Sanyal (2005a) grounds his definition of the planning culture in the 'attitude of professional planners,' and thus emphasizes the individuals. Indeed, in his transactive planning model, Friedmann emphasizes the importance of 'interpersonal relations' in the planning practice for the simple reason that 'institutions do not relate to each other as wholes, but through a complex series of exchanges among individuals' (Friedmann 1973: 177-178). These individuals are the transfer agents who facilitate the cross-national transfer of knowledge (De Jong and Edelenbos 2007; Ward 2000).

At the abstract level, there are the transferring and the acquiring agents. The former export their knowledge through venues such as direct professional relations, publications, and conferences (Masser 1986). The acquiring agents import knowledge either when they selectively invite expertise and/or when they choose relevant knowledge according to their identified needs (Masser 1986; Ward 2000). Some consider that the roles of the acquiring and transferring agents are mutually exclusive (Ward 2000), while others maintain different views. Firstly, there is the argument that planners in developing countries are exposed to various theories and practices whether through their studies and/or their professional work abroad—such exposure renders them active, not passive, recipients of knowledge (King 2003). Also, the unprecedented advancement in information technology and telecommunications provides fluid channels for information flows, hence enhances the exposure of these planners to external knowledge (Castells 2005). Most importantly, these planners possess the 'soft information' or the intuitive grasp (Mintzberg 1994: 111), which collectively shapes the 'planning culture' of their context (Sanyal 2005b).

Not differently from other disciplines, urban planning sought to evaluate the outcomes of knowledge transfer. On the theoretical level, there are distinctions between transfer as a one-way process, and exchange as a two-way one (Masser 1986). Ward (2000) also adds that a one-way transfer, or what he refers to as borrowing, occurs from the more to the less developed structures, while a two-way exchange takes place only among equal ones. Others have concluded that when knowledge transfers among unequal partners, then the outcome of the process is reduced to 'imposition' (Kunzmann 1994; Masser 1990). And lastly, lateral thinking happens when local practitioners draw on their own expertise to devise innovative solutions to their planning problems (Masser 1986: 171).

Almost all of these theorizations prescribe the relationships between the agency and the types of knowledge, and therefore they stipulate the nature of

the outcomes. Such a prescriptive nature renders these theorizations normative tools that describe what ought to take place without elucidating how and why these scenarios occur. Nevertheless, empirically, these theorizations have been rationalized through the empirical research such as those in the edited volumes by Nasr and Volait (2003) and Healey and Upton (2010).

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

In this article, we build on the parallels between the public policy, knowledge management, and urban planning disciplines in order to explicate the transactions between the transfer agents. To begin with, we combine these disciplines' views on the roles of transfer agents, whether as exporters or importers of knowledge (Masser 1986), firstly, as 'pulling-in factors' and secondly, as authority figures. Most importantly, the proposed framework places these views within 'the complex series of exchanges' that take place through the 'interpersonal relations' among these individual transfer agents (Friedmann 1973: 177-178). We explain such relations through Nonanka and Takeuchi's (1995) model of socialization, externalization, combination, and operationalization.

In this article, we also consolidate the scales of these three disciplines in order to assess the outcomes of the transfer process. Specifically, we distinguish between transfer (also known as borrowing) and exchange on the one hand, and imposition on the other (Kunzmann 1994; Masser 1986; Masser 1990; Ward, 2000). The latter mostly entails the adoption of policies and practices through grafting or copying, while the former, i.e. transfer and exchange, entail adaptation whether through vicarious and experiential learning and/or through hybridization and synthesis (Dalkir 2005; Rose 1991). Lastly, lateral thinking involves inferential processes and inspiration (Masser 1986; Dalkir 2005; Rose 1991).

In order to achieve these objectives, the research methodology adopts a qualitative research design within the framework of a comparative case study analysis. The two chosen case studies present two different scenarios where Canadian urban planners from Vancouver and Toronto became involved as transferring agents in Amman, Jordan and Abu Dhabi, the UAE. Sartori (1994) argues in favor of cross-national comparative research on account of the explanatory potential—a view that Yin (2003) also supports. This explanatory potential emerges from the advantage of comparative research to identify both the shared and unshared attributes and thus to pin down the 'similarities, not exactness' which, precisely because of this, can then be 'generalized into transferable theory' (Sartori 1994: 17). Furthermore, Williams (1986) discussed the benefits of comparative studies in urban planning particularly, cross-national

ones. According to Williams (1986), comparative studies hold the potential to improve the planning practice by stimulating constructive criticism and learning from best practices. Comparative studies also advance planning theory by offering a deeper understanding of planning in a diversity of socio-political, cultural and economic contexts. Therefore, such comparisons develop planning as an international phenomenon, one that overcomes barriers and one that shares overarching principles (Williams 1986).

The research that led to this article therefore depended on a combination of primary and secondary sources. It commenced with the latter namely, through a detailed analysis of the relevant planning documents in order to identify the theories and practices that were transferred from Toronto to Amman and from Vancouver to Abu Dhabi. Other secondary sources also included peer-reviewed publications, which facilitated the identification and then comparison of existing scales. Also, web publications and audiovisual information were consulted, as well as newspaper articles.

The primary sources of data included in-depth interviews, keynote speeches, and personal observations of meetings, workshops, and day-to-day activities in the planning institutions in both Amman and Abu Dhabi. A total of eighteen interviews were held with fifteen individuals in Amman (three were follow-up interviews). These interviews took place in three stages the first of which was between 9 April and 10 May 2009, when three key Canadian decision-makers, and one of their Jordanian counterparts, were interviewed in Amman. The second stage consisted of follow up interviews with two of these Canadian planners on 30 June 2010 and 14 July 2010. Then the final stage extended between 8 December 2010 and 31 January 2011 and included another follow up interview with one of the Canadian planners in addition to eleven new interviews with different individuals including key Jordanian decision-makers such as the Mayor of Amman, two Members of Parliament, an elected City Counselor, and two prominent architects from the Mayor's Round Table (a select group of local consultants who are invited to advise the Mayor on key policy decisions related to the AMP).

Likewise, a total of eight in-depth interviews were held with planners involved in Abu Dhabi. Four of these in-depth interviews were conducted with Canadian planners from Vancouver between 25 April and 30 September 2011, and then another interview was held on 6 June 2012—two of these four interviewees were involved right from the outset of the transfer process. In addition, the authors exchanged email correspondence with one of the key planners on 25 May 2012. We also conducted another interview on 9 December 2011 with a Canadian planner who was a sub-contracted consultant on a specific project directly related to the new plan of Abu Dhabi. We also conducted three additional interviews with planning practitioners who are based in Abu Dhabi on

3 November, 8 November 2011, and on 9 November 2011—the latter was a follow-up interview.

Additionally, one of the authors attended the Second Regional Conference on Creativity Initiatives of Development in Arab Cities, which was held in Amman between 27 and 29 April 2009, during which one of the leading Torontonians in Amman, John van Nostrand was the invited keynote speaker. Similarly, this same author attended, on 1 October 2010, the keynote speech at the Canadian Urbanism (CanU) Symposium in Montreal by the leading Vancouverite planner in Abu Dhabi, Larry Beasley.

Furthermore, one of the authors was embedded within Amman's planning institutions on two occasions the first of which was between 9 April and 10 May 2009 and the second lasted from 8 December 2010 until 31 January 2011. During these periods, several opportunities arose and were seized upon to attend several meetings, workshops, and discussions between the Torontonians and the Jordanian planners. Similarly, the other author held a position as a practicing planning consultant in the United Arab Emirates, and was directly involved in several development projects that implemented the design guidelines and manuals that ensued from the collaboration between the Vancouverite and the Emirati planners. This experience provided an opportunity for a participant observation of the implementation and of the institutional framework that are associated with the planning regulations that emerged from the knowledge transfer process. In line with Friedmann's (2010) recommendation, these opportunities provided in-depth insights on the nature of transactions between the transfer agents at the individual, group, institutional, and intra-institutional levels.

Detailed notes were taken during and after all workshops, meetings, and observations, while the interviews and the keynote speeches were audio recorded, then transcribed. All collected data were then sorted and classified into manageable themes such as: interpersonal transactions, institutional arrangements, and political structure as well as the theoretical, practical, and soft knowledge, and so on. Such sorting facilitated the deduction which elaborates on the data, the verification which confirms these data, and the induction which leads to theoretical conceptualizations (Groat and Wang 2002).

Amman and Abu Dhabi: City Profiles and Agency

Jordan is a constitutional monarchy, and its king holds absolute power (Al Oudat and Alshboul 2010), and directly appoints the Mayor of Amman. Notwithstanding its ancient history, Amman is a contemporary metropolis that was established only in the 1920s as the capital of the Transjordan. Consisting of a population of merely 2,000 inhabitants in 1914, it boasted by 2007 well over 2.5 million inhabitants (Greater Amman Municipality 2008). Amman

also represents a typical Middle Eastern capital that firmly maintains its dominating 'State City' status (Samha 1996), which by 2007 witnessed a concentration of over 40% of Jordan's population (Greater Amman Municipality 2008; Potter et al. 2009). In fact, Amman experienced explosive population growth since its establishment due to natural growth, rural migration, and external immigration. The latter was triggered by regional political instability, which brought Palestinian and Iraqi refugees (Brand 1995; Potter et al. 2009; Samha 1996). This sudden population growth taxed Amman's infrastructure (Yom 2009), especially resulting in water shortage (Potter et al. 2010) and severe traffic congestion (Parker 2009). The ensuing haphazard urban growth generated sprawl and continues to threaten natural and cultural resources (Al-Asad 2004; Al-Asad 2005). In response, the municipality of Amman proposed a series of master plans since the 1950s that ended with the ten-year Greater Amman Comprehensive Development Plan 1985-2005 (Abu-Dayyeh 2004). For the most part, these plans were never implemented while simultaneously, planning in Amman continued to be reactive and governed by outdated zoning bylaws and an emphasis on ring and radial road networks (Greater Amman Municipality 2008; Al-Asad 2004). The latter particularly exacerbated urban sprawl and created an automobile-dependent urban environment that is unfriendly for pedestrians. Additionally, the roads and highways fragmented land uses, divided the city's neighborhoods, and led to severe traffic congestion (Parker 2009). One of the Torontonians planners discussed the lack of planning in Amman: 'I didn't think [local planners] knew what a master plan is, that they are kind of passé, they take years to complete and they don't really go any-

Figure 1: Amman's Haphazard Growth



where. The proof was they had one from 1987, which was actually a really good document' (interview on 9 April 2009).

Figure 2: Abu Dhabi's Western-style Architecture



Not differently from contemporary Amman, Abu Dhabi also represents a young emerging city, one that arose from a minor trading post into a major urban center in the span of only four decades. Following its independence from British colonial rule in 1971, Abu Dhabi became the capital of the UAE as well as the Emirate of Abu Dhabi (Al-Fahim 2007). The UAE operates as an ethnocracy in which individual ruling 'families' hold executive authority in each of the seven Emirates that constitute the UAE (Al-Fahim 2007). The discovery of oil in 1958 has had a significant impact on the economy of the UAE in general, and Abu Dhabi in particular since it holds 90% of the country's oil reserves transforming it into a key player in global markets (Sharpley 2002). A large and cosmopolitan expatriate population, which accounts for over 80% of the total population bolsters Abu Dhabi's thriving economy (Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority 2011). Urban planning could hardly keep up with the city's evolution. Yasser Elsheshtawy (2008) identifies five stages for Abu Dhabi's growth from its emergence and creation during the 1960s to shaping a planning culture through the Abu Dhabi Master Plan 1988-2004. Like Amman's

plans, this plan's implementation was sporadic (Ibid.). One Canadian planner commented on the vision of this master plan, stating that: 'the original plan for the city was at the height of oil exploration. So it was, you know, that ethos of modernization, rapid modernization, with prevalence given to the private automobile, and that was a kind of a symbol of progress' (interview on 25 April 2011). Up until the involvement of Vancouverite planners, Abu Dhabi had sought to become a global center through mega-projects and starchitecture (Elshehtawy 2008). The ensuing physical fabric thus features predominantly Western architecture while some traditional Middle Eastern elements exist as facets primarily in residential developments (Chaudhary 2011). Also, the relatively small proportion of citizen Emiratis and the largely transient expatriate populace present a challenge for the city's planning. Add to that the challenges of planning for the harsh climate of the UAE, the limited availability of land in Abu Dhabi particularly, and the fragmented planning of the city (O'Brien et al. 2007).

Agency and the Transfer of Planning Knowledge

The Selection of Transfer Agents

By 2006, the authorities in both Amman and Abu Dhabi realized the need for updated planning that copes with the contemporary challenges of each city. Also, in a similar manner, the ultimate authority in both cases, i.e. the King of Jordan and the Sheikh of Abu Dhabi, specifically requested the involvement of foreign expertise in designing these new city plans.

In addition to their existing challenges, the new plans for Amman and Abu Dhabi were similarly triggered by an influx of investments from oil rich Arab Gulf states. These countries, in the wake of 9/11, faced challenges in investing in markets in the USA and Europe, so instead, they began to invest in mega-real estate projects in Middle Eastern cities (O'Brien et al. 2007). In Amman, the need for new plans emerged when the GAM received, in 2006 alone, over sixteen requests for high-rise towers—a hitherto unprecedented type of development in this city. Faced by an absence of legislation that regulates such high-rise towers and mega-projects, King Abdulla II himself ordered a freeze on all urban development within Amman and gave the then new Mayor, Omar al-Maani four months to put in place appropriate planning mechanisms. In his letter to the Mayor, the king specifically instructed him to consult with international planning experts: 'I would also like you to invite experts from all over the world to contribute to this effort, as the sharing of successes and failures that they have witnessed in other cities can be of tremendous value to us' (King Abdullah bin Al-Hussein, 3 May 2006, documented in: Greater Amman Municipality 2008). The Mayor then personally invited the first Canadian expert,

and thus assumed the role of a typical ‘pulling in’ agent by seeking planning knowledge to address an existing need. The Mayor admitted that the GAM at the time lacked the skills to address the king’s request ‘we certainly are not capable of doing anything in terms of master planning more specifically at the physical level’ (interview with the Mayor of Amman on 2 January 2011). This invited Canadian expert, Gerry Post, who was at the time a senior consultant at BearingPoint, which is a Toronto-based international consultancy firm, immediately established rapport with the Mayor, and was recruited on the spot. The Mayor of Amman explained that his choice to employ BearingPoint was based on the fact that it ‘has signed a master agreement with the Government of Jordan’ which made it easier to act immediately (interview with the Mayor of Amman on 2 January 2011).

Simultaneous to the pressures of mega-projects in Amman, Abu Dhabi, which thus far has exhibited a tendency to favor a more scrupulous development than its neighboring city Dubai, opened up its real estate market to foreign ownership in 2005. The search for a unique identity for Abu Dhabi as the capital of the Emirate prompted the global search for success stories in urban planning. The ruler therefore supported the selection of foreign expertise that would be capable of building a comprehensive planning framework and land use strategy. The planning ethos of Vancouver as a coastal city with a distinctive focus on sustainable high-rise development provided an impetus for Abu Dhabi to look to it for inspiration (McCann 2011). In fact, the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi personally acted as a ‘pulling in agent’ when, in 2006 he initiated the contact with Larry Beasley, who has just retired from his post as Director of Planning in Vancouver, and who was targeted given his role as the planner at the helm of Vancouver’s successful restructuring, revitalization, and sustainability planning (Grant 2009; McCann 2011). During a keynote speech at the CanU Symposium in Montreal in 2010, Larry Beasley relayed the story of his recruitment especially, given that he was not yet acquainted with the prince:

‘...our work [in Vancouver] has gotten a fair amount of attention [...]. And I think because of that, not because of me personally but because of that, I got this email one day and it was from this minister; and so I thought it was that, you know that spam one, which says “I am a minister from the south” [...] and so I just deleted it. And about a week later, I got a second email and there was something about it that made me open it. And the rest for me is history.’

Once hired, both Gerry Post in Amman and Larry Beasley in Abu Dhabi were placed in the highest tier in the authority hierarchy—the former as a project director along with Samir Subhi, a senior local planner (Greater Amman Municipality 2007a) while the latter ‘became the special advisor to Sheikh Mohammed [bin Zayed Al Nahyan] and the government of Abu Dhabi on all land planning in the Emirate’ (keynote speech, CanU Symposium 2010).

Pulling in Expertise

Gerry Post in Amman and Larry Beasley in Abu Dhabi attracted, through their personal professional networks, fellow Torontonians and Vancouverite planners—a typical trend in professional networking (Healey 2010). At the peak of the planning process there were over fifteen Canadian planners from at least three different Toronto-based planning firms who became officially involved in Amman (several interviews; Greater Amman Municipality 2007b). Likewise, Larry Beasley used his professional and personal contacts to assimilate a team of planners mostly from the City of Vancouver (Bula 2007). Eventually, the domination of Vancouverite planners in Abu Dhabi was dubbed ‘the Vancouver Mafia’ (Alayedrous Bani Hashim 2010: 79). One of these Vancouverites commented that ‘the interesting thing with Abu Dhabi then was there was a very high degree of Vancouver expertise in the planning authority, and of course Larry [Beasley] was the liaison with the Crown Prince and the people that were the directors of the Emirati leadership’ (interview on 12 October 2011).

The Transactions Between the Transferring and the Acquiring Agents

In his letter to the Mayor of Amman, the king of Jordan specifically requested that Jordanian planners be involved in the process: ‘I ask you to start assembling a team that will commence work on this highly significant endeavor.’ But also recognizing the infestation of nepotism in Jordanian public institutions (Kilani and Sakijha 2002), the king simultaneously went on to ‘emphasiz[e] that expertise and professional experience are the only criteria upon which your choices should be made’ (King Abdullah bin Al-Hussein, 3 May 2006, documented in: Greater Amman Municipality 2008). Following this request, a group of Jordanian planners from the GAM were selected and each was paired with a Torontonian counterpart in an improvised system of ‘buddies’ as referred to during the interviews. These one-on-one interactions among the buddies constituted the first socialization stage (Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995) that witnessed the soft transfer of norms (Stone 2004) albeit it was the Ammani planners who transferred their own soft information and intuitive grasp (Mintzberg 1994) to their Torontonian counterparts. Indeed, the Torontonian planners underscored during their interviews their skepticism against being ‘parachuted in’

to 'instruct' the Ammani planners. Instead, their interviews reveal a consensus toward first understanding the status quo of planning at the GAM prior to proceeding with any form of knowledge transfer. They were specifically interested in how planning, or the lack of official planning, shaped Amman thus far, and what were the factors (political, economic, social, cultural, and natural) that impacted planning decisions. It was not until after they extracted this soft information from the Ammani planners that the Torontonians began to share their own knowledge with their Ammani buddies. This knowledge is mostly shaped by their personal experiences in Toronto and particularly through their involvement in the Places to Grow.

Interestingly, a similar exchange transaction took place in Abu Dhabi albeit by resolving to different socialization strategies. Instead of pairing, the Vancouverite planners commenced their Abu Dhabi experience through a socialization and information gathering exercise (Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995: 62, 72) that enabled them to obtain soft information about the cultural norms and the local planning practices (Stone 2004: 545; Mintzberg 1994: 111). As one Vancouverite planner explained:

'What we learned on the economic front was synthesized as planning targets that shaped our plans and advice to the local leadership—and this economic perspective became more sophisticated and comprehensive as our work advanced. What we learned on the social, cultural and religious front was communicated to each visiting "expert" and most of the incoming expat staffers, especially to assist them to interact with the local people without difficulty' (personal correspondence, 25 May 2012).

This exercise served as a springboard for creating contacts and establishing rapport with the local planning officials and practitioners, which became invaluable later on in the planning process. Then in order to coalesce the wide breadth of collected information and their own expert knowledge into a structured framework, the Vancouverite planners organized another, hitherto unknown to their Emirati counterparts, socialization exercise that simultaneously externalized the acquired knowledge in the form of a series of design charrettes (Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995). These were held with the direct involvement of local planners, usually ran over the course of a full week, and were attended by local industry professionals, representatives from all local relevant agencies, and international experts from a spectrum of related fields. The charrette approach was applied throughout the planning process almost on an annual basis. The interview data reveal that, typical of socialization, these

design charrettes generated a combination of the knowledge of the local and the Vancouverite planners through the collaborative, team-oriented exchange of knowledge that culminated in an innovative and creative exploration of the compatibility of Abu Dhabi's local cultural and historical traditions with the Vancouverites' own planning knowledge. In the words of one Vancouverite planner:

'We had the Power Authority, the Tourism Authority... just you name it, they were all at that charrette. So it was a very big event. And of course the first thing about a charrette is that it creates buy-in from the client's side, the client feels like they are part of a process, and they get to input, they get to monitor [...]. So by the time you report back from that charrette, they are already on board, because they helped create it. So it wasn't something that was imposed, you know "here we're so smart, take this." They were deeply involved in that, and their senior planners were at the table' (interview on 12 October 2011).

The analysis of the transactions among the transfer agents in both cities reveals a number of comparable themes. The Torontonians in Amman and the Vancouverite planners in Abu Dhabi had limited planning experience, if any, in these Middle Eastern cities, yet the highest authority in both cities (i.e. the King of Jordan and the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi) expected them to not only transfer their planning knowledge, but to also account for the local conditions in the ensuing plans. In order to facilitate their mission, administrative hierarchies were arranged to place the Canadian planners 'in authority' that complemented their status as 'an authority' in their field of expertise (Barnett and Finnemore 2004: 68, 25-26). These authority hierarchies developed through both intra- and extra-institutional arrangements.

At the intra-institutional level and from the outset, senior Canadian planners were placed in leadership positions while the local acquiring agents provided them with the basic 'soft' knowledge that enabled them to understand local norms and practices that constitute the GAM's planning culture (Mintzberg 1994: 111; Sanyal 2005b). One Torontonian planner stressed the significance of this soft transfer while relaying how the Mayor of Amman asked 'what makes Amman, Amman?' and how the Torontonians 'picked up on that' and how by holding brainstorming externalization exercises with the Ammani planners, they collectively identified the:

'...relationship with topography, the consistent built form [...]. The use of limestone, the sort of homogeneity [...]. The

rambling kind of modern avenues [the] natural heritage, [...] and the whole system of landmarks. It's all tied back to the hilltops, mosques, and how people navigate' (interview on 30 April 2009).

A Vancouverite planner in Abu Dhabi echoed a similar perspective:

'The richness of information that came was really vested from the locals, and that was probably the most valuable kind of contribution; because I think there was a recognition in terms of the things that they value here, the locals value, needed to be responded to. The plan-making process really took in a number of different disciplines and stakeholders that were vested here, and represented those interests' (interview on 25 April 2011).

To supplement this information garnered directly from local agents, the incoming transfer agents also received specialized training and workshops organized by Larry Beasley and his team. These sessions were informed by personal interaction with various sectors of the Abu Dhabi local population, 'from citizens involved in various walks of life to business and government leaders to developers' (personal correspondence, 25 May 2012).

The intra-institutional level in both cities also witnessed administrative arrangements that, in addition to 'operationalizing' the transferred knowledge (Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995: 62, 72), also cemented the authority of the Canadian planners by instating them 'in authority' (Barnett and Finnemore 2004: 68: 25-26). The most prominent of these are the establishment of the Amman Institute for Urban Development (Ai) in 2008 and the Abu Dhabi Urban Planning Council (UPC) in late 2007—both were founded nearly a year into the collaboration. The Ai 'is a not-for-profit organization that operates as an international center of excellence in urban governance, community planning and development, and organizational reform within Jordan and the Middle East' (SUMPAMED Project 2010). The UPC's mandate states that it will be 'responsible for the future of Abu Dhabi's urban environments, and the expert authority behind the visionary Plan Abu Dhabi 2030 Urban Structure Framework Plan published September 2007' (Abu Dhabi Urban Planning Council 2007). Hence the primary difference between the Ai, which sought to establish itself as a think tank for the entire region, and the UPC, which maintained its focus on the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.

Notwithstanding the difference in their geographic scope, the two institutions similarly created a three-tiered hierarchy that placed foreign planners

between senior Jordanian and Emirati decision-makers, and junior local planners. The latter were perceived, in both cities, as the local acquiring agents who will acquire the knowledge from the transferring agents, i.e. the Canadian experts. These junior local planners also, through their socializations with the transferring agents, contribute to the combination of the transferred and local knowledge, and by consequence, to the operationalization of the ensuing knowledge through planning the implementation of the new policies and practices. These local acquiring agents therefore, were not mere passive recipients. Indeed, their tacit knowledge and soft information proved vital to the planning process, while their local personal connections and networks became the catalyst for establishing rapport between the Canadian transferring agents and other local planners and experts through socialization. Such acclimatization and networking with local stakeholders ensured a smooth exchange and a better combination of knowledge—in other words, a better incorporation of the local planning culture in the ensuing plans. An independent Jordanian consultant who worked for the Canadian team in Amman expounded on this:

‘...if you want something done in an organization, or information, the quickest way isn’t to go to the CEO and say “please get me this.” [...] The easiest way is to go drink coffee with people and sort of learn their names, learn who has kids and who doesn’t and the next time you want something, you’ll have it really in thirty seconds, because you are really their friend and because that really is the type of thing we’re trying to do. And Gerry really encouraged that. He’d say “Go and make friends because otherwise nothing will get done.” And you have to, because otherwise: A) they won’t give you the information, B) they’ll take a long time to give it to you, and they’ll resent you when you get it’ (interview on 9 January 2011).

Similarly, one Vancouverite consultant relayed how these interactions influenced the access to the local tacit knowledge and the local planning culture in Abu Dhabi:

‘Here it was very much protecting information, like information here is power so don’t share it. And so part of what we tried to do is first of all build a relationship with trust, and the second thing to do is demonstrate by your own actions that relationship of trust by sharing information’ (interview on 25 April 2011).

The relationship between the transferring and acquiring agents was therefore defined both by their position in the authority hierarchy and by the rapport that is nurtured through socialization, whether it be through mutual acquaintances or interpersonal transactions. But most importantly, the flow of knowledge in these socialization arrangements facilitated the building of local capacities.

The interactions between the Canadian planners and the senior Jordanian and Emirati decision-makers also seemed to flow smoothly given the latter's educational and professional backgrounds and their exposure to the information flows from Western sources (Castells 2005; King 2003). A Torontonion planner shared how their Ammani counterparts 'intellectually challenged' them (interview on 9 April 2009). Likewise, one Vancouverite planner commented that the senior Emirati planners were 'extremely confident [and] Western trained' (interview on 12 October 2011). These local officials were thus able to relate to their foreign counterparts on the basis of shared familiarity with the Western planning theories and practices, as well as norms and policies.

The Adoption and Adaptation of Planning Knowledge

The combined efforts of the Ammani and Torontonion planners eventually yielded a series of documents that began with the Amman Master Plan (AMP), which sought to regulate Amman's growth. This was followed by 'The Amman Plan: Metropolitan Growth,' dubbed the Master Growth Plan (MGP) in 2008 among other plans each of which is dedicated for a particular aspect of Amman's planning. Collectively, these documents set the policies and the regulatory frameworks for smart growth planning that confine urban sprawl. The ensuing regulatory tools therefore employ intensification strategies that aim to maximize the efficiency of the existing infrastructure, to support economic development, and to sustain the natural and cultural heritage (Greater Amman Municipality 2007a; Greater Amman Municipality 2008). While clearly inspired by Ontario's Places to Grow strategy, Amman's MGP also accounts for the city's characteristic identity and planning culture. As such, the MGP is an exemplar of a hybridized knowledge outcome (Rose 1991). Simultaneously, the tools devised to achieve these objectives account for Amman's distinctive identity especially its hilly nature, residential terraces, public stairways, and cultural heritage. For example, the Corridor Intensification Strategy, which, as a practice, is directly borrowed from the Places to Grow, yet it offers distinctively local and different concept plans for each of the proposed eleven corridors all of which take into account the diverse topography, existing built form, and current land uses of each (Greater Amman Municipality 2007c).

Similarly, the Abu Dhabi-Vancouver collaboration produced a number of planning documents primarily, the Abu Dhabi Plan 2030 Strategic Framework, which was later renamed Abu Dhabi Vision 2030. This document provided a comprehensive analysis of the planning and growth needs of the Emirate, with a particular focus on integrating sustainability principles. These principles were then translated into a regulatory framework through Estidama, a sustainable design and construction guidebook modeled on the framework of the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) and its subsequent version for neighborhood design (LEED-ND). Estidama, Arabic for 'sustainability', presents a Pearl Rating System (PRS) with versions of LEED and LEED-ND that are adapted to the characteristics of Abu Dhabi including, climate controls and specifications for materials and design. The PRS mimics the LEED rating hierarchy (from certified, to silver, gold, and platinum). Also, similar to LEED, the guidebooks of the Estidama Pearl Rating System distinguish between the Buildings, Villas, and Communities categories. The PRS was released in 2010, a year after Estidama and was not only immediately applied to all new projects, but also became mandatory of those that had received prior approval from the UPC and were already under construction at the time (Abu Dhabi Urban Planning Council Information Bulletin 2, February 16 2011). In his description of Estidama at the CanU Symposium in Montreal, Larry Beasley emphasized the 'hybridization' of the transferred knowledge (Rose 1991) by confirming that it is 'really calibrated to a desert climate and conditions of [Emirati] culture and it is already being applied and will be applied very aggressively over the next couple of years for all the development.' The operationalized knowledge delivered by the UPC also extends beyond the regulation of small-scale development to include Emirate-wide planning, thus establishing the UPC as the lead agency that plans all aspects of urban development and growth, both strategic and standardized.

Although similar in their approach to adapt the globally endorsed theories (explicit knowledge), the emerging plans for Amman differ in the regulatory authority than those of Estidama. The latter maintain the status of endorsed policies whose implementation continues to be in effect while in Amman, some of the outcomes in the MGP lacked a statutory status. In addition, and probably influenced by the Arab Spring, some of the constituencies that were affected by the planning decisions, and who claimed during focus groups and interviews that they were not properly engaged in a participatory decision-making process, campaigned against some of the already implemented policies such as the amalgamation of new districts within the metropolitan boundaries of Greater Amman. Indeed, some of these policies have either been halted or reversed over the past few months including a recent decree that has altogether eliminated the Amman Institute for Urban Development (Ai), which is the

equivalent of the UPC (AlGhad Newspaper 2011). Other reversed decisions include the eventual dismantling of the policy that amalgamated additional districts to the Greater Amman Municipality and the construction of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) (Al-Habashneh, 2011, The Jordan Times, 2011).

Most importantly, while initially the Canadian planners were invited to Amman and Abu Dhabi to contribute their practices, and more specifically, to transfer Toronto's smart growth policies to Amman and Vancouver's sustainability policies to Abu Dhabi, the knowledge transfer process extended beyond the transfer of only 'hard policies' (Stone 2004: 545). Instead, the transactions between the transferring and the acquiring agents in both cases entailed an exchange, rather than a mere transfer, of 'tacit knowledge' (Polanyi 1966)—whether it relates to the soft local knowledge or the local norms that collectively shape the planning culture. Simultaneously, these transactions also witnessed the transfer of various forms of 'explicit knowledge' (Nonaka, 1991: 98) including established theories such as smart growth and sustainability. But most importantly, in both cases, the transactions between the transfer agents yielded new conceptual and practical knowledge through the combination of the local and the transferred knowledge and then its operationalization, such as with the context specific design guidelines for the Intensification Corridors in Amman, and Estidama in Abu Dhabi. Indeed, John van Nostrand, one of the senior Torontonians in Amman described the emerging conceptual theory in Amman as a form of 'critical urbanism,' which refers to:

'The combination of global best practices and initiatives infrastructures ideas, but meshed with local practices and local ideas and traditions. And that's the direction forward that we must take [...] and certainly the direction that we are taking in planning for Amman, and I might say the planning we're taking for Toronto as well' (conference keynote address 22 May 2009).

Similarly, a Vancouverite planner expounded on the theoretical contribution in Abu Dhabi, which is:

'...an area that wants to grow, very quickly. It wants to be one of the top five governments in the world. It wants to be recognized as a leader in planning. And to do so, it needed to change its general philosophy, and intent, and direction in terms of planning. And so that's kind why we were brought in; to begin to institute that new philosophy' (interview on 25 April 2011).

These statements reflect the intent to raise the bar for planning in both Amman and Abu Dhabi, and along with this came the goal to strategically build local capacity. To this end, the processes of combination, adaptation, and hybridization discussed thus far created the basis for ensuring that local agents would be able to relate to, and therefore carry forward the projects initiated during the collaborations. As one Vancouver planner put it:

‘To build local planning professional capacity (in regard to substance and process) and what I would call a more contemporary and sophisticated “connoisseurship of urbanism”, we did a very systematic program of briefing, education, mentoring and tutoring. This was an explicit part of [the] mandate from His Highness’ (personal correspondence, 25 May 2012).

The capacity building program included focused training on urbanism and planning techniques employed in Vancouver, with the aid of leading academic experts brought to Abu Dhabi by Larry Beasley and his team. The reverse was also enacted, with several young Emirati planners travelling to Vancouver to partake in a ‘Vancouver laboratory on urbanism’ and learn from leading urbanists in the field (personal correspondence, 25 May 2012).

Planning Outcomes: Lessons for the Future

The findings reveal that the transfer of knowledge from Toronto to Amman and from Vancouver to Abu Dhabi transcends copying, grafting, and imposition. Also, while the intensification policies were adapted for Amman and the sustainability policies for Abu Dhabi, the adaptation simultaneously entailed experiential learning particularly, in Abu Dhabi’s continuous updating of Es-tidama’s regulations. Throughout these processes, the transactions between the Canadian transferring agents and the Ammani and Emirati acquiring ones were complimentary and based on a two-way exchange process rather than mere transfer. Indeed, a Vancouverite planner in Abu Dhabi stressed, ‘learning has gone both ways day-in-and-day-out, which has had a big positive impact on the visiting planners’ (personal correspondence, 25 May 2012).

The critical transactions observed in both Amman and Abu Dhabi therefore revolve around the processes of hybridization and adaptation as opposed to direct copying as discussed by Rose (1991), which created the conditions for both experiential and vicarious learning as expressed by Dalkir (2005). Throughout these transactions, knowledge (whether hard policies, soft norms, theories, or practices) cascaded along the authority hierarchies to the most junior among the local planners until eventually, the acquiring planners in

Amman and Abu Dhabi assumed authority over the ensuing plans. One Vancouverite planner noted: 'the interesting thing is that most of [the Vancouverites] stuck it out for the four or five years, and were part of the plans going right through and have now returned to Vancouver. It's like they finished their mission and...they've come back' (interview on 12 October 2011). Nevertheless, one of the now repatriated Vancouver planners simultaneously expressed concern over the continued progress of the UPC following the departure of the transfer agents (personal correspondence, 25 May 2012). While it is premature for this research to evaluate the outcomes of capacity building in the Emirate, the future achievements of the UPC will certainly provide ongoing evidence as to the success or failure of this aspect of the knowledge transfer.

The knowledge exchange that occurred in Amman and Abu Dhabi, and the fact that it entailed both hybridization and some elements of inspiration certainly do not mean that the transfer of knowledge from Canadian cities to Middle Eastern ones lacked a negative side. One of the major critiques to both cases revolves around the almost complete absence of participatory planning throughout the process. While during their interviews, some of the Torontonian planners claimed to have introduced the public participation debate to Amman, further probing through interviews reveals that such participation was limited to a select elite of Amman's society who were appointed by the Mayor as members of his 'Round Table.' In fact, the eventual dismantling of many a policy over the past few months might be attributed to the consequences of neglecting to appropriately incorporate the local community during the development of the Amman Master Plan—an oversight that triggered further critique in light of the Arab Spring. In Abu Dhabi, public participation was never brought to the table, and like Amman, was only selectively used as a tool to add value to projects in some communities as opposed to being implemented as a necessary exercise. One Vancouverite planner however, noted that this state of affairs is slowly beginning to change through the tentative actions of the UPC to implement community consultation on a more frequent basis (personal correspondence, 25 May 2012).

In both cases, the flow of knowledge between the planners was substantial, however, the final result of the transfer appears to have culminated out more productively in Abu Dhabi, whereas in Amman the current atmosphere surrounding the AMP is anticlimactic of the energy and inspiration that was its birth. The more positive outcome in Abu Dhabi can, ironically, be attributed to the distinctive authority wielded by the ruling elite. Public engagement in decision-making is not actively pursued, as expressed by Larry Beasley:

‘...we can learn something about the efficiencies that come from quick decisions and coherent decisions, and leaders that

are actually respected. When I ask people, 'surely you would prefer to have the democracy that we see in Canada?' almost everyone says "no, not really. I'd rather have a system that gets things done very quickly." What would take here a year or two years to do, you could do there in 4-6 months and that's just the reality. That's the hard reality of it' (Keynote address, CanU Symposium 2010).

It would therefore appear that, in Abu Dhabi's case particularly, the ability to produce outcomes is not predicated on budgetary allowances, but rather on the trust in the fact that the leadership will provide support and the plans will lead to fruition.

Acknowledgements

Our gratitude and appreciation go to Professor Pierre Filion at the University of Waterloo for his mentorship and guidance and for his help with translations; to all the Canadian, Jordanian, and Emirati planners who shared their experiences, particularly Mr. Larry Beasley, Mr. John van Nostrand, and Mr. Gerry Post; and to the reviewers for their constructive feedback. Lastly, we are grateful to Columbia University's Middle East Research Center (CUMERC) in Amman, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of Canada for their financial support.

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