

Expo 2020 Dubai Programme for People and Planet

WORLD MAJLIS AGENDA

KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING WEEK

12 – 18 December 2021



DATE

Sunday 12th December 2021

TIME

4.00 to 6.00 PM

VENUE

Terra – The Sustainability Pavilion

THE TOPIC

THE SCIENCE OF EVERYTHING:

Science versus Disinformation in the Digital Realm

In collaboration with the USA

In spite of publicly available research, millions of people believe that vaccines cause autism, that biological evolution is a lie, and that global warming is a hoax. Finding a way for science to regain its crucial role of helping people to distinguish facts from misinformation has become critical.

In this digital age, we have more information at our fingertips than ever before, yet separating facts from fiction is getting harder. Greater reliance on social media, rather than fact-checked, verified information, has given people access to a wider range of sources and “alternative facts”, which are often at odds with scientific findings, incomplete or simply false.

Encouraging basic scientific literacy and an interest in science may play a key part towards solving some of our greatest challenges today, from the global COVID-19 pandemic at hand, to climate change or the transformation of our society through new technologies such as robotics or 5G.

- How prevalent is misinformation in the world today?
- What are the most likely target areas for disinformation?
- Can a better understanding of science help us identify “fake news” and alternative facts?
- Is science the only answer?
- What is the role of everyone in society, from individuals to governments?

MODERATOR

Sultan Sooud Al-Qassemi

Columnist and researcher, UAE



Sultan Sooud Al-Qassemi is a columnist and researcher on social, political, and cultural affairs in the Arab Gulf states. Al-Qassemi is also founder of the Barjeel Art Foundation in Sharjah, UAE. He was an MIT Media Lab Director's Fellow from 2014 to 2016, a practitioner-in-residence at the Hagop Kevorkian Center for Near Eastern Studies at New York University in spring 2017 and a Yale Greenberg World Fellow in 2018. Al-Qassemi was a visiting instructor at the Council of Middle East Studies at Yale University, the Center of Contemporary Arab Studies at Georgetown University, the American University of Paris, the Islamic Civilization and Societies programme at Boston College and the School of Public Affairs at SciencesPo, Paris. In the Fall 2021 Al Qassemi was appointed as Kuwait Foundation Visiting Scholar, Middle East Initiative at the Harvard Kennedy School and Lecturer, School of Arts and Sciences, Brandeis University. Al-Qassemi, along with Todd Reisz is co-editor of Building Sharjah (Birkhäuser, 2021).

PARTICIPANTS

H.E. Ambassador Omar Saif Ghobash

Assistant Minister for Cultural Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, UAE



His Excellency Omar Saif Ghobash was appointed Assistant Minister for Cultural Affairs at the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation in October 2019. He was appointed Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates to France on November 24, 2017, and Ambassador to the Russian Federation in 2008. He began his career in the UAE Mission to the United Nations, founded Dubai's first international contemporary art gallery, is a trustee of the International Prize for Arabic Fiction, and sponsors the Saif Ghobash Banipal Prize for Arabic Literary Translation in memory of his father, the UAE's first Minister of State for Foreign Affairs. He is a trustee at the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence at King's College London and the Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy in Abu Dhabi as well as the author of Letters to a Young Muslim, a vital manifesto tackling the dilemmas facing young Muslims & everyone navigating the complexities of today's world.

His Excellency currently serves as the Deputy Commissioner for the UAE Pavilion at Expo 2020.



Fares Akkad

Director of Media Partnerships for News in Growth Markets, Meta, UAE

Fares Akkad is Director of Media Partnerships for News in Growth Markets across Asia Pacific, Latin America, Middle East Africa, and Turkey at Facebook. In his role, Fares focuses on building relationships with journalists and publishers as they embrace the digital age in pursuit of sustainable business models for trusted journalism. Fares and his team work closely with news organizations to introduce strategies for leveraging new tools, including Facebook's products and capabilities, in an effort to engage and better support more publishers across emerging markets. In the process, Fares aims to identify joint ideas that can maximize mutually beneficial objectives.

Rashid Al Awadhi

CEO, New Media Academy, UAE

Rashid has over 24 years of Marketing and Communications experience, including various senior-level positions in Middle East based multi-national companies, as well as UAE government entities.

Before being named CEO of the New Media Academy, Rashid was the Senior Vice-President for Marketing and Communications at the Dubai International Financial Center, leading the transition of the organization into Digital Media and Content Marketing.

Prior to that, he founded and managed Barza New Media, a digitally driven boutique-style consultancy that specialized in the production of social media driven reality content, with particular focus on Arabic-centric topics.

Before that, he was the co-founder of "Qabeela.tv" with his brother Mohamed. Together they produced, directed and hosted the award-winning social travel show "Peeta Planet", which was the first ever blended Social TV show in the world. The show was powered by Google and supported by twofour54.

He was chosen as one of "The 40 Most Influential Emiratis Under 40" during the UAE's 40th National Day celebrations, and was featured on the Forbes Middle East list of "50 Impactful Marketing and Communications Professionals In The Middle East" in 2020.



Professor Liina Pykkänen

Professor of Linguistics and Psychology, New York University, USA



Liina Pykkänen is a Professor of Linguistics and Psychology at New York University. She is the director of the NYU Neurolinguistics Laboratory and a co-director of the Neuroscience of Language Laboratory at NYUNYC and NYU Abu Dhabi. She also directs the magnetoencephalography (MEG) neuroimaging facility in the Psychology Department of New York University.

Prof. Pykkänen received her Ph.D. in Linguistics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and conducted her post-doctoral work at New York University. Her research addresses the brain bases of language processing, with a focus on semantic cognition. She is one of the pioneers in the use of MEG to characterize the brain mechanisms of language and has, over the last 20 years, generated a systematic body of MEG research on multiple linguistic processing levels. This year, she was elected as president of the international Society of the Neurobiology of Language.

In recent years, she has spent significant effort on science communication to the general public by starting a YouTube channel on the neurobiology of language and a lab podcast.

Dr Sumaiya Shaikh, PhD

Neuroscientist, Violence Researcher, Science Fact-Checker, CVE consultant, Sweden



Dr Sumaiya Shaikh is a Swedish-Australian neuroscientist with PhD in Medicine (Neurophysiology) from Sydney, Australia and a post-doctoral fellowship from the Linköping University hospital, Sweden. She has had over 6 years of teaching experience in an MBBS course at the medical school of Western Sydney University.

She's the Founding Editor of Alt News Science for which she has produced several sci-checks. She has been an expert in the misinformation epidemic during the COVID-19 pandemic. She advocates for evidence-based medicine and critiques misinformation in public health policies.

Her primary research focuses on the human brain during fear, anger, aggression & violent behaviour, while writing a book about the science behind ordinary people committing violent crimes. She has several research projects on misinformation, political violence and terrorism and has worked with several former and current violent extremists across Europe, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and the US. She is the founder of a CVE organisation in Sweden called ViolEND ÅB.

VIRTUAL PARTICIPANT

Alicia Wanless

Director of the Partnership for Countering Influence Operations,
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, USA



Alicia Wanless is the director of the Partnership for Countering Influence Operations at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. With a growing international multi-stakeholder community, the Partnership aims to foster evidence-based policymaking to counter threats within the information environment. Wanless is currently a PhD Researcher at King's College London exploring how the information environment can be studied in similar ways to the physical environment. She is also a pre-doctoral fellow at Stanford University's Center for International Security and Cooperation, and was a tech advisor to Aspen Institute's Commission on Information Disorder. Her work has been featured in Lawfare, The National Interest, Foreign Policy, and CBC.