SORBONNE UNIVERSITY ABU DHABI

SORBONNE ABU DHABI FOR INNOVATION & RESEARCH

TSU TRANSPORT STUDIES UNIT

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD





Research Conference

Bridging Dubai-Abu Dhabi

Toward One Global City

Wednesday 19 November 2025
9:30 am - 3:15 pm

SUAD Campus

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Summary

SAFIR, in partnership with Oxford's Transport Studies Unit (TSU), presents "Bridging Dubai–Abu Dhabi: Toward One Global City", an interdisciplinary conference aimed at exploring the spatial, infrastructural, and governance challenges of connecting Dubai and Abu Dhabi into a cohesive global metropolis. The event will bring together leading academics, policymakers, and industry stakeholders for a day of focused discussions on metropolitan integration and polycentric mega-regions. Key sessions will address the 15-Minute City concept, intercity transport corridors, public transit, digitalisation of work, and urban logistics. The afternoon will spotlight neighbourhood-scale planning, including cycling infrastructure, electric mobility, and public space design. The conference will conclude with a strategic keynote and a closing roundtable offering actionable recommendations for sustainable urban development and regional coordination..

Programme

Opening Session

09:30 - 09:45

Welcome Remarks

Dr Benjamin Motte-Baumvol, Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi

Framing the spatial and mobility stakes of connecting Dubai and Abu Dhabi into a cohesive and sustainable global metropolis.

Part I – Mobility and the Global City Challenge

09:45 - 10:15

Keynote 1

Prof Richard Shearmur, McGill University

Title: **Global Cities and the Challenges of Metropolisation**

This keynote will examine how global cities emerge, evolve, and govern complexity in an era of accelerated urban integration. It will discuss the structural tensions between growth, mobility, and sustainability that shape metropolitan futures worldwide.

10:15 - 10:25

Q & A Session

10:25 - 11:10
Panel Discussion – Mobility Systems in a Global Metropolis

Facilitated by Moderator:
Dr Juan Pablo Orjuela, University of Oxford

- ***Speaker 1:*** Freight, Flows and Metropolitan Complexity: Understanding the Logistics Backbone of Global Cities (**Prof Laetitia Dablanc,** Université Gustave Eiffel)
- ***Speaker 2:*** Etihad Rail – From Vision to Integration: Building the National Railway Masterplan and Linking the Emirates (**Ali Al Sammarraie,** Head of City Planning)
- ***Speaker 3:*** Etihad Airways – Greening the Sky: Aviation as the Missing Link in Sustainable Metropolitan Integration (**Mariam Al Qubaisi,** Director of International Relations, UAE Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure; Former Director of Sustainability)

Format: 10 min per speaker + 15 min moderated discussion (~45 min)

11:10 - 11:20
Q & A Session

Part II – Innovation and Sustainable Mobility

11:20 - 12:05
Panel Discussion – Innovation and the Future of Sustainable Mobility

Facilitated by Moderator:
Prof Richard Shearmur, McGill University

- ***Speaker 1:*** Telework, Mobility and Sustainability: Rethinking Commuting in a Polycentric Region (**Dr Benjamin Motte-Baumvol,** Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi)
- ***Speaker 2:*** Modelling the Willingness to Adopt Shared and Electric Mobility (**Prof Elisabetta Cherchi,** New York University Abu Dhabi)
- ***Speaker 3:*** Alternative and Sustainable Mobility, Abu Dhabi Mobility – Building a Connected and Inclusive Transport Ecosystem (**Anan Al Amri,** Section Head)

Format: 10 min per speaker + 15 min moderated discussion (~45 min)

12:05 - 12:15
Q & A Session

12:15 - 13:00
Lunch Break (45 minutes)

Networking lunch at SUAD Atrium

Part III – Concepts and Planning Horizons

13:30 - 14:00
Transition Keynote

Prof Tim Schwanen, University of Oxford

Title: **Bridging Scales: Transport in Global Cities and the 15-Minute City Paradigm**

Exploring how the goals of global connectivity and local accessibility can coexist—and the tensions they generate for sustainable transport planning.

14:00 - 14:10
Q & A Session

14:10 - 14:55
Panel Discussion – Proximity, Space, and Everyday Urban Life

Facilitated by Moderator:
Dr Simone Safe, Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi

- ***Speaker 1:*** The 15-Minute City in a Global City Context: Competing Temporalities and Urban Imaginaries (**Dr Zakiyya Adam,** University of Oxford)
- ***Speaker 2:*** Everyday uses and social interaction in Abu Dhabi's Public Spaces (**Clio Chaveaneau,** Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi)
- ***Speaker 3:*** Instant Deliveries and the Paradox of Proximity: Convenience and Sustainability in the Global City (**Prof Laetitia Dablanc,** Université Gustave Eiffel)

Format: 10 min per speaker + 15 min moderated discussion (~45 min)

14:55 - 15:05
Q & A Session

15:05 - 15:15
Closing Remarks

Concluding reflections by Dr Benjamin Motte-Baumvol