



Aurak Al ausat - 2

- Vocational Education:
Past, Present and future developments
- Improvements in the Image of Arabs and Muslims
in American Cinema
- Legacies of the 20th Century and knowledge imperatives
for the 21st Century
- Comparative Studies in Social Sciences:
Think diversity, think the "other "



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Editor and Program Coordinator :
Abdelwahab Ben Hafaiedh

Assistant Editor : Moushira El jeziri
Designing : Imen Zayani
Administration : ida Saidani

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23 Rue d'ESPAGNE 1000 Tunisie

Phone: (00216)71322667-71324811

Fax: (00216)71326770

Email:

contact@mercprogram.org

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Al_awsat@mercprogram.org

Summary

Foreword	:	7
Moushira El jaziri	:	Vocational Education :Past, Present and future developments.....	13
Laurence Michalak	:	Improvements in the Image of Arabs and Muslims in American Cinema...	39
Albert Sasson	:	Legacies of the 20th Century and knowledge imperatives for the 21st Century.....	55
Ida Saidani	:	Comparative Studies in Social Sciences : Think diversity, think the “other”.....	65

Foreword

After the first issue of *Awrak el Awsat* saw the light of day, one of our readers posed the following question : Given that we are unable to comprehend what is going on in the Arab societies due to the scarcity of information and data, are prospective studies a science that can be given attention and priority in the Arab countries ? There is no doubt a grain of truth in this reservation which merits consideration.

Gaston Berger defines this area of knowledge as first and foremost a method of work and thinking to change the present through liberating – even if relatively – what is inevitable. This vision, which can be short, medium or long in its range, requires maximum employment of imagination; what is possible and what is aspired. Neither are traditions and experiences of the past nor knowledge of the present - despite their importance - sufficient to influence our ideas about society. A dose of imagination is then needed. We need to ask : what if ?

In this competition for inquiry, the social, political and economic researchers and even writers, following the French writer Jules Verne, come together. Hence, we can say that there are no terminal inevitables as the future is at stake even when outcomes seem determined by logical antecedents. The latter are themselves transient even when they seem certain. Sometimes the relationship between futurology and prospective studies seems ambiguous. The Chinese proverb “when the wise man points at the moon, the fool looks at the finger” applies here. It is true that there are «heavy» trends that determine the present and future of societies, yet changing trajectories and subsequently the potential outcomes, is possible. Potential negative outcomes can be taken into account towards re-directing the ship to the right path : Here and now. This ability to understand the

present and change it, through a far-reaching look into the future, is what creates the difference between the one who looks at the finger and the other who looks at the moon.

The vivid evidence asserting the importance of futurology in social sciences are the numerous Arab and international seminars held over a year span to discuss the international financial crisis and its repercussions. Noticeably, most of these events were directed towards estimating the size of potential losses in the area of exports and the mobility of labor and stock markets, while neglecting other no less important social, psychological, scientific and educational issues, such as the relationship between education and the labor market, the proliferation of conflicts over scarce resources, high costs of raw materials or even conditions of psychological health.

It is at this point that we see the extent to which the concept of 'crisis' can be addressed from different angles. Dealing with crisis as a quantum of events, antecedents, mechanical outcomes and inevitable events (particularly economic) may allow us to establish a discourse on futurology and look at the finger by passing over the present. On the other hand, examining crisis holistically with the economy constituting only one part of the chain or the complex puzzle i.e. thinking about the role of the economic, social, political and cultural actors and rendering man the focal point in the thinking process as an entity capable of revising choices positively and freely, is what makes us think prospectively. The view from this angle differs in form and content from the technical, procedural and statistical monitoring of the future. Futurology, in this sense, transcends the future. It becomes a reading of events from the perspective of responsibility – both scientific and citizenry - of the researcher. Looking at prospective studies from this angle, they become a revision of the main choices of development and the makers of these choices. The latter are seen as main actors with a role in determining outcomes.

With this problematic in mind, *Awrak al Awsat* devoted space for a dialogue with Egyptian economist Gouda Abdel-Khalek on the economic reforms and management of the international financial crisis in which he deduced lessons learnt for the Arab countries. The current issue of the journal also included articles on the creation of an Arab academic space at a juncture in which knowledge economy blocs have become pervasive. Other articles in this issue have dealt with the role of Arab research centers in developing prospective research and the relationship between them and technological development.

The perennial core of MERC activities remain the 'raw' products of research proposals selected for funding in the MERC research competition in

addition to papers presented at the MERC seminar organized jointly with the Arab Women Organization in Bloudan, Syria, 2008 on «Women and the Public Sphere». Four papers from among a total of 27 judged to be in line with the prospective interests of the *Awrak al Awsat* have found their way to this issue.

Yasmine Berriane (Morocco) defines the main features of women participation in the public sphere in Morocco in an atmosphere of democratic openness and an expanding role for civil society. Amal al-Obeidi (Libya) chose to address the main features of the current reform process in Libya and its impact on citizenship trajectories and public participation. Following the same analytical line, i.e. citizenship, Islah Jad (Palestine) spoke about the changes in citizenship discourse in Palestine. Finally, Moushira El-Jaziri (Egypt) dealt with the role of vocational education in influencing the career trajectory of women from lower middle class backgrounds in Egypt and their opportunities for social mobility .

Finally, «the general trends of skills mobility” was the subject of the round-table which brought together a number of researchers in the area of migration representing different institutions such as :

The Tunisian Agency for Technical Cooperation (ATCT).

The Moroccan Statistics Agency.

The Institute for Statistics, Qatar.

The Population Policies and Migration Department of the League of Arab States.

The purpose of the meeting was to consider possible options for developing skills’ trends and means of cooperation with these ‘skills’ from their location in the Diaspora, instead of focusing on strategies of return.

Abdelwahab Benhafaiedh

Articles

- Mouchira El jaziri
- Laurence Michalak
- Albert Sasson
- Ida Saïdani

- Vocational Education: History and Developments

- Comparative Studies Improvements in the Image of Arabs and Muslims in American

- Legacies of the 20th Century and knowledge imperatives for the 21st Century

- Comparative Studies in Social Sciences: Think diversity, think the "other"

Vocational Education: Past, Present and future developments

Moushira El jaziri *

* Moushira El Jaziri: has BA and MA in political science from the American University in Cairo. She has been working since 2006 on her Ph.D. thesis in Development Studies at the International Institute of Social Studies, Erasmus University, The Hague. Her thesis addresses the question of occupational and social mobility among lower middle class working women in Egypt. She also has many years of work experience in the area of capacity building in social sciences in the Arab countries.

Email : melgeziri@gmail.com

This paper is part of a larger project on occupational and social mobility aspirations of lower middle class working women in Egypt and it specifically focuses on the case of female technical schools graduates.

In this paper, the author examines the history and development of this stream of education and makes a case for its historical disadvantage and relegation to a second class kind of education, which has affected the social status of its students and graduates in a time when massification of higher education has become a great problem for the future of education in Egypt .

هذه الورقة هي جزء من مشروع أكبر عن الحراك المهني والاجتماعي للنساء العاملات من الطبقة الدنيا المتوسطة في مصر تركز فيها الكاتبة بشكل خاص على خريجات المدارس التجارية المتوسطة. وفي هذه الورقة تفحص الكاتبة تاريخ تطور هذا النوع من التعليم وتشير الى أن التعامل معه كنوع متدنى من التعليم قد أثر على رؤية خريجه لأنفسهم ووضعهم الاجتماعي .

تبين الورقة كيف أصبح التعليم المهني بمثابة الابن البتيم للتعليم الثانوي العام وكيف تدنت قيمة هذا الصنف من التعليم، في وقت أصبح يمثل فيه التوسع الكمي للتعليم مشكلة كبرى بالنسبة للمستقبل المنظور في مصر.

In this paper, I trace the history of vocational education¹ in Egypt to uncover how government policies, orientations and legislation have been used to relegate vocational education to a second class type of education thus thwarting the aspirations of students to use it as a tool for social advancement. Using a political economy approach, I analyze how vocational education gradually became the ‘poor sister’ of general secondary education, and how this type of education together with illiteracy eradication were described as a revolutionary achievement of the 1952 revolution ended up being a live evidence of the failure to productively absorb the energies of millions of graduates of vocational schools and harness their efforts to meet the goals of economic growth. My main interest lies in commercial education and in female students and graduates of this branch. As I attempt to demonstrate here, commercial education has been marginalized over the years to the extent that in recent times, when people speak about vocational education they actually mean industrial education as the latter has been increasingly recognized as the only stream of education worth recognition and investment.

I. The early years

Efforts to build vocational schools were individual, fragmented and sporadic until the advent of the builder of Egypt’s modern history, Mohamed Ali (1805-1848) whose rule represented a milestone in education reforms. Credit goes to him for setting up the first technical school in 1820 (see Angliker, 1935). The attention Mohamed Ali gave to education was however disrupted with the British occupation in 1881 as educating the Egyptians was not the colonizer’s priority and their aim was to provide only the minimum education to those who could be absorbed easily in the civil service and could run the colonial administration and business without burdening the state’s meager resources (Richardson and Waterbury, 1996 ; Shenouda, 1967). In the early decades of the 20th century the majority of educated were men who with their primary school certificate were qualified to take up government positions (Mina 1980).

Credit goes to Christian missionaries and to the European communities who had the capital and controlled the country’s major economic and financial activities in opening the first formal private and non governmental industrial and commercial schools. (Angliker, 1935 ;

1- Technically, there is a difference between vocational and technical education. However, in this study I use the two terms interchangeably unless otherwise indicated.

Shenouda, 1967). The number of Egyptian students in commercial education was small given that private business, controlled by members of the numerous foreign communities, was closed before them as they lacked competence in foreign languages. Thus, growing impatient with the system, parents who could afford it sent their children to general secondary schools so they could have a professional career. It was only with the establishment of the first purely Egyptian bank, Banque Misr in 1920 with Egyptian capital, revived the general interest in commerce and so increased the number of applications for this type of training. (Angliker 1935).

On the front of girls' education, in general, there was no demand at the turn of the century on it and consequently no investment in it as it was thought to induce immorality and moral decadence (Hyde, 1978). Moreover, for the ordinary women there were no auspicious job opportunities in the modern economy. Ultimately, it was marriage not work that was their only source of economic security (Gran, 1977).

Thus, in general, on the eve of the July revolution the educational scene was grim, but more so for women than men: Female illiteracy rate in 1952 was 91.3%. Primary enrollment ratio was 26 percent, secondary enrollment 7 percent and third level enrollment 25 percent of all eligible students with women forming only 36 percent of those. (Howard-Merriam 1979 : 257)

II. The honeymoon

Egypt had traveled the road of free education in 1950 just before the revolution as education was made free and compulsory from the age of 6 to 12 and secondary schools were open to anyone who completed primary education (Richards and Waterbury 1996: 119). What was new in 1952 was that it was generally anticipated that the people would have new and more opportunities under the new regime (Wheelock, 1960). Among the six principles of the revolution was the establishment of social justice². Ensuring the people's right to health and educational services were among his goals.

2- The other five principles are: elimination of imperialism and traitorous Egyptian Collaborators ; ending feudalism, ending the monopoly and domination of capital over the government ; building a powerful army and establishing a sound democratic system.

Commitment to establishing the universal right to education of all citizens and asserting the vitality of education as a tool for development was emphasized since the early days of the revolution. Free education was once more emphasized and the government declared its goal to achieve universal education by the year 1965 (Hopwood 1982 : 139-140). Raising the motto “a school everyday”, there was a massive building of new schools which continued beyond the rule of Nasser, and number of schools doubled to 10,000 between 1952 to 1976 and over the same period from primary school enrolment more than quadrupled from 1 to 4.2 million (Waterbury 1985 : 218). There was an emphasis upon technical education which was envisaged to play a crucial role in the country’s development and economic plans (Szyliowicz, 1973).

But the task of integrating vocational education in the education system and giving it a central role was not easy to accomplish. Writers attribute the difficulty to the long time aversion of Egyptians to manual work which has had deep roots. Thus, in the early years following the revolution, the challenge faced by governments was how to improve the image of vocational education and it took Nasser and his regime intensive discourse to instill national pride, assert the need for education to prove that Egypt was fit and capable of industrialization, emphasize the regime’s commitment to social justice and ascertain the inevitability of the socialist solution and people’s control over tools of production and the need for planning and a vibrant public sector.

In the early years, the regime had thought little about women per se and paid minimum attention to according them greater equality as it was preoccupied with large national priorities. Domestic roles for women still persisted and pre-revolutionary feminine cultural schools in both the preparatory and secondary stages lingered on. (Hyde, 1978). The real recognition did not happen until the regime began to develop an ideology and give more consideration to its program for social justice after consolidation of power. The most notable development with regard to women’s education was the progress achieved in higher education after the 1952 revolution with and an increase in number of women studying science and engineering and medical subjects, as opposed to humanities (Howard-Merriam 1979).

Within this revolutionary climate that emphasized the need for public mobilization to respond to exigencies of nation building, girls began to

enroll in industrial schools. This started in 1959/60 with a modest number of 23 students rising gradually to 810 in 1964 and 13661 in 1979 (Metwalli, 1989 : 114). Girls' enrollment in agricultural schools took place much later in 1976/77 with 616 students, rising to 4869 in 1978/1979 (Ibid: 222). However, girls were steadily finding their way into commercial schools with proportions rising from 12% in 1955-56 to 25% in 1961/62 (Boktor 1963 : 67). Starting 1968/69 the number of girls in commercial education was drawing closer to the number of boys : (49.8% for boys ; 50.2% for girls), a trend that continued in the following years. In 1979 girls had formed a majority of 52,6 % (Metwalli, 1989 : 166) and since then, the tradition of commercial schools becoming the domain of Egyptian women was firmly established.

By 1956 a five year plan (1960-65) was drawn up that resulted in the increase in industrial production and the introduction of a number of important new industries including among others the iron and steel industry, rubber and pharmaceuticals. These provided work opportunities for a large number of individuals in the industrial sector. Moreover the imminent expansion in cultivable land resulting from completion of work on the High Dam also meant the provision of work opportunities for most graduates of universities and technical schools (Research Project 1963). The job opportunities in the new factories and industrial and agricultural centers absorbed graduates of industrial and agricultural schools many of whom had worked in clerical positions outside their specializations before the revolution.

III. The beginning of the crisis

During the following years, the government took firm steps towards the enforcement of socialism and it was seen as important to link educational policies with the government's economic development. (Ibrahim 1982 ; Szyliowicz, 1973). While this period witnessed the rise of several types of the educational policy and research institutions such as the Supreme Council for National Planning and the National Planning Commission and in 1960 the Institute of National Planning with research and training functions, it was then that educational planners and experts started to face the huge lack of educational data, demographic information on the population and occupational regional institutions and manpower needs, in addition to the shortage in planning experts and lack of coordination between various governmental agencies. The implication was the failure to link manpower

needs with the supply and skills of graduates of the different educational institutions. Avoiding the time lag between the graduation of students and their appointment in the different locations became a matter of concern along with the problem of meeting the shortages of teaching staff at the various levels of education in precise areas of industry (Hyde 1978).

At the same time, the government took a major step by codifying the principle of open admission to university in 1963 of all successful general secondary school graduates and in the following year it took on the obligation to hire all those who graduated from university and graduates of vocational schools in the government bureaucracy. It was said that the government had been attempting to substitute for the large number of expatriate technicians who had left the country after the Suez Crisis in 1956. But also, the fact was that the revolution had been declared in the name of the people and it was generally anticipated that the people would have new and more opportunities under the new regime. An extension of this thesis was that higher education came to be considered a right rather than a privilege (Wheelock 1960).

University education continued to be the dream of most young people and their families. Studies have shown that despite inducements and propaganda to improve the image of vocational education, the overwhelming majority of fathers in both rural and urban areas, regardless of income, preferred an academic rather than a vocational secondary education for their children that would lead up to university (Fahmy, 1973 in Hyde, 1978 p. 93). Waterbury (1985) explains the subtle differences between different levels of the lower classes, that can not be explained in terms of money but are a question of status and dignity (Waterbury 1985).

Abdelfadil (1980) also emphasizes that despite the regime's efforts to improve the image of manual work and establish equality, status segregation continued to persist under Nasser. Despite the fact that the 60s, particularly the period from 1961-66, were marked by the improvement of the living standards of skilled workers, the increase in the number of individuals who earned middle range incomes as well as a reduced income gap between manual workers and white collar employees, leading to overlap between them in terms of income, Abdelfadil notes that, "their social worlds remained separate" (p. 47).

Despite the government's attempts to enhance university education and the expenditure bias towards tertiary education (Abdel-fadil 1982 in

Williamson 1987 : 120), for the public, continuing in higher levels of education past the compulsory stage was not feasible as it required obtaining high scores on the secondary school leaving exam which was increasingly becoming a function of families' economic and financial resources.

With overcrowded schools and the lack of well-trained teachers, parents who could afford it resorted to private tutoring for their children so they would have a better chance of success at school. Soon education, the main socio-economic promoter, became more accessible and useful to children of the privileged classes and less to poorer classes.

In a study of the engineering schools of Egypt, the elite origin of students, particularly females was observed (Moore in Papanek 1985 : 329). Towards the end of the sixties only about a tenth of university students were children of workers and peasants who represented over 82% of the population while over 85% of the students were children of professionals, white collar workers and petite bourgeoisie of all sorts who represented just about 15% of the population (Ayubi 1980 : 417). As a result of their privileged education and access to secondary and university education, the rich had better employment opportunities and access to places in the bureaucracy. It was becoming increasingly obvious that the latter was not entirely open to the poorer classes and was beyond the means of the large majority (Ibid).

Thus, by the end of the 1960s the educational system which was meant to bolster equity and equality was itself transformed into a tool of social distinction and social closure. Different powerful social groups in the Egyptian society began to exert their influence to direct the educational resources to their own interests. This, for example, explains the appearance of private fee-paying schools that catered to children of the bureaucratic elite who did not achieve high scores. Students in private education, which included foreign language schools*, grew from 117000 pupils to 177000 and secondary private schools from 25000 to 55000 from 1963/64 to 1965/66. The same pressure was placed in 1973 to open the first private university in Egypt (Ibid : 407).

* One of the most deleterious developments in Egyptian education since the revolution has been the closing of many foreign schools. This took place in the aftermath of the Suez crisis of 1956 ; There is also evidence that the government had been following a deliberate policy to eliminate "foreign elements" from local schools by "Egyptianizing" them. For those who could afford it, these foreign schools had provided the best school education available in Egypt (Wheelock 1960 : 117)

Class background was also decisive in determining educational life chances and likelihood of dropping out. The drop out rate in 1974/5 for the age cohorts in school grades three to six was 13.1 percent in urban areas and 24.2 in rural areas. In 1976/77 the figures were 20.6% and 22.4% respectively. In contrast to the middle class families who were ready and capable of investing in the education of their children to find remedies for the deficiencies of the educational system by providing private tutoring to their children, low income groups, when children's schooling faced difficulties and financial remedies for the problems became unaffordable, made decisions that not only hinged upon their resources, but also on the impact they perceived for education on their child's life and the whole household (Papanek 1985 : 319). For many poor Egyptians a child in school was an opportunity lost for earning and income generation for the family. As the financial costs of sending children to school increase and no noticeable academic progress is observed, poor families pulled their children out of school to have them learn well-paying skills. Paradoxically, it was observed that the reading and writing skills of drop outs did not deteriorate once they left school, simply because they mostly leave school with little skills to begin with. Over 60 percent of all primary school children eventually reverted to functional illiteracy (Waterbury 1985 : 220-21).

Poor children, who managed to escape from dropping out at an early stage, often had to consider the education decision again at later points of their life, most commonly at the branching point at the end of the preparatory stage. At that point the choices of young people were again limited and had to be carefully deliberated. Often because of poor grades, they had no choice but to join the less prestigious vocational education stream with its three branches (commercial, industrial and agricultural) for three (or five) years, after which time the majority was usually ready to join the labor market. Others, even when they obtained the scores that qualified them to join the general academic stream, still opted to go to vocational education (as demonstrated by my interviews). Over time, the aspirations of parents for their children to acquire higher education gradually faded away particularly as poor parents recognized that general (as opposed to technical/vocational) education was not meant for them and was not helping their children get a job. They believed that vocational education would provide their children with a way to earn money and that what they needed was for their children to learn a vocation that would bring them income (Ayubi 1980)

IV. Expansion in university education : who pays the price ?

The demand on university education was huge. Between 1970 and 1979 provincial universities were opened in various Egyptian cities. Between 1971 and 1984 university enrolment increased by almost four times from 191,483 students to 660,357 students (Richards, 1992 : 27). The number of students enrolled in various pre-university education institutions in the academic and vocational streams was not only increasing but also drawing closer: doubling in pre-university academic institutions by 1970 and quadrupling in vocational schools (Szyliowicz 1973). But these numbers were absorbed by the government bureaucracy. During the period from 1971 to 79, the economy grew at a rate of 9.6 %; over the same period the bureaucracy's share of the total labor force grew from 14 to 22 percent (Ikram et al. 1991 : 114).

However, at the same time, the government started to suffer the problems that have continued to mar its educational and employment policy planning till the present time : the mismatch between educational outcomes and demands of the labor market, and the poor quality of outcome (Galal 2002). Despite the rise in number of vocational school graduates, in the mid-sixties there was a shortage of 284,000 semi-skilled workers and more shortages were expected to take place in the following years. The system was generating large numbers of graduates, but their skills did not match the needs of the market. Instead of helping with economic development, a large number of VSGs were becoming a burden on the state.

It is said that 1984 was a significant year in that the government took fundamental policy decisions to reduce university enrolment. Indeed, for several years enrolment fell each year by about 3% per year. By 1989 the total number of university students had been reduced by nearly 100,000, a decline of some 14%. (Richards 1992 : 19). By that time, economic growth rate had declined to 6.8% and unemployment among the university educated rose to 9.2% in 1986 from 6.7% in 1976 and 3.1% in 1960 (Ikram et al 1991). Once again, vocational education was looked upon to mitigate the problems resulting from the decision to reduce university enrolment and limit the stampede to institutions of higher education. An independent law (No. 139) for vocational education was passed in 1981 which provided only cosmetic changes meant to streamline that sector so it would be ready to meet the expected demands of the Open Door policy. The main intention, however, was to prepare it to absorb 70% of the secondary school pupils in the 1980s. The main brunt fell on the shoulder of commercial schools which

alone were responsible for hosting 60% of the graduates of preparatory schools and from 1971/72 to 75/76 the number of commercial school pupils rose from 105,652 to 162,242.

The plan to have commercial schools absorb excess students was not reached in response to demands in the labor market. In fact, with the drying up of clerical job opportunities provided by government and public sector employment, and the failure of the open door policy to generate sufficient work opportunities for young graduates in the 80s, graduates of vocational schools came out as the main losers. However, the decision was justified by pragmatic reasons that unlike industrial and agricultural schools, the refurbishing of commercial schools did not entail the high costs of setting up workshops and laboratories and supplying them with expensive machinery and tools. Moreover, because, among the three streams of vocational education commercial education has always been the one that accepted students with the lowest scores,³ decision makers, including governors, felt they had more freedom to use it to respond to emerging public demands. With increased decentralization, governors had more autonomy to decide areas of priorities in their governorates and with the availability of commercial education, they had a flexible and inexpensive service that could be used to respond to the aspirations of poor families to provide their children with just the level of education that would render them eligible for a government job. As they realized that commercial education was easy to handle, governors used their discretionary powers to open new classrooms and come up with new specializations such as “commercial services”, to absorb incoming students and appease public demand. (Metwalli 1989 ; Hatem, 2000).

With the decline in government jobs and the closure of the public sector door with privatization, commercial education became truly unwanted to the extent that in the mid 80s critics wondered if it was not time to close this stream of education altogether, especially given that universities were already producing huge numbers of graduates of the school of commerce who were out looking for jobs and certainly had more opportunities on the market than graduates of vocational schools (*Al Akhbar*, 29 February 1984). On the other hand, government spokesmen justified the failure to boost interest in commercial activities by the “imbalance between the three prongs of the development triangle”, claiming that with the low pace of industrialization and agricultural activities, there has been no role for commerce to play as its task was to serve the two other components.

3- Industrial education is the most prestigious, followed by agricultural then commercial.

“Commerce is like the middle man... Like the liaison between leaders, planners and policy makers on one hand and implementation and operation on the other... its success depends on the success of these two upper and lower strata (National Council for Education, 2000 p 51). No radical measures were taken at that time to close down commercial education for fear of unfavorable public reaction. Instead, the government adopted some sedative measures by using commercial school graduates to fill the gaps in other sectors. For example, ‘transformative training’ was used to re-train female graduates of commercial schools to perform assisting tasks to nurses in medical institutions in 20 governorates in areas such as preparing patients’ files, drafting entrance and exit cards etc.(*Al Ahram* 28 October 1988).

Antoninis (2001) argues that foreign donors in Egypt have been responsible in a major way for maintaining vocational education through their continued investment in its improvement and upgrading through infrastructural projects, curriculum development and teachers’ training, even when findings of empirical research were pointing out that there was no need for extensive vocational education.

Evidently, in the public view, vocational education appeared to be the guinea pig of the educational system, open for the intervention of foreign institutions and donors who take it in different directions (*Al Gomhoury al Hor*, 31.12.2007, p. 5). At the present time, large scale initiatives are being undertaken by the European Union, followed by the World Bank and the United States Agency for International Development among others to upgrade vocational schools, improve quality of education and its governance, and instill rigor in its structures.⁴ The reports of these donor institutions diagnose problems in, and offer potential solutions for this education sector.

4- Donors also include the German Technical Cooperation Agency (GTZ), the Italian Don Bosco Foundation and the Canadian Development Cooperation. Most of these organizations also have programs for the improvement of general education See (World Bank: 2005 and Egypt ETF Country Plan 2007 and Abrahart 2003). The Mubarak Kohl project is often cited as one of the most successful programs of vocational education now operating in Egypt. It is based on the dual system of practical and pedagogical education combining both theoretical and applied work whereby students attend two days at schools and four days in workshops and private sector companies where they receive hands-on training in the factories. It is a successful example of a partnership between the private sector which takes charge of the training costs, and the German side that works with the ministry of education and provides instruction expertise and school training equipment (Ammar, 2005) the total number of students in the Mubarak Kohl scheme is 12,277 only less than one percent (0.65%) of the total number of students in vocational education (*Al Ahram* 1 November 2007, p. 9 ; Ministry of education, October 2007).

First, there is major concern about the fragmentation in the governance of vocational education which is shared mainly by two ministries (education and higher education) in addition to a multitude of government agencies and other ministries outside the education portfolio⁵. There is also concern about the shortage in funds for training and the fact that the Egyptian government does not allocate budgets based on indicators of training outcomes, but rather on input indicators such as the number of students and teachers, and sometimes also regardless of specialization (World Bank, 2005).

Furthermore, at the present time, vocational education offers 114 narrowly specialized trades when industrialization in Egypt does not in fact require that kind of specific specialization. (World Bank 2005 : 11). Richards (1992) gives the example of training in the details of aluminum production, when the economic rate of return on this industry is -20% (Richards 1992 : 17-18). Ironically, the same concern was expressed close to 70 years ago when Hafez Afifi⁶ observed in 1938 that vocational education needed to respond to the needs of local communities.⁷

"...Instead of one school teaching one or two industries, which are needed by the city or town in which the school is built, they teach everything. Manufacturing furniture, carpet making, mechanics, leather and copper is taught in all schools regardless of the local resources" (Afifi : 1938 : 124)

Along the same lines, Ahmed and Ali (1978) question the use of "teaching a boy spinning and weaving in Aswan when there is no textile industry and no cotton and silk there and teach a boy in Alexandria granite cutting when granite does not exist in Alexandria" (p. 370).

The repeated complaint, however, is that the opinions and preferences of private sector employers are not considered in the design of programs of study in the vocational schools and as yet, no system has been put in place to coordinate this task (Hatem, p. 8) nor is there a system to keep track of

5- The ministries that have vocational education training centers include: industry and technological development, housing, manpower, immigration, agriculture, health, and culture (World Bank, 2005).

6- Chief of the Royal *Diwan*.

7- He also noted that there was a large number of vocational schools but the problem was that not many people used the skills they acquired in these schools to obtain a job and many have ended up doing minor clerical work in the government. In addition, he also attributed the poor quality of education in these schools to the concern with quantity over quality. The schools were short of equipment and the teachers were poorly paid. (Afifi, 1938 p. 124).

trainees and allocate them to jobs. The formal private sector frequently complained about the paucity of satisfactory "middle management" personnel. Middle technical institutes (see below) have attempted to fill this gap, but so far, they have had mixed success.

The distinction between laborer, skilled laborer and technician have often blurred, undermining the rationale behind the difference between three year and five year graduates of vocational schools and also graduates of higher institutes.⁸ It is certain that for the students all these divisions were worthless and only university education made a difference⁹.

Describing the curricula in vocational schools, a World Bank report says

"...Curricula are not sufficiently related to labor market needs. The supply-driven nature of the system means that finance is allocated to TVET in a way that takes no account of emerging needs or of the performance of systems... Curricula still tend to be outdated and reviewed too infrequently. Training courses are still largely institution-based and although greater efforts are being made to develop systems that use more industry attachments, far more industry participation than is evident so far will be needed if TVET in Egypt is to deliver quality skills relevant to labor market demands. There is a general lack of practical training opportunities available to TVET students in Egypt. The emphasis remains on theoretical and outdated teaching methods rather than on practical teaching" (World Bank 2005 : 61)

The problem of teachers and trainers in vocational education is also quite worrisome. Those tend to be hired from among graduates of intermediate institutes and if their number is not enough to meet the demand, they are recruited from among graduates of universities and higher institutes (Metwalli : 1989 : 143).

Having followed the same training path, the teachers tend to reproduce the same problems : they emphasize the academic components and lack

8- Richards claims that employers tend to prefer the graduates of the mixed secondary (1992) /post-secondary "five year" technical institutes. Not only do the students in the latter usually receive more practical training than those in the two year institutes,' but they also seem to have a better attitude toward technical work than their counterparts from the two-year institutes .

9- Vocational education was divided into three and five year vocational education : the former to prepare students to become skilled labor and the latter to prepare more advanced and technical workers. It allowed the first group to continue their education to more advanced levels in universities and upper institutes (Metwalli 1989 : 156).

practical work experience and fail to enhance the image of vocational education and increase its popularity among students (interviews). They had higher aspirations for a more remunerative career than teaching and have had few resources and too many students to carry out their job effectively. "... Most teachers possess no enthusiasm for their occupation but accept it as a way to survive in a harsh environment. They carry out their tasks mechanically and routinely and show little if any interest in their students" (Richards and Waterbury 1996 : 129). Even with the parallel system of private tutoring to complement government salaries and help students pass their examinations, teachers of vocational education remain comparatively disadvantaged vis a vis their counterparts in general education as they tend to tutor students from lower socio economic brackets with much lower ability to pay.

More than four decades ago Boktor (1963) remarked that teachers had little opportunity to get training and their resources were too limited to allow them to further educate themselves through books and other learning materials. His remark that "the normal pattern is for teachers and students alike to be granted limited access to the materials, which are considered too precious to be used" rings a bell at in the present time.

In interviews with girls in commercial schools they said that the number of times they laid their hands on computers or type-writers was very limited and the teachers thought of these equipment as objects that needed to be protected rather than used by students.

Not surprisingly "...Teachers on the whole do not grow. They teach the same thing in the same way and entertain the same ideas and methods to such an extent that they become stagnant, plodding along in the same groove from the time they start teaching until the time they retire." (Boktor 1963 : 90-93).

Mina (1980) summarizes the hardship of vocational school teachers in his statement that "... By all means, legitimate and illegitimate, they try to escape the vocational education stream to general education... The teacher's main concern is how to get out of this school. He feels he is not favored by the higher authorities. Either because they think he is weak in the subject he teaches or because of a problem he caused, he is banished to technical industrial education (Mina 1980 : 55)

V. More education ? Different education ? What are the options ?

Many of the problems of vocational education are not unique to this stream. Obsolete curricula, poor quality education¹⁰, the stress on memorization and rote learning, authoritarianism and lack of interaction in the classroom¹¹, ailing structures and high density classrooms¹² which characterize vocational schools are typical of the Egyptian public educational system, both general and vocational. What distinguishes vocational education from other types, however, is the increasing realization that it has now become a *cul de sac* realistically providing its graduates with few opportunities to grow and advance socially and professionally. A central feature of vocational education is that it has no option for its students to change from the vocational to the general stream although the opposite is possible i.e. when students of general secondary education use up their chances to repeat one of their general secondary school year, they have the option to “change paths” “*tahweel massar*”, almost always to the commercial stream. The duality, status and social inequality implications of such a regulation are obvious.

In the section below, three examples are provided to demonstrate past and present avenues for educational enhancement that have been available for vocational school graduates at various points of time.

In order to reduce the pressure on university education, the government started in 1957 to establish middle institutes to provide training in various professional fields including fine arts, music, agriculture, commerce, and industry. By 1963-1964 over 25,000 students were enrolled in thirty-eight institutes, and by 1968-1969 enrolments had risen to 36,425 (Richards 1992:19-20). Originally these institutes were designed to provide specialized, practical training in areas that were not covered by the universities. With emphasis on practical training, the system seemed to fare well. Missions were sent to European countries within which students took a

10- The inability of graduates of vocational schools to read and write properly is often pointed out. Under the title “Vocational school graduates fail their job entry tests”, it was mentioned that they were unable to write simple words like “Mubarak”, their own names and some numbers (in thousands) (*Al Masri al Yom*, issue number 1427 20/5/2008).

11- See “Herrera, L.A. (Editor) (2003) “Stand-up! Sit Down!” Cultures of Education in Egypt [Qiyam! Julus! Thaqafat al-Ta'alim fi Misr]; Cairo : Population Council.

12- Even though class density in vocational schools is lower than general schools, it is still very high compared to international standards of 20 students : 36.2 in industrial schools, 38.9 in agricultural schools and 40.4 in commercial schools (Egypt National Strategy 2006).

year of field work, and some 4,189 students benefited from that scheme between 1956 and 1964. In 1971 another set of higher institutes were added to the previous list, to complement the technical secondary schools. Enrolments expanded in these institutes from an initial 20,805 in 1973 to 105,360 in 1989 (Szyliowicz 1973). However, the following table shows declining popularity of non-university institutes of higher education with the enrolment in higher institutes constituting only 11% of total enrolment.

Table (1) : Popularity of non-university institutions

Higher education		
Type	No of units	Number of students
Public universities/private universities/ private higher institutes	17/14/109	2, 245, 755
Industrial institutes	12	33,342
Commercial institutes	19	69,953
Tourism and hotels	4	3,467
Thematic institutes	10	12,209
Upper Intermediate institutes	8 (45)	118,971
Private Upper intermediate institutes	10	29,622
Faculties of industrial education	4	9,622
Total		2,519,078

Source : Ministry of Higher Education, 2007

Moreover, higher institutes have been criticized on the grounds that their fast expansion had serious implications on the quality of what they had to offer. In the beginning, their increased emphasis on specific rather than on general skills weakened the chances of their graduates on the labor market. But the real problem is that soon they lost their edge of providing practical training and were skewed towards theoretical education. Students too complained that the institutes did not provide them with any new information, more than what they had already acquired in their vocational

secondary schools. Finally, the resources of the institutes were limited and were mostly used to finance salaries of teaching staff (Lindgren 2005).

Soon the distinction between the institutes and the regular universities disappeared and owing most importantly to pressures from the students themselves who were after the bachelors degree and complained of getting second class education, in addition to pressures from the teaching staff themselves, some of these institutes were upgraded to the status of universities.¹³ A ministerial committee was formed specifically to look into the situation of higher institutes. It recommended eliminating duplication and closed some of them (Richards 1992)

Another policy was adopted in the 50s to allow young people more opportunities to enter the university. Through the policy of external students انتساب the government permitted government employees with general or vocational school certificates to be affiliated to the university or higher institutes as external students, sit for the examinations as regularly enrolled students and receive the same university degrees but without attending classes. There is evidence that a large number of employees benefited from this scheme and obtained BA degrees from the faculties of arts, commerce and law which in 1962-1963 enrolled 30,000 regular and 20,000 external students¹⁴ (Szyliowicz 1973).

The Higher Institute for Cooperation معهد التعاون¹⁵ was particularly popular among graduates of vocational schools from the commercial stream. The drawback of this system, however, was that it heightened the aspirations of thousands of individuals and allowed them to share the expectations of regular university graduates for government employment, despite their poor preparation. However, with the new industrial and agricultural development projects and the expanding bureaucracy the government was able to meet the work expectations of everyone, both regular and external students.

13- Two examples were Banha and Helwan universities.

14- Now there are two kinds of affiliations : "affiliation" and "guided affiliation". The former is for employees who have a university degree and wish to obtain an additional degree and the latter for those who have a general secondary degree who could not join university because of inadequate scores all for fees that amount to EP 350 yearly. In the latter situation in case the student obtains grade 'good' after the first year, he/she can become regular student. Guided affiliation was applied 16 years ago (*Rose El Youssef*, p. 6 20/9/2007)

15- It was later upgraded to become the Faculty of Social Work.

Decades later, the government introduced the Open University, which as will be demonstrated provides only theoretical access to higher education. The Egyptian “Open University”, inspired by the British model, was opened in different branches of current Egyptian universities between 1990 and 1991 (Ismail 1990; Heggy 1991). It mainly targets individuals who graduated from vocational secondary schools as well as others with general secondary degrees and offers a flexible system requiring one day of attendance during the weekend. An important eligibility criterion is the elapse of five years after the last school degree ensures seriousness of study intentions and also likelihood that applicant has a job and can use his/her salary to fund the study at the university – fees amounting to an average of EP 1400-1800 yearly (Rose El Youssef p. 6 no. 658 209.2007), which is not subsidized by the government.

Although the Open University mainly targets VSGs, the tables below show among the age group 20-24, the overwhelming majority of VSGs do not benefit from its services as 90% of VSGs stop their education when they complete secondary. Among the few who continue studying, 60% or more go to Upper Intermediate institutions. On the other hand, 90% or more of graduates of general secondary continue to higher education, with most (75% or more of all graduates) going to University.

The contrast here is striking: Of general secondary school students 90% continue; of VSGs, 90% stop. The second table for the older age group those 25-29 emphasizes the point that even when the opportunity of the Open University exists with the passage of the five year period, that opportunity did not change the basic picture.

These figures undermine the two main assumptions underlying the rationale behind the Open University : the first is that graduates of vocational schools find work within the five years after quitting school and second, that the work they find is lucrative enough that they can afford to pay the university tuition.

Table (2) : Percentage of Those Who Completed Secondary School by Highest Stage of Education Attended, Age 20-24 Years.

Highest Stage Attended	Type of Secondary Attended		
	General	Vocational	Total
Secondary	10.6%	91.5%	67.5%
Above Intermediate	11.7%	5.5%	7.3%
University	77.8%	3.1%	25.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table (3) : Percentage of Those Who Completed Secondary School by Highest Stage of Education Attended, Age 25-29 Years.

Highest Stage Attended	Type of Secondary Attended		
	General	Vocational	Total
Secondary	6.2%	87.8%	59.4%
Above Intermediate	7.1%	8.2%	7.8%
University	86.7%	3.9%	32.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Student fees from these ‘irregular’ avenues to higher education institutions constitute one of the main sources of revenue for universities that is used to fund other university projects and so in this sense are useful for universities to maintain. However, ‘back doors’ to university should also be seen in light of public expectations from education that put pressure on the government and restricted its ability to introduce any meaningful reforms which risked confrontations that Egyptian leaders sought to avoid (Williamson 1987 ; Waterbury 1985a). In particular, in the post-Nasser days, both Sadat and Mubarak have been caught between the demands and populist rights of Nasser’s constituency, on one hand, and those of the bourgeoisie and international institutions for greater economic liberalization on the other. Again when economic growth was dwindling by the mid 80s and the labor market was not able to absorb new graduates, no attempt was made to reform the education situation in any meaningful way or adapt vocational education to the changes and the imminent rise of the private sector (Antoninis 2001). Enrolment in vocational education continued to increase and by the late nineties and commercial education had the highest number of students as indicated by tables 2 and 3.

VI. The current situation

Observers of the Egyptian education scene are struck by the current multiplicity and diversity of learning institutes both in pre- university and higher education. In the 80s the government had encouraged private investment in education and since then the number has been rising steadily to meet the increasing demands of the Egyptian middle class, many of whom were migrants in the Gulf countries who returned home in the wake of the Gulf war and were impatient with the slow pace of the educational reform and dismayed by the large number of students and failure of the system to produce high quality students who could compete in the international labour market. The keenness of middle class families to give their children an

educational edge intersected with the willingness of businessmen to produce model schools that combined the modernity and criticality of foreign school curricula with the authenticity of Islamic and Arab culture .The result has been a growing number of competing foreign language schools in addition to a wide array of other schools.



Student gathering at Cairo University

The same fever reached institutions of higher learning when in 1992 law no. 101 was issued allowing the establishment of private fee paying universities (Ammar 2005) and in 1996 the private sector got engaged in the process which became a lucrative business in Egypt. Foreign instruction universities were springing up like mushrooms to reach 24 universities in 2007. Moreover, while still committed, de jure, to the principle of free education in public universities, the last decades have also witnessed the creation of fee paying foreign language departments in public universities thus creating distinctions not only between fee paying private universities and free public institutions but also within the latter themselves as a result of the establishment of fee paying foreign language departments in some faculties. With this new development, public school pupils who tend to concentrate in the Arabic instruction departments, stand out as less privileged.

On the other end of the continuum stands vocational education, the

weakest link in the Egyptian educational system, with hapless attempts of the Egyptian government to rescue it. In 2007 in the context of the National Democratic party's (the ruling party's) 9th General Congress, Egypt's president emphasized the government's awareness that the process of economic restructuring and reform has had a high social price and promised that the coming phase would witness more attention to the social dimension of economic restructuring and the introduction of a comprehensive social policy covering the social sectors of housing, health and education (Services and Social Justice, 2007 : 4) Under the section on education, special attention was given to the preparation of good teachers, vocational education and open learning. The government declared that as the economic growth rate in Egypt had now risen to 7%, work opportunities were expected to expand and the foreseen development could not be sustained without highly trained technical staff. Mubarak was referring to the potential use of the energy of 62% of the total number of pupils enrolled in vocational education institutions. Because of the large number of ministries and agencies involved with technical education, it was decided to form a national agency for technical education in order to unify policies and combine all the efforts in one place (Al Ahram 29 august 2007, p. 3 ; Al Ahram 1 November 2007 p.9).

International donor institutions have supported education reform projects, such as like the Secondary Education Reform Program (SERP), funded by the World Bank. The rationale behind the program lies in the discomfort with the existing dual system of education that consolidates social segregation and inequity. It emphasizes the significant point made earlier by others such as Antoninis (2001) that the Egyptian path to industrialization and economic growth in fact did not require the dedication of a whole stream of specialized education to address its needs and that a solid general secondary education that has both practical and theoretical components would be capable of addressing the needs. The Egyptian government with advice from the World Bank opted for a long term slow process of change to create a balance between general and vocational education (50/50 enrolment) by converting commercial schools into general secondary schools towards the total elimination of commercial schools (National Strategic Plan–Annexes 2006 : 77).

The process was reported to have been met with public resentment as commercial education has always been considered the lowest threshold of education that was relatively inexpensive and did not require private tutoring. As a result, the government had to stop the process without meeting the target (only 201 schools had been transformed till 2008) (Egypt Strategy: 279). Until that took place, new core curricula for the general and vocational

branches would be designed that would emphasize technological aspects of education and teachers would be provided with training on the use of technologies and multimedia. (Megahed 2002).¹⁶

VII. Conclusion

Observing developments in vocational education, one is struck by the general inertia and continuity in the discourse around it over the years. Many of the issues raised in the last few years seemed like a *déjà vu* speaking for a persistent problem that has been left to grow without appropriate intervention. From the above review some important issues merit further emphasis.

Vocational education has always had little status due to its association with manual work. Particularly in the last few decades it has also firmly recognized as the refuge of individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds and the destination of young people with constrained financial resources. Despite laudable reforms and endeavors under Nasser to upgrade it and improve its image and role in economic development, both cultural aversion to manual work and the inability to sustain successful economic growth that engaged its graduates in meaningful contributions to commercial, industrial and agricultural advancement, undermined its significance and utility. A dual education system had been created and the vocational degree became a reminder that its bearers have been rejected from the prestigious academic stream and the auspicious middle class.¹⁷

16- Describing the opposition to the idea of consolidating vocational and secondary schools and offering one comprehensive curricula in the schools, Megahed (2002) quoted a World Bank report (1999b) and Richards (1992) saying : “Merging the technical and general streams would be politically infeasible (WB, 1999b, p. 5). With a million of students enrolled in technical and general secondary schools as one specialist put it, “any major change in the system would inevitably affect hundreds of thousands of families and could provoke political resentment similar in its intensity to that which followed the suspension of some consumer subsidies in 1977 (Richards), 1992, p. 10”

17- An attempt had been made to create this type of dual educational structure at an earlier stage at the end of the primary stage. Law no. 261 of 1956 allowed the setting up of preparatory vocational schools for those who had completed six years of primary education (Article 3). At about the age of 12 pupils entered preparatory schools if they passed a stiff competitive exam. Many students tended to fall at this hurdle and in 1966 only about 20 percent of the children aged 12-15 were attending preparatory schools which meant that many school age children remained out of school (Boktor 1963; Hopwood 1982 : 140). Vocational schools were open to pupils who were not eligible for preparatory academic education. But the experiment was short-lived and soon proved to be a failure. It was met by criticism on the ground that at the age of 11, children are immature

Moreover, successive Egyptian governments failed to present vocational education as a worthy and meaningful line of study that could usefully run parallel to the academic stream. Instead it became the only path students reluctantly had to take if they failed to enroll in academic secondary. Over the years, technical education curricula remained obsolete, heavily theoretical and unable to catch with developments. To date, attempts to involve the private sector have been understandably met with little success, for rather than hire individuals with poor skills, it made more sense for private sector employers to design their own on-the-job training, and even more sense to hire technicians who might not have gone to school but have learned the trade by working as apprentices and have hands-on work experience (Richards and Waterbury 1996). Vocational education has been gradually losing its legitimacy as a field of study and technical training continues to be offered not for educational or professional reasons, but rather for social reasons as a safety net to ease the burden on higher education and ensure that those who have been deprived of entry into university were not out on the streets (Indermit and Heynemann 2000). Within this bleak picture, commercial education has suffered most as the least prestigious of all three vocational streams. It has been the choice of the poorest groups of the population who wanted to give their children the minimum education that would qualify them to earn a job, and has also served as the government's fall back position to satisfy popular demand on education at the lowest costs. Opportunities for upward social mobility through graduate learning have been de facto closed off to holders of vocational degrees. Statistics have shown that the Open University and higher institutes are not a viable option for the vast majority of vocational school graduates.

and cannot decide where their interests really are. Plus, and this is more important, that there had been no demand in the labor market on these kinds of inchoate skills. It was seen that early specialization in the preparatory stage had no value added as it provided neither solid academic foundations nor adequate manual skills. Eventually, the experiment was dropped (Ammar, 2005 ; Metwalli, 1989) and it was decided to have a general and unified preparatory stage, which set the scene for considering preparatory education a compulsory period of education and focus attention on technical education in the secondary stage. In effect, however, this step meant taking the dual system one step up and postponing the branching out decision to the end of the preparatory rather than the primary stage. The exam that took place at the end of the three year preparatory stage was another sieve that decided who was admitted to the academic (general) secondary stream and who was directed to vocational education. The system of vocational preparatory education was applied again in 1988 and continues till the present time. Recent evaluation reports, however, point to severe problems in their functioning and the poor quality of education they offer. Two recommendations were made : to close the schools and integrate them within the general preparatory schools, or undertake a major overhaul in school buildings, teaching and curricula so they can offer a proper vocational service (Egypt National Strategic Plan for Pre-university Education).

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Improvements in the Image of Arabs and Muslims in American Cinema

Laurence Michalak *

* Laurence Michalak: is a cultural anthropologist with extensive experience in the Middle East and North Africa. Currently, he is the director of CEMAT (Center for Maghrib Studies, Tunis). In December 2002 he retired after 22 years as Vice Chair of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at UC/Berkeley, where he was also Outreach Coordinator, Faculty Advisor for the Middle Eastern Studies Major, and Lecturer in Middle Eastern Studies and Anthropology. His research in the 1980s and 1990s on Tunisian migrants in France led to an interest in alcohol-related beliefs and behaviours of Muslims who migrate to non-Muslim settings.

Email : cemat@planet.tn

This paper presents an overview of major American movies made between 1990 and 2009, analyzing their images of Arab and Muslims. The analysis is inspired in part by Clifford Geertz, who pointed out that many phenomena that are not written can still be analyzed as texts; here our texts for analysis are a set of American movies about Muslims and Middle Easterners. It's also inspired by Edward Said, who identified Orientalism as a discourse. Said analyzed the writings of historians, social scientists, novelists, journalists, and other scholars of the Middle East, but he did not discuss cinema or popular culture. In this article I will analyze cinema as form of discourse and will demonstrate that in cinema there has been a move away from the Orientalism that Edward Said described, toward greater fairness toward Arabs and Muslims.

تدرس هذه الورقة أهم الأفلام الأميركية المنتجة خلال عامي 1990 – 2009 وذلك بتحليل انطباعاتها حول العرب والمسلمين. التحليل مستوحى جزئياً من كتابات كليفورد جيرتزل الذي أشار إلى أن العديد من الظواهر التي لا يمكن أن تكون مكتوبة يمكن تحليلها كنصوص. والنصوص التي سنتناولها بالتحليل هنا هي مجموعة أفلام أمريكية عن مسلمين ومسنشرقين. وهي أيضاً مستوحاة من كتابات ادوارد سعيد الذي عرف الاستشراق على انه خطاب. قام سعيد بتحليل كتابات المؤرخين وعلماء الاجتماع والأدباء والصحفيين وغيرهم من العلماء من الشرق الأوسط، لكنه لم يناقش السينما أو الثقافة الشعبية. وسأتناول بالتحليل في هذا المقال السينما كأداة خطاب وسأبرهن أن السينما حادت عن مفهوم ادوارد سعيد للاستشراق وذلك نحو المزيد من الإنصاف تجاه العرب والمسلمين بشكل عام..

Muslims in general, and especially Arabs and Middle Easterners, have been negatively stereotyped throughout the history of American cinema. Hollywood has represented them mainly as villains-oversexed sheiks kidnapping white women, sword-wielding natives attacking foreign legion outposts, exotic magicians on magic carpets, mummies lumbering after screaming women, spoiled potentates in oil-rich kingdoms, and terrorists hijacking planes and killing innocent Westerners. Until recently, American cinema represented Arabs and Muslims all as foreigners, failing to recognize Arab-Americans and Muslims as constituents of American society.

However, at the very end of the century-in 1999, to be precise there appeared two mainstream American movies with positive Arab and Muslim main characters. Then came the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the ensuing American wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. One might have expected the Arab image to return to the bad old days. However, this has not happened. American cinema has become decidedly more even-handed, nuanced and, on balance, even positive toward Arabs and Muslims. This article documents and analyzes this trend.

The analysis is inspired in part by Clifford Geertz, who pointed out that many phenomena that are not written can still be analyzed as texts; here our texts for analysis are a set of American movies about Muslims and Middle Easterners. It's also inspired by Edward Said, who identified Orientalism as a discourse. Said analyzed the writings of historians, social scientists, novelists, journalists, and other scholars of the Middle East, but he did not discuss cinema or popular culture. In this article I will analyze cinema as form of discourse and will demonstrate that in cinema there has been a move away from the Orientalism that Edward Said described, toward greater fairness toward Arabs and Muslims.

I will discuss 21 major American movies made between 1999 and 2009, analyzing their images of Arabs and Muslims. I use the term "American" or "Hollywood" movies in a broad sense to refer to films distributed by American companies or with major American partnership. Of course, cinema is an increasingly international business and sometimes the director and/or some of the main actors may not be from the U.S. I will place my analysis in the larger context of a theory that there has been an historic process of cinematic "rehabilitation" of American minority groups. Thus Arabs and Muslims are following in the footsteps of groups such as Native Americans, Blacks and Asians-who at first were vilified, but gradually came to acquire positive images.

A negative Cinema Image until 1999, Followed by Improvement

Anyone who doubts that for almost all of the 20th century, Arabs, Middle Easterners and Muslims were negatively portrayed in cinema has only to consult Jack Shaheen's comprehensive filmography, *Reel Bad Arabs*, to realize their mistake. Shaheen annotates over 900 films, beginning with the invention of cinema and continuing to 2001. It is a story of overwhelmingly negative representation (Shaheen 2001). Like Jack Shaheen but on a smaller scale, I have also contributed articles about this topic (Michalak 1984, Michalak 1989, Michalak 2002), and this article draws upon and extends my earlier ideas.

After nearly a century of negative images of Arabs, a shift occurred in 1999. That year witnessed two positive films about Arabs. But then came the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. For many Americans, Muslims (and especially Arabs) became the new enemy. Some writers suggested, with different degrees of sophistication, that the Arabs and Muslims had replaced the Communists, so that the old Cold War had given way to a new “clash of civilizations.” It seemed that this beginning of a trend toward positive images would probably be nipped in the bud. Surprisingly, though, that did not happen.

In retrospect, the change in 1999 was not completely abrupt. During the 20th century some movies were more negative than others; some even presented the Arab as a kind of noble primitive. During the 1990s Arabs and Muslims were sometimes positive minor characters. In *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* (1991) we find Azeem, a Muslim Moor, returning with Robin from the Crusades to England and helping him regain his heritage. And in *Escape from LA* (1996), set in the future, the main character meets a sympathetic woman who says “I was a Muslim in South Dakota; all of a sudden they made that a crime ;” and then she is killed. A third example of a positive minor character is the Arab-American detective in *A Perfect Murder* (1998). But none of these are main characters. From the invention of cinema until 1999, nearly a century, there is arguably not a single mainstream American movie whose main character is a positive Arab, Turk, Persian, or Muslim of any kind.

The 21 major mainstream movies from the period 1999-2009 that I will discuss here are not an exhaustive list. During this period there have undoubtedly been some other films which touch on Islam or the Middle East to some degree and which I do not discuss here. However, the films I am about to discuss are all major productions which were distributed worldwide. Looking at the ways in which these 21 films represent Muslims and Arabs, I argue that eleven of them (more than half) are positive-sometimes very positive. Of the

other ten, six are neutral, and four are negative. Given the events of the last ten years, it is not surprising that ten of these films-almost half of the 21-are about war and the effects of war on American society, and I will offer some further analysis about the role of war in the image of Muslims and Arabs.

Eleven Positive Movies

The trend toward positive movies about Muslims and Arabs began with (1) *The Thirteenth Warrior* in 1999. This was the first mainstream American movie with a positive Arab main character-Ibn Fahdlan, an Arab diplomat of the Middle Ages who traveled in the Volga area of Europe. The movie was based on the book *Eaters of the Dead* by Michael Crichton, which in turn was inspired by the journals of the real Ibn Fahdlan. However, Crichton and the filmmakers weave Ibn Fahdlan's travel journal into an elaborate fantasy. In the movie, Ibn Fahdlan is a Muslim diplomat who is forced into a company of warriors. There are three levels of humanity in the movie. At the top is Ibn Fahdlan, a brave Muslim who shuns alcohol and prays before battle. One level down are the Vikings-an uncouth but likeable companionship of warriors. And at the bottom are a primitive group of violent, matriarchal snake-handling cannibals. Ibn Fahdlan is played not by an Arab but by Spanish actor Antonio Banderas but this is a minor point, given that his portrayal is unequivocally positive.



Michael Crichton is a popular author whose books are often made into films, so *The Thirteenth Warrior* might have been viewed as an exception to the rule. However, in the same year 1999 (2) *Three Kings* was released-a second positive movie about Arabs. *Three Kings* is the story of a group of American soldiers in Southern Iraq after the first Gulf War, who attempt to steal a hidden hoard of gold which Saddam Hussein had stolen from Kuwait. There are Bad Arabs in the film-the Republican Guards and their unseen leader, Saddam Hussein. However, the balance is definitely on the side of the Good Arabs, Shi'a villagers who are portrayed with unusual depth, humanity and compassion. Even an Arab torturer in the film is a complex

character who acts, not out of innate evil, but because his family was bombed and maimed by Americans. The American soldiers develop such sympathy for the Iraqi villagers that in the end they give up their stolen gold to buy safe passage for the Shi'a villagers to Iran. This is a story of a journey from materialism to altruism, from greed to compassion-an honest portrayal of Arabs and an excellent film-well-produced, well-acted, and thought-provoking. Some of the parts were played by real Iraqi refugees, and Arab-American scholar Jack Shaheen was involved as a consultant.

In the following year, 2002 (3) *The Four Feathers* was released. This is a story set in the late 19th century, when the British army is fighting the Mahdi in the Sudan. Harry, a young English officer learns that his regiment will be sent to war, so he resigns his commission. His fellow officers and his fiancée accuse him of cowardice. Harry then goes to the Sudan where, disguised as a native, he saves the lives of his officer friends. They withdraw their accusations of cowardice, Harry wins back his fiancée, and the couple live happily ever after. *The Four Feathers* was originally a British colonial novel by A.E.W. Mason, first published in 1902. It has been made in movie versions at least seven times-in 1915, 1921, 1929, 1939, 1955, 1977, and 2002. The most recent movie is by Indian Director Shekar Kapur, who turns the British colonialist story on its head and makes it into an anti-colonial story. The novel and the first six film versions border on racism, presenting the Sudanese as “Fuzzy-Wuzzies” - fanatical Muslim followers of the Mahdi. However, Kapur makes the hero of the movie not Harry, but rather Abou Fatma, his Black Sudanese servant. Abou Fatma is a devout Muslim who rescues the British.

The Director approaches Islam with respect. At the end of the movie, Abou Fatma rides off into the sunset like the hero of a cowboy movie.

(4) *Kingdom of Heaven* (2005) is a revisionist story of the Crusades. In it, the Crusaders are generally the Bad Guys and the Muslims are the Good Guys. True, the hero and main character is a Christian-a French blacksmith who leads the defense of Jerusalem. Also, the Christian king of Jerusalem, Baldwin IV, a leper, is a noble figure. However, the two major Christian knights, Guy de



Lusignan and Raynald, are sleazy warmongers, and all the clergy-the village priest, the Christian Patriarch and all the clergy in Jerusalem-are evil. There is not a single negative Muslim figure in the film. Saladin is a paragon of civilized nobility. The film has been criticized for historical inaccuracies and, indeed, the story of Balian rising from blacksmith to Crusader noble is a Horatio Alger-like invention. However, the positive portrayal of the Muslims in Kingdom of Heaven is refreshing, and it is certainly more historically accurate than previous cinematic representations of the Crusades.

(5) *Munich* (2005) is a film based on real events in which the Israeli Mossad took revenge for the Palestinian killings of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympic games. A group of Israeli agents attempts to kill eleven Palestinians who were involved in the murder of the Israelis. However, the operation goes awry and the Israeli leader of the group becomes disillusioned. He drops out of the Mossad, leaves Israel, and settles with his family in Brooklyn. This is a film about moral ambiguity and the corrosive effects of violence on those who perpetrate it. It demonstrates how even acts of seemingly justifiable revenge can lead to moral dilemmas. This complex film, made by Jewish filmmaker Stephen Spielberg, treats the Palestinians, even Palestinian terrorists, as credible, multidimensional people.

(6) *Syriana* (2005) is a complex interweaving of several different plots involving CIA operatives, oil company executives, energy analysts, competing emirs, and Pakistani oilfield workers. Like *Three Kings*, *Syriana* stars George Clooney. The film has scenes of torture and violence, with dialogue in English, Arabic and Persian. The plot is difficult to follow. The Middle Eastern characters are diverse-good, bad, and in between-but the real villain is American Middle East policy, portrayed as being based on access to oil and the suppression of political reform. In the movie, Middle Easterners are portrayed in a balanced way, including an enlightened Middle Eastern emir who is assassinated by the CIA, and two gentle Pakistani workers who turn into suicide bombers.

In (7) *Rendition* (2007), the CIA suspects that an Egyptian-American, Anwar, is a terrorist. They abduct him and fly him to an Arab country, where he is interrogated and tortured-a procedure called "rendition." An American diplomat witnesses the torture. He becomes convinced of Anwar's innocence and the injustice of rendition. The diplomat arranges for Anwar to be released by the Arabs so that he can escape back to the U.S. In a subplot, the Arab torturer's daughter dies in a bombing that had been designed to kill the torturer. The movie is based on one of many real cases of rendition in which the U.S.

arranged for the illegal torture of innocent people. *Rendition* shows Arabs torturing Arabs on behalf of the misguided American officials. However, the torturer, the terrorist, and especially the daughter of the torturer are presented with depth and compassion.

(8) *The Kingdom* (2007) begins with Saudi terrorists setting off bombs at a softball game on a civilian compound in Saudi Arabia, killing innocent American expatriates. An FBI team goes to Saudi Arabia, and a sympathetic Saudi policeman helps them identify and wipe out the terrorists. The film is loosely inspired by anti-American terrorist incidents that took place in Saudi Arabia in 1996 and 2003. The representation of Arabs is mixed but generally positive. On the positive side, the Saudi officer, Colonel Faris Al-Ghazi, is a sympathetic character whose heroic death at the end of the movie inspires genuine mourning. There is also a Saudi prince who is a positive figure who facilitates the FBI investigation. Even the leader of the terrorists seems like a sincere older man. On the negative side, though, the Saudis are portrayed as incapable of carrying out a competent crime investigation.

In (9) *The Kite Runner* (2007), an Afghan boy, Amir, and his father emigrate to the U.S. Amir grows up in the U.S., marries, and then returns to Afghanistan to rescue his nephew from the Taliban, thus atoning for an earlier act of cowardice. Amir becomes an observant Muslim of a positive kind, unlike his secular father or the misguided Taliban. The characterization is believable, and a broad range of Afghans is presented. Especially notable is the scene in which the main character prays in a mosque, in the midst of fellow Muslims, while beautiful music with devotional Muslim lyrics in English plays in the soundtrack. *Kite Runner* is based on a best-selling book by Khaled Hosseini an Afghan who emigrated to California, and so it is a representation of Afghans by an Afghan and a representation of Muslims by a Muslim.

(10) *The Visitor* (2009) is about Walter, a bored older college professor who goes New York City for a conference and befriends Tarek, a Syrian musician, and later also Tarek's mother. Tarek's mother Mouna is Walter's age, and she accepts Walter's invitation to live in his apartment. Both Tarek and his mother are in the U.S. illegally. Despite the assistance of a lawyer, paid for by Walter, Tarek is deported, and his mother soon follows him back to Syria. Walter then returns to his solitary life. This is a low-key movie about contemporary middle class alienation in the post-Cold War, post-9/11 era, brightened by sympathetic portrayals of two positive and believable Arab characters from Syria—a country that was characterized under President George W. Bush as part of an “Axis of Evil.”

(11) *Body of Lies* (2009) is the most recent and, in some ways, the best example of a positive movie about Middle Easterners and the Middle East. It is an engaging spy/terrorist thriller about an attempt to capture an Islamic terrorist, with a subplot about the relationship between the American spy (played by Leonardo DiCaprio) and an Arab-Persian nurse (Golshifteh Farhani). As the title suggests, the film deals with lies and truth among spies, counterspies, terrorists and counter-terrorists. In the end, the American hero leaves the spy profession-like the Israeli agent in *Munich* (2005) and like the earlier *Spy Who Came in From the Cold* (1965). The villain is the CIA Section Chief, well acted by Russell Crowe. The movie is set mainly in Jordan, and is peopled with heroes, villains, and people in the middle. The dapper and charismatic chief of Jordanian intelligence is the real hero; he fools everyone and eventually captures the terrorist. In this movie, the Jordanian intelligence chief stands for truth, while the American Section Chief stands for lies. The Arab/Persian nurse is a wry, articulate and altruistic character. The relationship between the spy and the nurse is understated and appropriate to the local setting : not only is there no nudity or sex, but she won't even shake his hand! The final scene says it all: the unscrupulous CIA Chief remarks that the Middle East is a terrible place and he offers DiCaprio a cushy, high-paying job with a nice office in Washington D.C. ; but the DiCaprio character replies that he likes it in Jordan. He quits the CIA and stays to pursue his relationship with the nurse.

Six neutral movies

Six of the movies in our set of 21 would best be described as neither positive nor negative, but rather neutral. They are all movies about American military involvement in the contemporary Middle East. However, the focus of these movies is not the Middle East, but the effect of war on American society. These movies are all about the effect of bad wars on good people. Here the Middle Easterners are only incidental or background characters, mostly victims, presented as either neutral or vaguely positive.

1. *Jarhead* (2005). Jarhead, a slang term for "Marine," is a memoir of Swofford ("Swoff"), a young American who joins the military, goes through the dehumanizing basic training program, becomes a sniper, and is sent to the first Gulf War. This is a movie about the effects of the Iraq war on the soldiers who were sent to fight it, although in fact there is almost no fighting. In Iraq, Swoff never fires his weapon until a celebration at the end of the war, and the fact that he has no opportunity to fight and kill is a source of frustration to him. The only live Iraqi soldiers he sees are through a sniper scope but, to his chagrin, he and his spotter are not allowed to shoot them. Swoff's experience of the Marine

Corps and the Iraq War is one of boredom. After that he and his fellow soldiers return to the U.S. with varying degrees of dysfunctionality.

2. *Battle for Haditha* (2007), by a British director but with an international cast, is based on a real incident in Iraq. In the town of Haditha in Western Iraq in November 2005, a group of marines unnerved by Iraqi killings of their fellow soldiers, committed an atrocity in which 15 non-combatant Iraqi civilians were killed. The marines were tried, but all but one were acquitted. This is a very gory movie in which Arabs figure only as victims.

3. *In the Valley of Elah* (2007). This movie is based on a real incident. A father who is an ex-Army officer investigates the death of his son, an American veteran of the Iraq War. He discovers that his son committed atrocities in Iraq and was killed by a fellow Iraq veteran. At the end, the disillusioned father hoists an American flag upside-down, a sign that the U.S. is in distress. The distress is due to the corrosive effect of the Iraq War, a war which has turned good soldiers bad. The characters are complex and believable. The Arabs are incidental characters, victims of a misguided U.S. policy, and they only appear in brief flashbacks—a little boy run over by a soldier who has been ordered not to stop, or Iraqi civilians abused by American soldiers. This film parallels *The Deer Hunter* (1978), a film about American soldiers who return to Pennsylvania having been rendered dysfunctional by their participation in the Vietnam war. Again, both films are really about the United States, and Iraq and Vietnam are shown only in flashbacks.

4. *Lions for Lambs* (2007) weaves together three plots. It begins with a discussion between an activist college professor and a cynical student about whether it is worthwhile to get involved in politics. A second plot concerns a politician trying to sell a reporter on a new strategy for winning the War on Terror in the Middle East. And a third plot is about two idealistic American soldiers, former students of the professor, fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan. The only Middle Easterners in the movie are the Taliban, who kill the American soldiers on a snowy mountaintop at the end of the movie—an illustration that the new strategy doesn't work. The Taliban are incidental figures who kill the Americans, but they are neither good nor bad—only soldiers doing their duty. This is yet another movie that criticizes American involvement in the Middle East and laments the bad effects of a morally questionable policy. The Taliban in the movie are only incidental figures—ultimately neither good or bad.

5. *Redacted* (2007) is loosely based on a real incident in which a group of

American soldiers raped and killed Iraqi civilians. The mostly redneck American soldiers are oversimplified and the result is close to a Good Guys/Bad Guys movie. Again, the Arabs in the movie are simply victims, with little characterization. *Redacted* is a politically superficial movie about the United States, in which Arabs and the Middle East figure only incidentally, even though the movie takes place in Iraq.

6. *Stop-Loss* (2008). Decorated American soldiers who have served in Iraq return to a hero's welcome in a Texas town at the end of their service. However, they are ordered back to duty in Iraq under a policy called "stop-loss"-involuntary extension of military duty. The military has resorted to stop-loss in tens of thousands of cases because enlistments are insufficient for military needs. The plot turns on the dilemma of the American soldiers who have been "stop-lossed." What should they do ? Return to Iraq ? Go to court ? Flee the U.S. ? One depressed veteran even commits suicide. The movie deals as well with issues of post-traumatic stress and residual violence among Iraq veterans. It takes place almost entirely in the U.S., except for an opening combat sequence in which American soldiers caught in an Iraqi ambush are killed and wounded, and occasional flashbacks. The Iraqis are urban guerrillas, civilians going through checkpoints, and a presumably innocent family killed in the firefight. The Iraqis have no speaking parts and in the movie and there are no developed Iraqi characters, because this is not a movie about them.

Some would argue that the Middle Eastern characters in these films are positive, in the sense that they are foreign victims of a flawed U.S. policy. On the other hand, the political stance of the films is sometimes vague. Are these movies about the dehumanizing effects of the Iraq War in particular, or about the effects of all wars ? The Muslim victims in these films-acted upon rather than acting-are somewhat neutral, or even vaguely menacing. This group of films is about America and Americans, and the Middle Eastern characters are only incidental, usually silent, and never fully characterized.

Four Negative movies

It is important to acknowledge that the negative stereotype of Muslims and Middle Easterners which dominated the 20th century over the course of hundreds of films has not died out. On the contrary, there are still negative portrayals of Muslims and especially of Arabs in American cinema. Let us examine four examples of negative representation in our group of 21 movies.

1. *The Mummy* (1999) is a remake of the earlier classic films in which the

Mummy was played by villain specialists from Boris Karloff to Christopher Lee. As I have mentioned in earlier articles, the mummy represents the Middle Easterner-death, magic, superstition, and despotism-in contrast to the Westerner-who represents life, science and democracy. The Mummy lumbers after the white woman, whom he mistakes for his dead queen. In this modern Mummy movie, however, the racism is much more explicit. Apart from a token Good Guy bedouin leader, the Egyptians in the movie are all corrupt, foul smelling, zombie-like, and lecherous toward white women. The new Mummy, played by Arnold Vosloo, is a truly sinister villain, much more powerful than the 1932 Mummy. He is equipped with magical powers and accompanied by hundreds of evil followers. As played by Brendan Fraser, the archaeologist hero is a bit like Indiana Jones, but without the subtlety. Many reviewers noted the racism in the movie, but in May 1999 this film took in \$44.6 million, the “highest grossing non-summer opening in film history” (Shaheen 2001, pp. 334-5).

2. *Rules of Engagement* (2000) is about a fictional anti-American riot in Yemen. An American marine commander is court martialed for giving the order to fire on a crowd, killing 83 Yemeni civilians, mostly women and children. Is he found guilty? No, because we discover that the Yemeni crowd-even the women and children-were all wild-eyed, gun-wielding terrorists. Other Yemenis in the movie turn out to be liars and/or religious fundamentalists who preach “jihad.” In his book *Reel Bad Arabs*, Jack Shaheen reports that the screenplay was written by former U.S. Navy Secretary James Webb, and that the U.S. State Department provided free assistance for the film (Shaheen 2001, pp. 404-406). This is surprising, since the American ambassador and the other diplomats are negatively portrayed. This racist pre-9/11 film was the most popular film in the United States in April 2000.

3. *The Mummy Returns* (2001), is a sequel to the 1999 movie discussed earlier. It set another box office record of \$70 million, “the biggest non-holiday opening in movie history” (Shaheen 2001, pp. 336-7). Played again by Vosloo, the Mummy with magical powers returns from the dead to menace the archaeologist-adventurer and the librarian, who have now married and had a son, whom the evil Egyptians try to abduct. This time the Mummy is accompanied by an evil female consort, Anch-Su-Namun, as well as a Scorpion King (half man and half giant insect), various disagreeable and incompetent henchmen, and hundreds of computer-generated zombies and assorted other threatening supernatural creatures who are killed without major difficulties by the Westerners.

4. *Blackhawk Down* (2001). This movie is based on the October 1993 battle of Mogadishu, in which 19 American soldiers and hundreds of Somalis died. The film was a major hit, finishing in first place in the box office for two week-ends and winning three Academy Awards, including Best Director. Notwithstanding, it is a terrible movie—all shoot-'em-up special effects and no political analysis whatsoever of the complex situation into which the US intervened—a civil war involving five different factions. The Somalis in the movie are dehumanized and the Malay and Pakistani soldiers who fought alongside the Americans are minimized. The film is culturally superficial and inaccurate, filmed in Morocco without a single Somali and no speakers of Somali. It is strictly a We're-Good-and-They're-Bad movie. It is a shame that such a film could be a box-office hit in the United States and win Academy Awards.

A Theory of the Rehabilitation of Minority Groups in American Film

It is useful to consider these movies within the larger context of how minority groups have been presented historically in American cinema. Arabs are not the only group that has ever been negatively stereotyped in America. Asians, Blacks, Russians, Germans, American Indians and others have all figured in Hollywood's rogues gallery, and it is instructive to look at the similarities, differences, and historic patterns of portrayal of these groups. In American cinema generally, I have argued, minority groups have tended to be negatively stereotyped and then "rehabilitated" in stages (Michalak 2002).

In Stage One, in early cinema, there is a tendency to represent ethnic and minority groups as uniformly bad. In early cowboy movies, for example, the Indians were all bad—much like the Arabs in the Foreign Legion movies. Mexicans, Asians, Germans and Russians have been similarly represented. An example of such a film about Arabs and Muslims is *Rules of Engagement*, in which all the Yemenis are terrorists, even the women and children.

In Stage Two there is recognition that there are both Good Guys and Bad Guys among the minority group. The Bad Cowboys sell whiskey and guns to the Bad Indians who do bad things, but the Good Cowboy fixes the misunderstanding before the cavalry and the Indians go to war. An "Arab" film in this category is *The Siege* (1998), in which there are both Good and Bad Arabs, but nobody in between. This represents a slightly higher level of sophistication.

In Stage Three the dominant group becomes bad and the minority group becomes good. Examples of this are *The Karate Kid* (1984) for Japanese, *Lady Sings the Blues* (1972) for Blacks, *Town Without Pity* (1961) for Germans,

Dances with Wolves (1990) for Indians, *Gorky Park* (1983) for Russians, and *Stand and Deliver* (1988) for Mexicans. *Kingdom of Heaven*, with its evil Christian clerics and positive Muslims, comes close to a reversal film.

In *Stage Four* the minority group makes their own films and represents themselves. Examples are Spike Lee's films about African-Americans and the Native American movie *Smoke Signals* (1998). For Arabs and Muslims, there are Syrian-American filmmaker Moustafa Akkad's films *The Message* (1976) and *Lion of the Desert* (1981). As mentioned earlier, there are elements of Muslim self-representation in *The Kite Runner*, which is closely based on a novel by an Afghan Muslim author.

Conclusion

Why has an improvement in the representation of Middle Easterners and Muslims occurred in spite of the events of September 11, 2001 ? As discussed in the previous section, perhaps it is because the representation of ethnic minorities tends to follow a process of "rehabilitation." But why has the process taken so long in this case ? Why has American prejudice against Middle Easterners and Muslims been more resistant ?

The beginning of an answer is that fear of Arabs and Turks is a deeply ingrained attitude brought to America by migrants from Europe. Also, it was not until well into the 20th century that Muslims from the Middle East and elsewhere began to migrate to the U.S. Since there were few Americans from there to defend against defamation, the Middle East became America's fantasy world—a place of Otherness and villainy. In recent decades, however, Middle Eastern migration to the U.S. has increasingly included highly educated professionals who have organized to combat prejudice.

Middle Eastern and Muslim Americans are now organized to oppose defamation through groups such as the National Association of Arab-Americans, the American-Arab University Graduates, the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, the American Arab Institute, the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), the American Muslim Alliance (AMA), and others. These groups have organized public protests, initiated lawsuits and organized boycotts. People of Middle Eastern origin and Muslim Americans have increasingly run for and been elected to public office. Arab- and Muslim-Americans are diverse in their national origins and religious and political affiliations, which makes collective decisions and collective action difficult, but the need to combat defamation is an important issue around which they have had success in uniting.

There has undoubtedly been improvement in the past decade, but what will happen now ? Will the representation of Muslims and Middle Easterners follow the course of other groups that were once reviled but have now achieved a modicum of respect from Hollywood ? Or will there be a reversion to type as in *Rules of Engagement* and the mummy movies ? It is easier to analyze the past than to predict the future, but optimism seems warranted. To be sure, there will still be occasional negative portrayals, but the battle has been engaged and Hollywood seems to be tilting to the side of fairness.

World events undoubtedly play a role. September 11th was a disaster for the image of Arabs and Muslims in America. However, Americans are coming to realize that one cannot hold over 300 million Arabs and 1.5 billion Muslims responsible for the actions of a handful of misguided terrorists. The silver lining to the black cloud of 9/11 is that it has led to an interest in Islam and an upsurge in the numbers of people studying Arabic. More young Americans are studying abroad in countries such as Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan and Oman. The result is a steady increase in American sophistication about the Middle East and the Islamic world, which is all to the good.

The battle against negative stereotyping in cinema is far from over. The pejorative films of the 20th century continue to live on in DVD rentals and on late-night TV. But the substantial number of films with positive Arab and Muslim characters is a sign that things are changing. Presumably, we can all agree that negative stereotyping is harmful, and that Americans should strive for critical thinking, understanding, tolerance and multiculturalism. It is to be hoped that negative stereotyping-not just of Arabs, Middle Easterners and Muslims, but of all groups, and not just in cinema but in all aspects of life-may someday become a phenomenon of the past.

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Legacies of the 20th Century and knowledge imperatives for the 21st Century

Albert Sasson *

On the invitation of the UNESCO Forum on higher Education, an international workshop was held in Paris (19-21 March 2009) to discuss the current and future dynamics of scientific research. The workshop analyzed the diversity of research contexts across all regions and the implications of these for generating a sustainable knowledge base for the future.

Talking on the legacies of the 20th century and knowledge imperative for the 21st century Nazli Choucri, (*Egypt*) focused on the changing nature of knowledge imperatives as these have evolved from models used in the 20th century to new forms which can address contexts and needs of the Third Millennium.

The major knowledge legacies of the last century are well known : commitment to the sustainability objectives which has renewed the relevance of the social sciences, enhancing human skills for the knowledge economy, the emergence of new models of knowledge value and forms (*such as intellectual property rights, knowledge commons, open access and knowledge networking*), and new systems and spaces (*i.e. social, ecological and cyberspace systems which have their own logic, laws and modes in interaction*). An example of this approach to knowledge management is MIT's OpenCourseWare Initiative, which uses cyberspace potential to widen access to knowledge for diverse publics of learners. These previous forms and functions of knowledge generated their own concepts and theories, ontologies and frameworks, indicators and measurement practices, models and methods and strategies to link to the policy-making arena.

In contrast and in a short space of time, the new millennium has presented a totally new social context for knowledge management. Already it is recognized that *complexity* characterizes every aspect of the social

* International Consultant in Biotechnology United Nations University Institute for Advanced Studies UNU/IAS.

development process. As a result, social systems are constantly changing, closely interwoven, nonlinear and self-organizing, easily adaptive, counterintuitive and policy resistant. The power of *knowledge networks* has grown and their discreet and autonomous actors wield considerable authority due to their knowledge-producing capacities and ability to advance the frontiers of knowledge. Another significant innovation are ontology-based *collaborative knowledge platforms* which network expertise and so can provide support to public policy decision-making in domains such as the environment, science and technology, economic development and international relations. As the 21st Century unfolds, emergent knowledge challenges can be listed as follow : maximizing benefits from cyberspace, reducing barriers to knowledge and so promoting equity of access, abandoning the constraints of time in favour of the liberty offered by new spaces, enabling and managing multilingualism and linking globalized knowledge to its localized counterpart.

Why is Asia investing heavily in research and development ?

In his presentation, Professor Albert Sasson, (*Morocco*) explored the recent trend of heavy investment into research and development (R&D) by Asian countries, Cuba and some Gulf states. He noted that all these countries are recognizing the need for continued progress in research, innovation and development, and different regions are responding to this need in different ways.

In Asia, countries like China, Japan, Korea and Taiwan are greatly increasing the amount of funds being used towards research by billions of dollars. In a positive economic climate, this increased spending should lead to more competitive products by Asian companies competing with Western ones, to the creation of skilled jobs and to a rise in the standard of living. Several indicators of competitiveness in R&D markets were identified by the French Observatory of Science and Technology Report as follows : (I) number of researchers per 1,000 population ; (II) number of scientific publications by local researchers, and (III) number of patent applications per country. These, along with the global distribution of students and researchers, all help to illustrate a country's current position in the field of innovation and research and development (R&D).

A second case explored by Albert Sasson was the oil-rich countries

such as the Gulf States. Recently, they have been greatly attracted to R&D advancements, but do so for reasons different from those of the Asian "Tigers". These states are trying to stay ahead of the world's dependency on oil by researching and creating alternative 'green' energy sources. By partnering with higher education institutions, such as the **Massachusetts Institute of Technology** (MIT), or enlisting world-renown researchers through generous research funding countries will be able to reposition themselves as 'energy suppliers' and not just oil suppliers. The move from reliance on natural resources to an aggressive acquisition of knowledge and technology-based industries should ensure the future sustainability of the region and its residents' lifestyles. Here, there is a clear relationship between the advancement of research and a facilitating social context. The author also presented the case of innovations in biotechnology and public health in Cuba. He noted that due to a wide-scale education of thousands of physicians and a great push for public health care (particularly preventive treatment), a large number of immunologists were trained in scientific/biomedical research and many more scientists work in this area. This has led to Cuba becoming a leader in developing countries for vaccines and other bio-pharmaceutical production. According to Agustin Lage, this is due to the strong "link between research on immunology and public health", which then produces a need for comparatively competent and advanced medical biotechnology. Again, the link between R&D and social context is evident.

In conclusion, Albert Sasson evoked issues surrounding higher education in China and India. These cases are similar in that both countries have populations of over a billion, and thus face enormous challenges of organization and funding due to their sheer scale. But they differ in their approach. China's Confucianism leads to a strong support for the educational process and knowledge acquisition, but the nature of its political leadership particularly freedom restrictions and censorship may conflict with innovation and knowledge expansion. That said, millions of Chinese students leave to live and study abroad each year. Indian students generally have easier access to the English language and, thus, their universities may be more competitive for attracting foreign students, linking up with multinational companies and educating researchers who publish in international journals.

Though most Asian countries are responding to the challenges of innovation, globalization and the R&D gap in their own fashion and according to their social context continued financial investment is needed, as well as the willingness to share technology and to be open to innovations to ensure their competitiveness globally.

What can be said about research on social science in the Arab States ?

This viewpoint analyses the central role of social science research, and more specifically, the connectivity status among research actors within the Arab Region.

To introduce the subject, Abdelwahab Ben Hafaiedh, (*Tunisia*) underlined the correlation between academic achievement and multi-entirety/multidisciplinary cooperation. In that sense, "research in the fields of hard science, life physics or engineering sciences cannot develop in the long run if the context is not favourable for social science research".

There is a regional tendency to invest in human resources, at the expense of promoting connectivity among the active population. Moreover, human resources, material resources and capital investment constitute the dynamic trinity believed to ensure the development of research and innovation. The present economic crisis has demonstrated that good 'time management' and not, capital investment is a key factor in research and development (R&D). As a result of the crisis, the universities of the Arab States face financial constraints on their research funds, pushing many professionals into private practice and burdening the remaining teaching staff.

Through five indicators : (I) Indicator of Performance of Higher Education and its impact on Social Science Research; (II) Indicator of Dissemination of Social Science ; (III) Indicator of Regional Co-operation and Collaborative Research ; (IV) Indicator of Accumulation of Knowledge ; (V) Indicator of Accessibility to Scientific Information, Abdelwahab Ben Hafaiedh examined the present and recent past challenges of social science research in the Arab Region. On the one hand, the growing impact of higher education on social science research has led to the multiplication of research entities (passing from ten universities, in the 1950s, to about 250 higher education establishments, nowadays). On the other hand, due to a lack of

press freedom, social sciences publications are decreasing significantly, and affected by funds cuts. This restrictive trend is also denoted in the decrement of funds destined to collaborative research. Despite this, a tremendous effort is made to work with foreign research centres, permitting an international exposure of the regional actors. The analysis of the indicator of accumulation of knowledge signifies the emerging themes developed by social scientists - such as : (a) women studies ; (b) cultural identity ; (c) professional and family life ; (d) regional conflict, and (e) education. We can underline the specificity of these subjects to the Arab context. The access to scientific information that one should consider as primordial, is affected by the lack of information technology (IT) infrastructures.



UNESCO Forum on Higher Education

From these observations three streams of evidence stand out. Firstly, a social recognition of social science is needed, in order to bring awareness to the higher education field, integrating the idea that students will eventually be part of the active population - and not necessarily have a career in the education body. Another remarkable aspect in the social sciences environment is the critical mass of active researchers in the region. Notwithstanding that, the passage between generations of researchers is not

well-monitored, leaving little or no traces of past works. This is accentuated by another factor : the lack of trust among the regulatory entities (governments, policy-makers) and the research field.

This being said, the higher education and research measures in the Arab region have to be harmonized in order to guarantee the durability of pending research processes, and academic freedom. The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries have to update the research priorities agenda, to keep pace with the international research developments.

Mapping and analyzing research systems: How to 'breathe dynamics' into a template

In their presentation Roland Waast, France and Johann Mouton, (*South Africa*) presented their work which is based on the findings of the *Special Initiative Project of the UNESCO Forum - Mapping Research Systems* - that focused on research systems in fifty-two middle-income (MICs) and low-income countries (LICs). This project produced a general synthesis, regional syntheses and a global meta-review of trends, along with a template for collecting data on these systems. The prime purpose was to present a reference study and a panorama of data to assist evidence-based policy-making and fresh initiatives related to research. Data collection faces stiff challenges in MIC and LIC contexts: scattered and unreliable information, lack of statistical offices and non-existent storage and monitoring services. The *Special Initiative Template* is not a manual but rather a guide which attempts to structure information *via* indicators, descriptors and narratives. The template is neither evaluative nor prognostic and can be adapted to various contexts, purposes and users. Its applications are experimental and should be regarded as work in progress.

The structure of the template and its ten indicators is as follows:

- *National context* is depicted *via* four indicators (the country situation, history and governance of science and its informal Sand T structures).
- *Input/output* is studied *via* five indicators (performers, human resources, funding, cooperation and research production such as publications).
- *National dynamics* are analyzed *via* the tenth indicator which looks at tensions within the research systems, specific challenges for the country, identification of urgent issues to be resolved and a review

of initiatives designed to address these.

- Grasping the national dynamics requires consideration of the following specific areas :

1. **Country's assets and obstacles** (e.g. history, development strategies, its trust in science and its social environment).
2. **Human resources** (e.g. numbers of scientists, their calibre, renewal of expertise, brain drain).
3. **Institutional situation** (e.g. role of universities, policy and management issues, cooperation challenges).
4. **Research output** (e.g. its quality and relevance, collaborative research, networking).
5. **Function of research** (e.g. whether national research is cutting edge and credible for economic partners, whether it provides expertise and advice to the state, strategic input to problem-solving and can anticipate new trends and innovation patterns).

Research and information technology connectivity : Opportunities for innovation and issues for Africa

Under the theme of "Research and Information Technology Connectivity", the case study of Africa illustrates the importance of knowledge as a critical element for sustainable development. According to Olusola Oyewole, coordinator, Association of African Universities (AAU), (*Accra, Ghana*), mobilizing regional capacity initiatives in Africa has known a long period of neglect and stagnation, relegating research to a subordinate status. Nowadays a key element in Higher Education, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructures have yet to be developed throughout the African continent where Internet access remains too expensive and the bandwidth management has to be redefined. Alongside the connectivity challenge, other barriers persist such as :

1. Poor human resources (constantly menaced by brain drain).
2. Inadequate power and water supply.
3. Policy and regulatory process which is not always conducive to the immediate necessities.
4. Lack of research networks (isolating research entities from the global development process).

In conclusion, some proposals were brought up to address the ongoing challenges. It is in the best interest of the region to introduce research and educational collaboration. The improvement of the information technology connectivity will allow educational networks to share database and reports, motivating the creation of multinational and trans-disciplinary institutions. As connectivity is severely affected by power generation, urgent measures need to be taken to - at least-improve electricity supply. Institutional leadership has to be taken into consideration when developing education policies in order to regulate the transformation of the higher education and research environment. This evolution has to be supported by improved 'fundraising for research', perhaps even seeking to diversify its sources.

Business Ethics

The final paper entitled Business Ethics was presented by Wallace Baker, (*United States of America*) as part of the Forum's International Experts' Workshop's debate on *Research Imperatives for Emerging Economies*. It consisted of a reflection on the issue of business ethics and on the impact of academic research in this field of social development. As business ethics permits the private sector to act in the public interest, it links to public policy-making. For this reason, the field has considerable power to direct and transform both social change and the thinking and behaviour of citizens. These remarks were based on the author's commissioned paper for the UNESCO Forum entitled "*A Reflection on Business Ethics : Implications for the UN Global Compact and Social Engagement and for Academic Research*". The 1999 UN Global Compact was the UN's call to the private sector to reinvigorate the commitment of the economy - and especially of the business sector - to sustainable development. Today, the private sector exerts a powerful influence on socio-economic development as often individuals are richer than certain low-income countries (LICs). Small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) also play a key role in national economic growth and in the empowerment of citizenship. Though the business sector remains too weak in many middle-income country (MIC) and low-income country (LIC) contexts, ethical business conduct must be nurtured and strengthened as a major force for positive social transformation. To some extent, the promotion of business ethics and the encouragement of social engagement depend on the role and contribution of relevant academic research. Certainly researchers by virtue of their wide knowledge and investigative as well as analytical

approaches, can help to identify and document the main or emerging issues surrounding the place of business in socio-economic development. The issues in question are complex and necessitate reflection from various standpoints on the nature of commercial activity, of profit, of the human professional conduct involved, and of the contribution of this milieu to the general public good. Consequently, an interdisciplinary research angle must be adopted so as to study the different dimensions of the issues. Moreover, it should be recalled that research is the lifeblood of the knowledge society and the fuel for its successful operations because it helps generate new and effective approaches to problem-solving.

Comparative Studies in Social Sciences: Think diversity, think the “other”

Ida Saidani *

When exactly the practice of comparative research began is a matter of debate. Karl Deutsch has suggested that we have been using this form of investigation for over 2000 years. Comparing things is essential to basic scientific and philosophical inquiry which has been taking place for a long time.¹

Through creating a true space of exchange between PhD candidates from the two banks of the Mediterranean, the conference Comparative Studies in Social Sciences : Think diversity, think the “other” aimed at providing Ph.D students with theoretical and methodological training in comparative research from a socio-anthropological perspective. It also offered an opportunity to put into practice the comparative approach through sharing participants’ experiences and knowledge and putting in perspective their work and analyses. The first conference in this series took place at the University of Sassari, in Sardinia, in October 2006. The second session was organized by the Center for Economic and Social Sciences (CERES) in October 7-11, 2008, in collaboration with the Middle East Research Competition (MERC).

On Tuesday October 7th, Dr. Hassan El Annabi, CERES director opened the meeting. Dr. Zeyneb Samandi and Dr. Andrea Vargiu introduced the conference theme, and Dr. Abdelwahab Benhafaiedh, MERC Coordinator, put emphasis on the importance of the conference for young researchers. The afternoon session of the workshop was held in two separate rooms. In the first room, the session headed by Pr. Mohamed Elloumi and Pr. Marinus Pires Lima emphasized two areas: women and families /training and employment. In the second room, Pr. Hocine Zeghib and Pr. Abdelwahab Benhafaiedh chaired the session that focused on time issue young and public space.

* Member of the teaching staff University of Tunis

1- Deutsch, Karl (1987). "Prologue : Achievements and Challenges in 2000 Years of Comparative Research," in *Comparative Policy Research*"NTC. p.12

The presentation by Catherine Therrien, PhD candidate at the University of Montreal, Quebec, Canada was based on an anthropological research on the changing identity of mixed couples in Morocco. Not only did her paper fit with the theoretical and methodological objectives of the conference, but also as an individual Therrien was able to bring her own experience as an anthropologist from Quebec married to a Moroccan and residing in Morocco for seven years. She said that the comparative perspective is required in order to deal with a subject where diversity and difference is a daily subject of concern. She mentioned that alterity is not just the fact of being in another place far away from the similar others, and that diversity should be reconsidered in a renewed dialogue with the other.

Theoretically, she stated that her thesis focuses on building a conceptual framework for addressing diversity in a contemporary way by incorporating the idea of movement. She asserted that mixed marriage, which can be seen as an experience of identity transformation, could lead the partners to discuss their lives at the intersection of different cultural references raising, as well, tensions of identity movement. She stated that these changes, negotiations and movements (of the individual, couple, family and society) were revealed to her in the ethnographic field, which is described and analyzed in her thesis.

Methodologically, she mentioned that her status allowed her to place her shared experience at the heart of her work and that the unity between the embodied experience and the intellectual aspect of her research was a springboard that facilitated the field experience and allowed her to avoid the trap of excessive categorization. The questions, reflections, theoretical tracks and methodological choices made by Therrien in her doctoral work fostered and enriched the discussions in the seminar.

In another room, Besma Loukil, Tunisian PhD candidate, presented a paper on Green and Public Spaces in Tunis. She said that Tunisia is one of the few countries in the developing world that have a green policy and that large sums of money are allocated by the state for the construction and maintenance of public green spaces. However, she explained that in comparison to other countries which have found a method to manage urban public spaces, Tunisia has not yet found the path to suitable management of these spaces. Problems arise like the cost of maintenance, the decline in the number of park visitors, conflicts, incivility and crimes. This phenomenon, which is common in the Maghreb cities, imposes the pressure to rethink how these spaces should be designed and managed, as part of urban

projects. She stated that her PhD thesis seeks to establish an inventory of parks and gardens in northern Tunisia with emphasis on social behaviour (illegal practices, disturbances, violations....) and their methods of management. She mentioned that this would lead to classifying parks into groups based on uncivil practices, crimes and crime management. The candidate went on to say that she selected a sample of thirty parks which are examples of disorder so that she can better explain their distribution in terms of management. This phase is based on interviews with different actors (guards, users, residents, designers, etc). Thorough investigations have been conducted on a large number of users and residents to show that the incidents of uncivil and criminal practices vary depending not only on the mode of management, but also on other factors relating to culture, psychology, economy, etc. Finally, she said that the findings will be of great help as they would provide public and urban actors with new tools and strategies for the management of public parks.

On Wednesday 9th, and during the session entitled “Economics and the sociology of enterprise”, Adel Ayari, PhD candidate from Tunisia, presented a paper focusing on culture and enterprise and his case study was the Tunisian Factories NOUR and ASSAD which are the two main national firms working in the area of manufacture of lead automotive starter batteries. The candidate employed the comparative approach which consisted of observation, interviews and questionnaires.

On Friday, October 10th, Myriam Achour Kallel was the first speaker in the afternoon session. Following an ethnographic field exploration that she carried out from 2002 to 2007, she focused on the dynamics of identification of converts to the Baha'i faith in Tunisia. She proposed to investigate some conceptualisations of religious conversion in order to compare the different theoretical contributions that relate to their context of emergence. Moreover, she said that the conversion is considered in terms of the dialectic between the individual and the social (C. Duncan, 2003 ; PJ Laurent, 1998 R. Smith, 1995). She continued to say that it has been understood as a reformulation of meaning attached to a vision of the world, i.e. as a response to a social and cultural context (local and international) defined in terms of time and space. Indeed, this conversion shows the actor's approach towards an individualization of belief, and at the same time, provides a formal framework that legitimizes the reconstitution of meaning that affects their world view - by restating their building of identity and alterity. The candidate posed the following questions : How does religious conversion reflect the movements and identifications made by “alterity” ?

How is religious conversion perceived ? And to what extent do theories reflect the social “reality” observed during fieldwork.

Mohamed Jeghlaly, Moroccan Ph.D candidate in Political Science, was the second speaker. He presented his topic on : "Ulama" within the “regulating” institutions of the religious field : a comparative examination between Dar el Fatwa in Lebanon and the French Council of the Muslim Faith (CFCM)”. He examined the status of the traditional religious clerics in the socio-political contexts which do not allow the state power to intervene directly and effectively because of the multi-confessional nature of the society (the case of Lebanon) or the judicial incompetence of the state (The French Law).

Gafsi Jaber, PhD candidate from Tunisia, introduced his doctoral dissertation under the supervision of Pr. Abdellatif Hermassi entitled "forms of religiosity among young Tunisians : Islam as a peaceful and apolitical example". His proposal focused on a comparison between the religiosity of the Tunisian youth in the 1980s which was politicized, and that of the 2000's characterized by the appearance of free apolitical and individualistic tendencies especially among young practitioners. For the presenter, the relationship between youth and religion is of considerable importance especially after the rise of Salafi–Jihadist movements in the Arab and Muslim World which triggered the tendency to confound Islam with extremism. The focus of his study is the Tunisian youth who are becoming an increasingly significant social category particularly with their rising role in what is called the Re-Islamization of Maghreb societies.

In another room, Fatima Roumate, a PhD candidate from Morocco, said that the comparative approach requires the formation of communication links, yet the question is how to create these links when it comes to parties who are all the time at odds with each other despite the unity of their goals. She went further to say that the answer to that question requires the creation of a space suited to bring together the various local development actors and strengthen their roles in this context. Thus, the Moroccan Institute of Local Development has established an experimental program to strengthen local governments to operationalize their roles and to encourage the construction of local sustainable partnerships. The beneficiaries of this program are locally-elected officials, civil society and external service providers. She concluded by saying that the creation of a space to think the local, think the “other” and think diversity is a very important theme that promotes the role of the different local actors in the development of their regions despite all the contradictions and differences. Such a space is able to synthesize ideas and

visions and then direct them towards public interest which is the common goal of all citizens.



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