Syrian Engineers
Modernization, Techno-Bureaucracy and Identity
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Abstract

Between the socio-economic studies of development, and their fine anthropological analyses, a sociology of new actors, such as engineers seems to highlight recent social and political evolutions in Syria.

The objective of this research is to examine the potential ability of engineers, as actors, to assert themselves as moderniser, ie. to define themselves from the viewpoint of their profession, relative to a general principle of the country's development. In such a perspective, the orientations of syrian engineers are not only the product of reaction to the economic crisis or to the political situation. They rather refer to the complex space where are combined the social, political, religious and national factors. Such is the leading hypothesis whose fecondity and pertinence we have tested in our thesis. What is the influence of an engineer's academic background and his professional experience on his ideological position? What is the influence of an Islamist ideology or any kind of ideology produced by a culture and by working within this part of the world? What role does the engineer play in making decisions about the development projects in his country? These are some of questions that will be considered.

In the course of this thesis, we have attempted to show the Syrian engineers, as a group, to be more heterogeneous than coherent. They forme several sub-groups, each of which combines modernising orientation in the guise of technocratic and technisist aims with other orientations which we have called : weak professional orientation, corporatist orientation and "aesthetically" Islamist orientation.

This study interprets the result of different inquiries conducted with 202 Syrian engineers (and with 93 Egyptian engineers for the sake of comparison), all of whom having at least two years of professional experience.