Donor Community and the Market of Research Production: Framing and De-Framing the Social Sciences

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These two quotes with which I start my study suggest a problematic relationship between the heritage of the Western social sciences and the local society in the Arab region. I join Alain Roussillon (2002) who argues that sociology in the Arab World was part of the colonial project. Orientalist texts such as the five volume Description de l’Égypte (Description of Egypt) map out this intent. During the latter part of the colonial period, and especially after independence of the Arab states, an indigenous sociology or sociologie musulmane (Muslim Sociology) emerged. It attempted to decipher the specific nature of the segmented Arab society and yet retained an Orientalist position, by investigating its “exotic” culture. It was only in the seventies and eighties that a social sciences community emerged in the Arab region to examine its own society. This social science community occupied a complex and contradictory relationship with

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Western social sciences and scientists. It is structured by an unequal partnership as its analysis remained dependent on the academic perspectives developed in the West and yet it shared a relationship of collegiality with the West. As a result social sciences are often taken as a Western discipline raising the question of their legitimacy.³

This relationship to the West is not only historical but also recent. Since the Washington Conesus in 1995 (Hanafi and Tabar 2005) and its recommendation to direct the aid not only to government but also to civil society, the international community has contributed to the creation and subsidizing of research activities in research centers located outside of national universities. Understanding the research production of sociology cannot be fully comprehended without referring to, first, the genesis of the social sciences in this region ever since the colonial era, in addition to the political economy of the aid system. This paper will focus on the impact of the latter factor on both the research structure and production in the Arab East (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon Palestinian territory and Syria).

The growth in the number of research centers in the Arab East is related to the proliferation of the phenomenon of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). There are almost 122 centers involved in research activities within this area, which emerged in the context of the political transition in the Palestinian territory and Lebanon as well as the economic transition in Egypt and Jordan. This abundance is not only specific to this particular region but more generally, it refers to the context of any developing country to which the international community conceived aid as a way to promote the recipient country’s civil society.

In this paper, I analyze how the intersection between structures of power within the society and state, the international community and the market of research production, influence the themes of research and the

³ A hot debate has periodically appeared in Egypt and other Arab countries during the past few decades regarding the issue of research agendas. This issue is usually placed in terms of an opposition between local agendas and that of others, often those of the West. In addition, socially and politically contentious topics often lead to a discussion of research agendas and priorities. For example, the categorization of Copts in Egypt as a ‘minority’ in a regional conference, organized by the Ibn Khaldoun Development and Research Center in Cairo in 1990, quickly turned the discussion toward research agendas and whether the center was submitting to the interests of foreign, ‘neo-colonial’ donors. In 1998, another polemic arose concerning the funding provided by the British Consulate to the Cairo Center for Human Rights to conduct research on violence in an Egyptian village called Kisheh. On the one hand, the Egyptian state expressed its anger over the ‘abuse’ of freedom of speech and the increasing role of NGOs in social and political development by arresting the center’s director. On the other hand, the debate appeared within the Egyptian research community regarding a crisis in research priorities and the need to discuss local and foreign agendas.
relationship between the donors and the NGOs. Thus, this study will question the research centers which hold the status of NGOs unaffiliated with academic institutions and the consequences these centers have on research production. This study will be based on two research programs: the first, Program ESTIME, concerning donors’ funding towards research activities. To this end, 52 interviews were undertaken with several donors, international organizations involved in research funding in the Arab East as well as their recipients from the research centers and universities. The second research program that I coordinated focuses on the relationship between donors, international organizations and Palestinian NGOs, and specifically on agenda-setting and networking between the global and the local.

This study will also shed light on the role of local NGO leaders, including researchers, as a new elite—hereby qualified as the “globalized elite”—who have access to the international arena (sector-related UN conferences, international networks, etc.), but participate very weakly in their research agenda setting. While raising the dominant paradigms (research topics and objects, research methodology, research questions), this study will place more emphasis on actors and the structure of the research field.

After mapping the research structures, I will also delve into the ways through which external actors influence research production in the region. These actors are donor agencies (such as the French Cooperation, German Stiftungs, the Population Council, and UN agencies) and international organizations (such as the Ford Foundation of the Canadian agency IDRC). I will bring forth and depict paradigms revealed from general trends, without any pretension of doing an inventory of funding and research centers activities, since many exceptions can be found within these trends.

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4 The fieldwork was conducted under the framework of the research project ESTIME. The ESTIME project (Evaluation of Scientific and Technological capabilities in Mediterranean countries) aims at describing the scientific and technological capabilities of eight research partners’ countries of the Mediterranean (Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and the Palestinian Territory). The project portrays the close links between both the European and Mediterranean research spaces by providing precise indications on research, technological development, and innovation in the Mediterranean region, supported by empirical investigations and a thorough revision of sources of information. ESTIME is a project of the Institut de Recherche pour le Développement – IRD Unité de recherche “Savoirs et Développement.”

5 The research on this program was conducted with Linda Taber and led to the publication of a book, (Hanafi and Tabar 2005).
RESEARCH STRUCTURE IN THE ARAB EAST

Many scholars from Maghreb involved in the ESTIME project clearly indicated that the phenomenon of research centers taking the form of NGOs is not very widespread. However, the case of the Arab East is quite different. Research centers, either private or as NGOs, are flourishing, launching several surveys in applied social research for two particular reasons: the first being the peace processes of both Lebanon (after the Taef Agreement of 1989) and the Palestinian territory (after Oslo 1993), and the second concerning economic liberalization in Jordan and Egypt. The keyword for the donors was “the reinforcement” of civil society. These centers produce either research or pure consultancy (in other words, very short research where the output is often an unpublished report).6

The survey I have carried out concerning research centers in the region shows that research activities have mainly been conducted by two different types of organizations: first, by specialized research organizations such as research centers that have emerged either within or without university settings, and second, by NGOs specialized in development, advocacy and cooperative efforts (like The Lebanese Center for Policy Studies). For instance, in the Palestinian territory, table 1 demonstrates that research production is very much marginalized when it comes to university affiliated institutions (only four centers constituting 10%)7, while the predominant number of organizations are NGOs. Some 41% of the organizations producing research are specialized bodies while the rest are NGOs specializing in advocacy and development.

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6 IFPO and ESTIME have established in 2005 a database for research centers and researchers. Among the 54 research centers, there are 27 centers which published publication labeled as grey literature: “En général les ONG éditent soit des guides, pour celles qui sont très proches du terrain et font de la formation, des rapports et enquêtes, les universités des actes de colloque”. (IFPO, 2007)

7 Three are connected to the University of Birzeit (Public Health institution, Law Center and Birzeit Center for Development Studies) and one is connected to Al-Qds University (Jerusalem Studies Center).
Table 1: organisms producing research in the Palestinian Territory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Center</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NGOs: Research Centers</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGOs: Development and Advocacy Centers</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGOs: Development, Advocacy &amp; Research Center</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Research Center</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>42</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Jordan we find diversity in the status of the research organization, but what is important is that the sweeping majority of the organizations are outside the premises of universities. See table 2.

Table 2: organisms producing research in Jordan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Center</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private research centers and offices of consultancy</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governmental Institutions</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International institutions</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library or Documentation centers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>75</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (IFPO 2007) based on the (CERMOC 1995). This number is reduced now to only 61 active organizations.

However we have two specific cases in the region: from one side, Syria and Lebanon, and from the other side, Egypt. In Lebanon the university is still the bastion of research: according to the ESTIME survey, 85% (60 out of 71) of the researchers studied are affiliated with the Lebanese universities (IFPO 2007). Syria has the same situation but for different reasons: the government still controls what is produced in the social sciences and humanities. These are strongly apologetic, restricted in their research approaches, controlled by single-party authorities, and used for ideological propaganda and political manipulation. In contrast to other countries, Egypt constitutes a specific case where the importance of public research centers in social sciences is a phenomenon that dates back to the 1950s. Egypt holds the National Center for Sociological and Criminological Research (NCSCCR) based in Cairo, as well as the semi public institution Al-Ahram Center for Strategic Studies. Other centers are university affiliated like The American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE), which is also based in Cairo.
The source of funding for these institutions does not only come from Western donors, but also from the Gulf monarchies. These absolute monarchies often finance non-critical social sciences and the Islamization of these sciences, as well as technical research centers. However, the picture has recently become more complex, especially with regards to Qatar’s contribution to the promotion of research topics, like democracy.\(^8\) Other than Western and Gulf funding, national funding and there is also funding from some pan Arab centers like the Arab Unity Studies Center and the Institute of Palestine Studies. Both institutions survive thanks to their endowment from Arab business people.

The growth of research groups outside the university has led to three contradictory consequences for the production of research. First, it has discouraged faculty members in universities from conducting research, although some have engaged in collaboration with off-campus centers. As Romani (2007) subtly put it,

\[\text{[s]} \text{i de nombreux chercheurs palestiniens sont également universitaires, l’inverse n’est pas. Les chercheurs des centres observés sont dans leur majorité parallèlement responsables d’un enseignement en université, lorsque les universitaires rencontrés déclarent majoritairement ne pas travailler pour un centre de recherche. Ces capillarités entre recherche et enseignement sont individuelles, informelles et non institutionnalisées. (5)}\]

These centers are well-endowed and their libraries are better stocked with recent titles compared to those within the universities. However, these libraries remain private, usually not open to the public and when they are, they have regulated opening hours.

Second, since they are off-campus and scattered, these research centers have not encouraged graduate and undergraduate students to be involved in research.\(^9\) The ESTIME project reported that such centers do not often advertise their library in their website or brochures (IFPO

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\(^8\) During May 2007, the Arab Centre for Democracy was established in Doha and the Egyptian sociologist Said Al-Dine Ibrahim was appointed as Director. This center aims at encouraging the Arab region to adopt democratic culture. Qatar had made an initial payment of 10 million US dollars towards the Centre which it claims would be the “biggest civil organization in the Arab world that supports democracy.”

\(^9\) One Master’s student in Ramallah reported sadly that “they are forced to run around the West Bank from one city to another city to find one book here and another there. While there is no centralized public library (of course the municipality library usually is very poor), the acquisition in university libraries depends entirely on book donation.”
More generally, one may notice that there is little effort coming from these research centers to cooperate with universities by opening their resources to university students and faculty.

The third consequence relates to the quality and form of the production of research. Research promoted by these centers is policy oriented, such as the research on population studies (2004). A majority of these studies remain unpublished or if published, they do not undergo a proper peer review process. Additionally, this form of funding has encouraged consultancies and fast research (like fast food) where research is designed, implemented and analyzed within half a year. Such research is based on low-level generalizations and extrapolations from tables derived from small samples. Some funding organizations do not promote research. Rather they fund only workshops and networking activities within research projects.

THE RESEARCH “FIELD” AND THE RESEARCH COMMUNITY

While one may find large research communities in Lebanon and Egypt (and to a lesser extent, in Jordan) scattered between universities and research centers, this is not the case in the Palestinian territory, where there are very few senior researchers who succeed in attaining a professional trajectory based mainly on teaching and conducting research. Very few scholars labeled by Vincent Romani (2001) as intellectual entrepreneurs have shared in the research contracts in the Palestinian territory. One prominent researcher cynically disclosed to me that he is currently involved in eight research projects. The research field is thus threatened by a model of market-based centers - the production and consumption of this research is for specific clients and not for the public. Contrary to both Lebanon and Egypt, Jordan suffers from a lack of proper research centers. IFPO/Amman (Ex-CERMOC) was a pioneer in producing the bulk of research concerning social history, migration and refugee camps in Jordan. For example, the Center of Strategic Studies established at Jordan University produces political literature, while the Center of Urdon al-Jadid (the New Jordan), founded in the 1990s, produced good research about social history, but ended up often producing rather journalistic research.

10 Some significant exceptions are Abdel Hamid Shouman Foundation which has an excellent library in Amman open for long hours, the Institute of Palestine Studies and French Research centers in Cairo (CEDEJ), and French Institute for the Middle East (IFPO) (in Amman, Damascus and Beirut).
studies on the Jordanian economy, political system, and the process of democratization.

This has implications in terms of investment. There is an overwhelming bias towards physical infrastructure rather than human resources within these research centers. For example, most centers have excellent communication systems, such as the Internet, websites, brochures, publications, and newsletters. The discourse of institution and capacity building of both donors and local NGOs often concerns equipment more than human resources. It is very rare to find training programs for researchers working in these centers. However their research staff is recruited on contract for the term of the projects (generally eighteen months) while administrative staff is permanent. As a result, researchers shift from one center to another depending on project availability. This mobility is salient and prevents researchers from accumulating experience. This situation compels many competent graduates to seek employment in international NGOs, developmental fields, or even as employees in government administration. Reflexive research thereby loses out. Individual researchers do not play a role in the setup of research programs inside these research centers. The majority of these research centers do not hold weekly or monthly meetings, and thus they do not share decisions with the contracted researchers. It is no wonder that these centers remain associated with single individuals and at best, the decision making is shared between the director of the center and the board. This explains why so many of these research centers have a diverse range of research projects with no program federating them.

The absence of the participation of young and junior researchers in the decision-making process has reinforced their marginalization and has kept them in the shadows. The majority of seminars are closed to the public and the invitation process is often personal, composed almost entirely of clientele who are close to the NGO spheres and research centers. This concerns not only the attendants but also the participants who belong to the older generation of researchers.

In describing the closed nature of the research field, one researcher from Ramallah stated, “tell me the title of a conference and I will guess the chosen speaker.” It is striking that until now it is very rare to find a call for papers for the workshops or conferences that have been held. In the process of organizing the Middle East Research Awards (MEAwards) research group on return migration – a type of brainstorming group– some of those who received the call for papers found it quite insulting to be required to provide abstracts and CVs; they thought that their names should have been sufficient for their selection. I will later discuss the case of the MEAwards.
Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of the field (champ) helps illuminate the nature of intellectual production. The field is a result of interaction between the specific rules of the field, the agent’s habitus and the agent’s capital (social, economic, cultural, and symbolic) (Bourdieu 1990). In the case of Palestine, the rules of the research-field are complex and established not only by local actors but also by the donor agencies. The latter not only allocate the research contracts to the research centers but also influence staff recruitment.

The field is a social arena of struggle over the appropriation of certain types of capital. While scholars often focus on diverging ideas and ideologies to explain conflict within a field, they overlook the power structure shaping it. There are many fault lines inside this structure: between the well established senior scholars versus junior newcomers and between English speakers versus Arabic and French speakers. The senior researchers and English speakers impede the latter in establishing themselves. Ironically, after contributing to the marginalization of the new researchers and the graduate students, this research elite has complained about the lack of competent researchers. Most senior researchers are located in the capitals (Amman, Cairo, Beirut, Jerusalem, and “Ramallah”), where they are in proximity of the donor community. Teaching may occur in any city but the research structure tends to be in the capital near the donor community.

These conflicts allow for groups to develop within the sociological community. Following Jacques Kabanji’s (2005: 75-77) ideal-types, one can distinguish between three types of sociologist. The first is the committed (or activist) sociologist who is engaged ideologically, politically and nationally in societal problems. The second group does not believe in the leading role of state in the modernization project of the Arab society and is in search of new actors in civil society to fulfill this project. The final group consists of experts interested in sociological research as a tool for development in order to manage the social crisis but who do not engage in reflexive and critical theoretical research. For Roussillon (2002) in the specific context of Egypt, the tradition is rather of an apolitical sociology and what he called “structural a-politicism.”

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11 A field is a system of social positions (for instance, a research field) structured internally in terms of power relationships (the power differential between universities, research centers, senior and junior researchers).

12 Roussillon (2002) was not convinced by the notion of a field, because he considered the research community in Egypt to be extremely fragmented, thus rendering the concept of field inappropriate.

13 58 out of 61 centers are located in Amman (IFPO 2007).

14 Out of 54 centers, 46, or approximately 85%, are located in Beirut(IFPO 2007).

15 See the Romani study about sociologists in the West Bank (2007).
competition in the society, because with the intervention of the donor agencies, there is a tendency to favor expert-sociologists at the expense of other figures.

Competition between these three groups for resources allows for research to be dictated by an obsessive commitment to the paradigm of identity at the expense of social criticism. Contemporary sociological analysis has overstated externalities as well as the negative role of colonialism upon the local society and understated the internal factors and the contradictions inside this society. Additionally, the themes of study—such as democratization or public satisfaction—borrowed from the West and promoted by the donors, do not reflect the internal processes as organic to contemporary society. Simultaneously, the study of new local themes is not encouraged. Because of this contradiction, researchers are caught in a trap: a criticism of the lack of democracy means a criticism of existing power structures and by implication, entails an acceptance of the positions represented by international donor communities. This is why many debates in the region often end up being parochial and reflecting old debates. These debates were often marked by a discourse of exceptionalism, specificity and particularism of the society in question as compared to perceived “others,” therefore necessitating special social science agendas and methods governed by national considerations (Hanafi 1999), to the point of mythologizing their uniqueness as in the case of the research on Palestinian and Lebanese issues. In the case of Lebanon, many research projects and publications start with the statement that the Lebanese political system cannot be analyzed in the light of the political science categories of secularism versus sectarianism and that the Lebanese society is unique in the Arab region. The outcome then is often practical knowledge (Romani 2007), lacking deep conceptualization, comparative perspective and criticism. Again the paradigm of identity is very similar to the notion of committed sciences that had flourished in the time of the socialist regimes in Europe and in the Arab region. Research produced within this framework has been problematic. In the words of Adorno (1982) “the danger for politically committed art is that it will end up as bad art without becoming good politics either.”

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16 See, for instance, the critical review of the research trends on the Palestinian refugee problem in Hanafi (2006) and Zureik (2003).

17 Theodor Adorno (1982) privileged the paradigm of disengagement in his concept of the autonomy of art. According to him, an artist would choose a topic/object which is relevant to the social, economic and political problems of the society and the social demand, but it is crucial that the methodology employed and the process of the creation be autonomous in such a way that the art can be critical without the artist worrying about satisfying the public.
Having said that, I am in favor of the public intellectual who takes interest in the hot issues of society, especially when they are not part of one’s specialty (Burawoy 2007). In the last four years, after suicide bombing became the main mode of military action among Palestinians, we see a new trend among some Palestinian sociologists to criticize such nationalism and to be committed to the transformation of the Palestinian community. Many Palestinian scholars have condemned such acts through petitions and articles in the Palestinian newspapers labeling it as a war crime.

**AID SYSTEM AND THE EMERGING NGO STATUS’S RESEARCH CENTERS**

These processes have become starkly clear due to the changes in funding after the 1990s as a result of an increase in the number of research centers promoted by donors in collaboration with the local elite. Before 1990, sociological research was produced mainly in universities.

The Palestinian case is very revealing. For instance, the book *The Sociology of the Palestinians* was written to create an “attached, committed and action-oriented” (Nakhleh and Zureik 1980: 11-12) sociology of Palestine that is sensitive to dependency, social classes and colonial exploitation (Tamari 1980). This perceived orientation of sociology changed in the nineties. One of the major reasons for this shift is due to the institutional setting of the research. The increase in the number of foreign donor-driven research centers is part of the neoliberal agenda. The latter believes in the need to promote local civil society organizations to facilitate the shift from a conflict-ridden society to a post-conflict one, with the aim of reconfiguring the ways by which subordinate classes are incorporated into emerging state-society relations. This is particularly true today in the case of Palestine, which has a long history of internal and external conflicts. This agenda has a direct implication on the structure of social science knowledge. Krishna et al. (1998: 269) argues that instead of creating national institutions that organize its knowledge in coherent structures, this type of agenda creates hierarchies in the research field. In the context of the Palestine, this agenda has serious implications, given the weak institutional educational structure, the occupation of its territory and the enormous influence of international communities in its internal politics.

If we project this process onto the research agenda in the case of the Arab East, we see that the transformations in the donor agenda are intrinsically linked to three complex processes:
Firstly, since the early 1990s there was a fundamental shift in the political economy of aid in NGOs. Internationally, this moment coincided with a change in the sources of aid: solidarity-based support between Northern and Southern NGOs withered away and was replaced by bilateral and multilateral relations between Southern NGOs and governmental and development agencies. Regionally and locally, this period coincided with the 1991 Gulf War and the onset of the Madrid peace talks, through which Palestine’s geopolitical status was reconfigured and the West Bank and Gaza Strip were recast as sites of “peace-making.”

Secondly, the shift in the political economy of aid in NGOs in the region created new internal forms of social and political capital. As a result, research centers were encouraged and the established at the expense of aid to universities; this was part of the new policy agenda for the empowerment of civil society institutions.

Thirdly, the entry of local NGOs into aid channels has led to new subject formation and changes in the conceptual and institutional foundation of NGOs. NGOs represent fragmentary sites. That is, they are positioned locally, within development channels and network globally. A new globalized elite has emerged. This elite refers to a type of transnational subject formation, in which the actions of local actors are fore-grounded by debates, development paradigms and international standards, that are not bound to their local context.

In this context and in the framework of a three-dimensional crisis of national science (financially, institutionally and in terms of self-confidence) (Waast, 1996), one needs to study the emergence of research centers in the form of NGOs. I will develop three points: the institutional

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18 These developments must be understood as part and parcel of the Arab world’s integration into a unipolar world system; globalization, which is both a process and a project, is the harbinger of this system. It is worthwhile to reflect on the meaning of globalization within the experience of modernity in the Arab world. The mid-1980s brought a harsh economic downturn in most of the non-oil-producing countries, resulting in many of these nations to accept loans from the World Bank. Through this process, these countries were integrated into a neoliberal order; many of these nations were told to implement Structural Adjustment Programs, privatize state industries, and reduce social spending. At the same time, following the collapse of the former Soviet Union, the Arab countries were incorporated more firmly into the Western sphere of influence: with the fall of the Soviet regime, Arab leverage with the United States was reduced and Arab states became much more dependent on Western financial and military assistance. Furthermore, the 1991 Gulf War consolidated the hegemony of the United States in the region. Therefore, in its political and economic moorings, globalization has been associated with a feeling of frustration and a sense of powerlessness in the face of structural transformations that have increased the vulnerability of the region to economic and political actors external to the Middle East.
aspect, the emergence of knowledge society, and finally the impact in term of elite formation.

Institutional Aspects: Empowering NGOs and Disempowering the State

During the 1980s and 1990s, there was a process of professionalization and institutionalization of NGOs in their capacity for advocacy and research actions, and especially in their increased entry into development cooperation. NGOs have taken on new practices in the form of research, civic education training programs and awareness raising activities (Hammami 1996).

International donors have encouraged the creation and the development of such centers. According to the new policy agenda, empowerment of civil society institutions is accompanied by a disempowerment of the state. In the Palestinian territory, the ties between the Ministry of Higher Education and High Commission of Higher Education, on which Palestinian universities depend, have made the donors perceive universities less as civil society and more as public institutions. As a result, the university becomes a locus for producing graduate students who are disconnected from the research field. Moreover, the center’s leaders have preferred to decline university affiliations for fear that the university will take a percentage of the allocated funds. In fact, the University of Birzeit, like other universities in the world, receives a percentage that varies from thirty to eighty percent of the project budget for running costs, administrative management and the facilities offered to the project. Occasionally these leaders have been direct in their replies, claiming individualistic reasons such as keeping research centers outside the control of some university faculty members and administration. Consequently, Palestinian universities are unable to generate adequate resources for instruction and research.

While there are serious pitfalls to moving research outside the domain of universities, one should also acknowledge the benefits: these small scale units are not hampered by university bureaucracy and are flexible and efficient when closures and curfews become the general behavior of the Israeli occupation forces in Palestinian territory. Finally, some donors and external agencies are well aware of this situation.19

19 The Ford Foundation for instance, has funded an annual competition for young researchers since 1999 in collaboration with the University of Birzeit. The outcome of this competition resulted in a number of good sociological publications. Other research agencies like the Institute for Applied International Studies (FAFO) (Norway), the international development research Center (Canada), the Population Council (Cairo), several German foundations and a French research
So the dilemma of empowering NGOs and disempowering the state does not take into account the fact that the number of the private universities is mushrooming. This concern six universities in Lebanon, five in Egypt, four in Syria, four in Jordan and one in Palestinian territory. These universities (with the relative exception of the ones in Lebanon) have rare resources for research. In the Gulf monarchies, a different phenomenon is taking place. Instead of developing the national state universities, international branches of leading universities (including, for example, Carnegie Mellon, Texas A&M, Weill Cornell, Sorbonne and others) have grown. The parachuting (Bashour 2006) of these structures does not encourage the research production and the social sciences in these institutions are very marginal.

The Emergence of a Knowledge Society

The research activities of the NGOs are linked to a new notion of the “public” that believes that citizens need to be restricted to certain social and political spheres and not demand rights that relate to democratic aspirations and survival problems. These NGOs’ research centers claim that these models are being accepted by the new citizens thereby indicating the superiority of their analysis over the traditional ways of doing research advocated by the universities which use in-depth comparative analysis. To this end, developmental NGOs have created a new repertoire of concepts, which anthropologist Riccardo Bocco (2006) calls knowledge society. This term, he argues, together with other concepts such as knowledge management and knowledge sharing is actively promoted by the World Bank (1998) and has a tendency to valorize knowledge by creating a preconceived theory with its own specific methodology. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has come up with its own repertoire of concepts such as knowledge-based aid to add to those of the World Bank, creating a new perspective to assess and examine social processes in the Palestine territory. These concepts legitimize the interventions of donor driven aid through scientific tools, measurement and monitoring systems on the basis of preconceived past experiences (Bocco 2006).

In the Palestinian territory such surveys are done by FAFO and the Palestinian Public Perceptions Reports, 2001-2006, of which the latter is sponsored by the University of Genève. However, for whom and for what is this knowledge being produced? Often these projects and evaluation center (CERMOC/IFPO) have also contributed in revitalizing Palestinian universities by funding many projects.
reports are only available to the donors and are not shared with the public and the collaborators.\textsuperscript{20}

\textit{The Impact on Elite Formation}

As a result of this logic of competition between different NGOs introduced by new sources of funding, new cleavages have emerged. The middle class actors represent an emerging elite, intertwining research, advocacy and development, and have overturned the old elite of the voluntary charitable societies which mainly work on relief. Moreover, internal divisions such as urban/rural, Islamist/secular, English/Arabic speakers and professional technocrat/militant activist have been reproduced and have become more pronounced. These divisions represent markers, fissures, which reflect the process out of which this new elite is emerging. The fact that the majority of research is done under the framework of NGO structures and not in specialized university research centers – or at least university affiliated research centers—has tremendous consequences. They impact the quality of the research and the type of approach and methodology used, as well as foster elite formation and the emergence of a new “globalized” elite in local societies (Hanafi and Tabar 2005). A central premise of this study, therefore, is that there is a re-structuring of knowledge and practices and a new process of elite formation underway in the Arab East research and NGO sector today. They are called the “globalized elite” because they have access to the global (UN events, international workshops, scientific congress, etc.) but do not participate in the decision making of these global events.

The configuration of this field cannot be understood without dealing with the general environment of the region and the impact of donor policies in the empowerment of a certain elite category of researchers. However, a special emphasis should be put on the fact that responsibility cannot be placed on the donors alone but is shared by the globalized elite, whose actions/research are disconnected from social demand. In fact, local actors have their own responsibility and role in promoting certain groups at the expense of others. The donors sometimes propose an idea without taking into consideration the conflicts, the internal divisions within the society, or the actors’ own predilection. For example, the Net-

\textsuperscript{20} Many research centers in the region complain that they do not receive the evaluation report even when they ask for it. There are two exceptions, however: one German foundation gave some excerpts of it to their recipient research centers, while a Scandinavian donor agency gave an evaluation report in its entirety. It is rare to find evaluation reports on the websites of the research centers or to find that the staff has access to them.
work of Policy Research Centers (Rabita), a network proposed by the Ford Foundation in 1995 for five Palestinian research centers, ignored the fact that some of these organizations do not want to engage in networking. As a result, the networking initiative ended up as a small club. Although ideas and knowledge circulate within aid channels and are embraced by donors and NGOs alike, concepts are interpreted and re-articulated by local actors. Therefore, although the Ford Foundation conceived the idea for the network as an open space, this idea was de-coded and re-encoded by local actors as a clique.

The fact that many of the practitioners and leaders of NGOs are producing reports and/or publications in the field of research makes it hard to understand the relationship between knowledge and society without referring to the internal transformation of the NGO sector. Much has been written on the way salaried positions in the NGO sector attract skilled and educated individuals, often to the detriment of the public sector. The notion of elite used here is much broader and includes the way in which the rise of a new social formation disrupts the embeddedness of local organizations within local social networks, concomitant with the rise of the neoliberal paradigm which transforms the relationship between the individual and social institutions.

**Diversification inside the Donors Community Agendas**

My analysis of the paradigmatical intervention of the donor community should not, in any way, suggest that there is homogeneity in the donors’ agendas or in the reception of this agenda by the region’s research centers. While donors exercise influence over local research centers in order to advance their own political agenda, this does not mean that it isn’t met by resistance from their partners. In the research domain, when funding agencies support a specific research topic, they do so at the expense of others. Thus, research topics are indirectly “manipulated,” but donors rarely wield any control over the actual research process. Moreover, although there may be a tendency for research projects to reflect the official political position of either the donor or its government, one should not exaggerate the occurrence of such episodes. For example, a German foundation supported a conference organized by the Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA) entitled, “The Impact of the Peace Process on Industrial Sectors in the Middle East.” Although the foundation sought to emphasize the positive impact of the peace process on the industrial economies of the concerned countries, most of the studies presented at the conference concluded the opposite, at least in the transi-
Donor Community and the Market of Research Production

...ional period imposed due to the intermittent progress of the peace process in that time.

While the donor community has generally privileged the channeling of funds to research centers holding NGOs status, this is not the case with the Ford Foundation and the Canadian agency IDRC. If we take IDRC as an example, we notice that it diversified its partners to include universities (Jordan, Alexandria, Cairo, Damascus, Birzeit Universities, etc.) and at some point the municipalities. IDRC was one of the pioneers in the donor community to provide funding to Syria, mainly to the country’s universities. At some point, Syrian researchers were trained thanks to IDRC cooperation projects in the region. This sold with many research studies elaborated by Syrian and regional researchers, especially Lebanese and Jordanian. In spite of the fact, the research agenda of this center depends on Canadian foreign policy, the regional directors and program officers have the power to negotiate with the headquarters over the projects requested by the local partners. For instance, IDRC funded the research project “Reconstructing of a Palestinian Village: the Case of Lubya,” a project which concerns the history of the Nakba in 1948 and which lacked any obvious direct relevance to IDRC.

NEW FORMS OF KNOWLEDGE

Since the nineties, we can discern new forms of knowledge emerging that assess contemporary societies in the region. As in the rest of the world, gender has become an important lens through which changes in contemporary society are assessed. Themes such as gender and democratization in the Arab world, gender and school curriculum, the oral history of women’s experiences examine patriarchal and semi-patriarchal domination. However this research has not developed through the “mainstream gender analysis” approach and it remains somewhat superficial unlike such research in the North and some parts of the South.

Much research on the Palestinian territory and on Jordan is based on polls as they are the only available empirical data. Lebanon, Syria and Egypt seem to be different from the two former areas. In the Palestinian territory there are eight research centers whose main activities are con-

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21 As Rosen noted, some international organizations have been a leading agent for the development of certain field. For him, the “Ford Foundation… played a constitutive role in the post-World War 2 establishment of area studies as well as development discourses and theories” (Rosen 1985).

22 These centers are: Opinion Polls and Survey Studies Centre (OPSSC) in Najah University, Development Studies Program (DSP) of the Birzeit University, Pal-
cerned with producing public opinion polls on political issues. Presently, NGO research centers promoting advocacy and policy oriented research, do so mainly through the organization of surveys, the majority of which are based on polls, since they constitute the only source of empirical data. These inevitably use quantitative techniques to study living conditions. One reason for this is the orientation of funding organizations which prefer research projects with unambiguous quantitative indicators. This “fetishism of the quantitative” (Tamari 1997: 33) is devoid of critical interpretation. It is a donor-driven methodology which fits the model of “standardized” project. In the proposal, poll centers determine the sample size, the questionnaire and the budget. For instance, one German foundation’s major program was to support opinion polls of the Palestinian society. Unfortunately, the methodology used was obtrusive. Instead of assessing opinion, it generated and manufactured opinion, legitimizing political discourses and actions of certain political actors, who are the contemporary elite. Social scientists became a part of the political game (Champagne 1990).

Three examples illustrating the forms of knowledge generated in this form of research will now be discussed: (a) research conducted on poverty, (b) the role of the Mediterranean Development Forum, and finally (c) research and academic autonomy after September 11, 2001.

Research on Poverty: Who and Where Are the Rich?

Poverty studies conducted in the Palestinian territory make a diagnostic survey of “poverty mapping” and “poverty alleviation,” by presuming that certain neighborhoods are occupied by the poor, without examining why they live in these neighborhoods and assessing the root causes of the poverty, like the distribution of resources and the role of the state and its structural adjustment policies. The study of the poverty is part of catastrophe-centered research that has been carried out, sponsored and sometimes published by UN agencies and later outsourced to NGOs. Indeed, the abundance of data on poverty, declining standards of living, unemployment, labor market contraction, and other crises in the public and private sectors that is found in the periodical and annual reports by

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23 These centers are: Opinion Polls and Survey Studies Centre (OPSSC) in Najah University, Development Studies Program (DSP) of Birzeit University, Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research (PCPSR), Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre (JMCC), and the Center for Dissemination of Alternative Information (Panorama).
private sectors that is found in the periodical and annual reports by the aforementioned organizations is probably sufficient to sustain hundreds of research projects in the social sciences. These organizations have often used quantitative indicators and have emphasized demographic characteristics. These surveys are thus descriptive in nature, based on evaluation of consumption and income, together with life expectancy, child mortality and literacy. The incorporation of this raw data and its partially processed findings into broader sociological, anthropological, and historical studies is lagging far behind. It is also interesting to note that these studies identify the poor but not the rich and have postulated policy interventions to reduce the size of the poor population, while neglecting to assess the wealthy community. A qualitative approach based on in-depth interviews and an assessment of poverty in specific groups such as youth, are seldom taken into consideration. In these circumstances it is impossible to understand the nature of inequality and the stratification system. This trend is confirmed in a global study of Else Oyen et al. (1996) which reveals different analyses of the datasets available in their country/region, but does not take into account ethnographic research.

One case of subcontracting is the work of the Jordan Center for Social Research (JCSR). This center’s project is to promote the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). This research is very descriptive and its objective is to identify the geographical location of poverty and to propose solutions. This is very obvious even from the declared objectives of the research:

[they] were to carry out the first phase of the overall development of a strategy for the MDG implementation and monitoring in Zarqa/ Jordan. The overall development strategy had the following components or phases: (Phase One) Conducting a preliminary field study to assess the socio-economic situation in the Governorate of Zarqa and identifying potential local partners. (Phase two) Drafting of an in-depth local MDG Report to be used as a future blueprint for policy and to monitor progress towards achieving the MDG and development goals in the Governorate. This phase involves extensive research into the status of MDG implementation to be conducted with the participation of local organizations, NGOs, CBOs, the municipal authority, etc… (Phase Three) Implementing short-term projects to address the most urgent issues and set the foundations of a strong partnership for development with local authorities and civil society organizations. (Jordan Center)

Through cooperation with international organizations, the local research centers also produce knowledge on poverty but the researchers are
often experts who have built their careers in international organizations. Another example of this will to geographically localize poverty is a project entitled “The Figures: Measurement Methodologies and Development Research Needs for Data in Jordan (The Problem of Poverty).”

However, there are some exceptions. The urban approach adopted by the International Development Research Center (IDRC) in 2006, as response to the Millennium Development Goals of UNDP, has dealt with fundamental issues related to the cause of poverty such as the lack of redistribution of wealth.

\textit{The Mediterranean Development Forum – MDF 3}

The Mediterranean Development Forum (MDF) is a partnership of Middle Eastern and North African think tanks, organized mainly by the World Bank, to support development research and policy initiatives. Its aim, according to the forum’s brochure, is to operate “by increasing research capacity, creating and maintaining regional networks, encouraging debate, exploring new ideas, influencing policy and setting agendas.” From the beginning, MDF has sought to cooperate with the “private sector, governments, development agencies and civil society, including the media, to improve economic and social progress in the MENA region.”

Initiated by the World Bank, the MDF is interesting in three respects. Firstly, it’s reflective of the Bank’s emphasis on cooperation between state and non-state actors, since the MDF network brings together a think-tank composed of NGOs, private sector, media and state actors. Secondly, this network is important in that it illustrates the process by which new ideas and concepts are disseminated in the Arab region, tropes that support the reasserted market orthodoxy and the new envisioned model of state-market-society relations. Finally, it is a mechanism of legitimizing knowledge on social and economic development.

To illustrate that the MDF3 debates on issue like civil society and growth. Under the theme of “Voices for Change, Partners for Prosperity”,

\footnote{This project was implemented in 1999 in Jordan by the Center for Strategic Studies.}

\footnote{IDRC launched a Focus Cities Research Initiative for innovative projects linking urban poverty alleviation, environmental management and natural resource use for food, water and income security. Its efforts was to advance awareness, think of policy options and create best practices for the reduction of environmental burdens in urban slums through in-depth participatory research with multi-stakeholder City Teams. It created a research focus for each city, cataloguing the most pressing environmental issues affecting poor urban neighborhoods, while developing results and creating synergies with ongoing urban development and planning programs.}
the third three-day conference, held in Cairo during March 2000, brought together 700 development practitioners and experts from across the MENA region.26

The MDF3 workshop on civil society, which I observed, was organized by Saad Eddin Ibrahim of the Ibn Khaldoun Center in Cairo. In the workshop, Ibrahim presented a definition of civil society which reflected the terms of reference and the functional role attributed to this concept within the global agenda. He noted that the agenda’s announcement of the revival of civil society has coincided with the resurgence of classical liberal economics and new development paradigms. As he stated, civil society is “the self-initiating and self-regulating associations that operate between the household and the state” and which traditionally “promote[s] democracy, accountability, transparency, sound governance, development and the provision of services.” Civil society, he believes, is a catalyst for development and a watchdog for the people, “a kind of cushion between the despotic, powerful state and ruthless, greedy business.” For civil society to thrive, restrictions on association and freedom of expression need to be removed. It means a change of attitude by governments, which have “no trust in the popular genius for finding solutions.” This workshop concentrated on practical concerns such as how to empower civil society and overcome the obstacles that prevent it from playing a leading role in development.

This concept of civil society adopted by the session in the MDF3 did not take into account the fact that this civil society is a terrain mined by “unequal relations of power wherein some actors can gain greater access to power, as well as differential access to material, cultural, and political resources than others” (Alvarez et al. 1998: 18).

Among the subjects that were dealt with in detail during this workshop were: the creation of an action plan for improving the legal framework of NGOs; how women's organizations can be more successful, using case studies on micro-credit in Tunisia and citizenship in Egypt; increasing the impact of civil society on policymaking; and the contentious issue of foreign funding of civil society organizations. There was also a debate about the role of the media in covering civil society and whether the media itself is part of civil society. It was clear from the discussion and the papers presented that the workshop approached the question of civil society in the region in terms of success stories like “the growth of

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26 There were seven main workshop themes, each of which had six sessions. The themes were: global trade and regionalism; institutional reforms and sustainable development; “what makes your firm internationally competitive?”; civil society; knowledge and development; financing development; partners for employment creation; and social protection.
Arab human rights organizations and the involvement of civil society organizations in Cairo in converting Islamic extremists into successful small entrepreneurs.”

In the opening session of the MDF3, one of the speakers underlined that this meeting would bring out many of the latest ideas on balanced approaches to development that incorporate the social dimension and its concern with health, education and freedom of expression, with an emphasis on economic progress. In a similar manner, during one session, a paper was presented by a World Bank consultant arguing that economic growth cannot reduce the number of poor and that the gap between the disadvantaged and the wealthy could increase. This paper is in harmony with the new catchphrase of the World Bank about “qualified growth” or growth with equity instead of pure growth. This paper is reminiscent of publications from two decades ago, often by Indian economists. Along with the argument of the academic production of such publications one should ask: why should actors attend a conference to hear a theory proven over a decade ago?

In fact it is quite clear that what is important here is not knowledge as such, but a legitimization of knowledge by the experts from international organizations. For example, qualified growth becomes at the same time signifiant and signifié. In this sense, the MDF seems to function as a think tank for harmonizing vocabulary about development, progress, liberalization, and so forth, among actors. This “new” knowledge empowers itself through a process of objectification in the form of elegant golden brochures, books, five-start hotel conferences, etc., and by institutionalization in prominent organizations like the World Bank and UNDP.

World Bank experts cannot use “political” vocabulary such as democracy and instead draw on the more nuanced term of good governance.

In the other workshops, the neoliberal economic agenda was very clear, such as in the workshop on global trade and regionalism. Organized by the Cairo-based Economic Research Forum for the Arab countries, Iran, and Turkey, the aim of this workshop was to “ensure that the MENA countries are able to negotiate tough deals in the various trade negotiations that are underway, (WTO, the European Union Association Agreements and the Arab Free Trade Agreement).” A series of six sessions on trade liberalization issues was held with an updated briefing on the current status of all of these trade agreements including advice on how to gain the most out of the negotiations, in light of new research into past failures and successes. There was discussion of the timely issue of global standards, in such fields as working hours and environmental protection. The impact of freer trade on manufacturing, agriculture, textiles, and petrochemicals was examined in detail. What are the main obstacles to increasing MENA countries’ exports? What are the implications for jobs and output if domestic markets are opened? Can international trade agreements be used to improve policies towards the rural economy?
which exhorts the state to cooperate with non state actors (NGOs and private sector), creating synergy and equilibrium between these actors. Implicit in the good governance discourse is the emphasis on the equilibrium of stakeholders that excludes the possibility of strong street demonstrations by some actors (such as unions), which make this concept problematic. However, what is more problematic is when the language of good governance also becomes the vocabulary of the scholarly community and is accepted without critical inspection.

Overall, the practical implication of the MDF is that it marginalizes critical thinking. This is a subtle process, advanced not by direct pressure such as through exclusion or the stifling of countervailing opinions; rather it is the end result of the hegemonic consensus, which develops around new legitimized concepts and knowledge. It is true that some voices emerged during the conference that challenged neoliberal premises, but such perspectives were marginal. Moreover, in the end, a few dissident voices reinforce the legitimacy of the dominant paradigms by showing that a sort of pluralism exists. Many of the papers presented illustrate that little attention is devoted to re-thinking the categories and concepts used.

*Academic Autonomy after 9/11*

Since September 11th, 2001, the research agenda undertaken by international agencies has been further politicized and enormous pressure has been placed on local NGOs to conform to the international donors’ agendas. Whatever little academic autonomy there was before 9/11, decreased as a result of the campaign titled “war against terror.” All Palestinians were considered potential terrorists and donors initiated control and surveillance of the community. This affected academic practices including seminars and conferences, which were seen with suspicion. Scholars who were critical of Israel and Western policies were particularly vulnerable.

I give here a case of the pressure experienced by Palestinian scholars who were organizing a conference at al-Quds University’s main campus in Abu Dis, Jerusalem. Such events would not have happened in any developed country and would not even merit a discussion in a paper like this.

In the conference “The Palestinian Refugees: Conditions and Recent Developments,” held in November 2006, local Palestinian scholars had tried to create a new orientation to the refugee problem (as against officials and donor agencies) in order to clarify the legal aspects of return migration and its modalities, as well as the restitution and compensation of all Palestinian refugees.
The al-Quds University, organizing the conference, was able to ensure thirty local and international participants. In addition, around two hundred students and refugee community leaders participated. This conference became an event because usually conferences entailed closed workshops featuring twenty to thirty experts. It was no wonder that the German foundation, the sponsors of the conference, abruptly withdrew its funding and asked for a postponement of the conference. This was the second time that this donor requested a delay. Postponing is a polite and diplomatic way of canceling a project. But requesting the deferral of an international conference, three weeks before it was scheduled to take place, indicated a clear political interference, in addition to a lack of respect and responsibility for academic work. This action demands an explanation.

Donor websites state that their main goal is civic education and that their projects are to “promote democracy.” However, the democracy that they want is from a “docile partner” and not from the Hamas, which is the leading political party. Does that mean that their funding aims at the demobilization, de-radicalization, de-politicization of the Palestine territory? The politicization of (the majority of) donor agendas is not new. However, what is new is the cynicism among quite a few donors. Issues such as the construction of the apartheid wall, Jerusalem, refugees, the confiscation of IDs and the checkpoints which hinder the movement of the Palestinians, do not seem to be important to democracy for the Palestinians. Can the rights of children, women, and people with special needs be implemented without supporting the national rights of the Palestinians? Can donors conceive of programs in a way that affirm Palestine as a post-conflict society?

Some Palestinian scholars have tried to augment independent and autonomous sociological research despite the above mentioned limitations, by cultivating personal relationships with local representatives of these international donors. These scholars believed that the latter are sensitive to the plight of the colonized and therefore could be trusted. However, today they cannot take this for granted, because local representatives have either become hand-in-glove with their government or face pressure from their superiors. Though these donor agencies give funding for relief/protest against hardships faced by Palestinians, due to the construction of the wall (known as the apartheid wall), they do not follow the European Union (EU) position on many issues and merely follow their own governments’ dictates. For instance, the Palestinians have now got used to the fact that local German representatives of donors support the official German position which is against the publication of the EU Jerusalem report. This report holds Israel responsible for the everyday prob-
lems faced by the Palestinian as a result of the Israeli construction of the wall. They also now take for granted that these local representatives will not support certain EU members’ demand that the world community refer the case of the construction of the wall to the International Court of Justices for advisory. How can sociology and sociologists compartmentalize policies, politics and the struggle for everyday existence of the Palestine people?

The cynicism and double standards of some donor agencies together with their lack of sensitivity to the issues of academic autonomy have reached new heights. There is a high level of suspicion about academics. A good case in point is the decision to withdraw a Palestinian economist’s invitation to attend a workshop about a research study because he was an employee of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, an office of the Palestinian National Authority. This was because the elected Hamas government is banned by the EU. The EU’s position reflects a clear deterioration not only of the relative autonomy of the NGOs but also of the academic world. Currently both fields are perceived in terms of what Agamben (1998) calls security issues. Can ideas be of security concern? In such a context, what is the future of sociology?

THE NORTH-SOUTH COOPERATION

As mentioned in the introduction, colonialism was the avenue for the emergence of the social sciences in the Arab East. According to Roussillon (2002), for the last half of century these sciences in Egypt have been influenced by French and Anglo-Saxon traditions which were at some point at rivalry. The problem of the legitimacy of these sciences was also raised at that time and continues to be salient because of what they have inspired. This constitutes not only public concern but also part of the social sciences community. Actually, following the category propounded by Roussillon, we can talk about two trends inside of this community: the nationalists and the reformists. While the former were outspoken in their skepticism about this influence, the latter considered it a tool for social, economic and political reforms in the region.

Half a century of cooperation between the North and South has taken on diverse forms: fellowships for training, research grants for individuals and teams, institution building, strengthening and twinning, North/South partnership research programs and so forth (Gaillard 1999). However, the Northern funding system has not encouraged social scientists to accumulate knowledge but instead to use knowledge to solve society’s problems or as a tool for a control paradigm. These societies were seen by many
orientalists and Northern social scientists as abnormal societies, justifying
the study of the dysfunctional and orienting the study to the examination
of the category of the population which opposes modernity and moderni-
ization (Roussillon 2002: 22). Even with periodic social, economic and
political surveys leading to more inventories than social science analyses,
the donor community is interested in studying specific societies in con-
flict or post-conflict and for economic reasons. For that, “area studies”
emerged at the expense of the disciplines (sociology, anthropology, po-
litical sciences, etc.).

Contrary to the soft power of the American and Anglican missionar-
ies in Palestine, Lebanon and Egypt, as Samir Khalaf may say, it is very
interesting that the French and British colonizers did not really construct
universities (except University of Alger), nor institutions, nor individuals
trained as social scientists (Roussillon 2002: 22). However, for quite a
long time, many scholars in the Northern social sciences field have been
very helpful to Arab social scientists in their quest for emancipation;
among these scholars are Jacques Berque, Paul Pascon (1932-1985) in
Morocco (what was called “pied rouge”), Elisabeth Longuenesse, and
Jean Hannoyer.

After September 11, several cooperation projects were established to
research strategy and security. The Pentagon asked academics for “help
in understanding its enemies.” Officials expect that the knowledge gained
from such research will help U.S. forces fight what the Bush Administra-
teion called “a global war on terror” and help commanders cope with an
incendiary mix of poverty, civil and religious enmity, and public oppo-
sition to the U.S.-led occupation in Iraq. One Pentagon officer reported,
"[w]e want to avoid situations where nation states have unstable govern-
ments and instability within populations, with disenfranchised groups
creating violence on unsuspecting citizens. Toward that goal, we need
computational tools to understand to the fullest extent possible the society
we are dealing with, the political forces within that government, the so-
cial and cultural and religious influences on that population, and how that
population is likely to react to stimuli—from aid programs to the pres-
ence of U.S. troops” (Bhattacharjee 2007: 534).

Some international organizations encourage local researchers to con-
nect with researchers from different continents who are also working on
the same topic. The Heinrich Böll Foundation has a particularly good co-
operation process in the region. One of the events addressed and illumi-
nated the cultural dimensions of globalization processes, held not only in
Beirut but also in Mexico and in Berlin, gathering local, regional and in-
ternational scholars together. The Foundation program Cultural Global-
ization, aimed at supporting research and cultural expression, discusses
and reflects on the effects of globalization on cultural expression and cultural diversity. It looks for authentic answers to the issues raised by the processes of globalization, and discusses approaches that can empower people to shape these processes in a self-determined way. The inclusion of culture into international trade agreements jeopardizes the entire principle of the right of countries to apply cultural policies and to support domestic cultural production — including foreign ownership limits for broadcasters, regulatory systems for television and radio including quotas for national content, subsidies and tax credits reserved for domestically-owned cultural enterprises, screen quotas for national cinema, and numerous other matters that have major implications for the culture and media sectors. Opening the debate in the region was very important, given that many Arab scholars were suspicious of the question of globalization and labeled it as cultural invasion.

The role of research centers like French institutions abroad (CEDEJ\textsuperscript{28}, CERMOC and IFPO), the Danish Institute of Near East, and FAFO in introducing qualitative research is very important. There is a relative autonomy of the expatriate research community from the research centers in the metropolis. Unlike other Western countries, France has a central research institution—the National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS)—including researchers representing all social and natural science disciplines. Other research institutions of lesser importance also exist, including those concerned with social and agricultural issues in societies previously occupied by France, especially in Africa, such as the Institute of Research for Development (IRD). Many research centers are also affiliated with universities. They are supported primarily by the French government but also obtain their own resources from publications and scientific patents. Minor funding is also provided by the private sector. These institutions are guided by committees that comprise an overwhelming majority of scientifically renowned members in addition to a small number of government-appointed individuals. The committees determine the budget allocation and general policies for each department within a center and therefore give priority to some fields and geographic areas at the expense of others. Thus, it is not a question of whether or not governments and donors influence a research agenda but rather the extent of this influence.

The relative independence of researchers and research in countries like France undermines the influence of donor agencies (Hanafi 1999). In spite of a French policy to focus on spreading the French language and culture and the American policy of struggling against communism and

\textsuperscript{28} Centre d’Etudes et de Documentation Economique et Juridique.
Islamism (Gaillard 1999: 273), the contribution of such research centers in sharing knowledge goes far beyond the official objectives assigned to these centers. Indeed, the difference between the practices of a very subjective research community and the stated intentions of the centers are quite large. The role they have played is important not only in analyzing Southern societies and training local researchers in the use of qualitative research methods but also in enriching the social sciences more generally. These different research experiences and cross-cultural analyses are a source of diversification of the epistemologies which provides the basis for heuristic renewal (Waast 1996: 23; quoted by Gaillard 1999: 328). Jacques Gaillard highlights the importance of such cooperation between the North and the South as it contributes to this mix of cultures. However this cooperation should not be based on a simple transaction or one-way transfer of knowledge but should embrace a new paradigm of interactive interdependence (Gaillard 1999: 328-9).

Cooperation should not be based on creating networks without promoting research projects. Encouraged by new information technologies, Manuel Castells (2000) writes about network society as a shift from social groups to social networks. But these networks are not obvious nor are they neutral (Latour 1999). In his seminal book *Liquid Love*, Zygmunt Bauman (2003) noticed that people speak ever more often of connections, of connecting and being connected, rather than reporting their experiences and prospects in terms of relating and relationships. Instead of talking about partners, they prefer to speak of networks. Unlike relationships and partnerships, which stand for mutual engagement over disengagement, network stands for a matrix for simultaneously connecting and disconnecting where connections are entered on demand, and can be broken at will. In a network, connecting and disconnecting are equally legitimate choices and carry the same importance. Network suggests moments of “being in touch” interspersed with periods of free roaming. I think Bauman’s description of network can be applied accurately not only to the praxis between individuals but also between Southern and Northern scientific institutions. The EU has often felt more comfortable establishing networks which create virtual proximity and always produce a “very” visible output (website, meetings, etc.) than engaging in scientific projects with less visible output (academic journal articles, books). The people invited to the network have two qualities: they speak a foreign language and they have social capital, i.e. connections. What is missing here is the cultural capital: to what extent people fit into the research topic of a given international network. In France, the new model of funding research is a call for papers so as to assemble a research team. The budget
often does not contain funding for fieldwork or for translation into the local language of the country in which the workshop is held.

**CONCLUSION**

This paper has attempted to qualify our claim about the problematic development of research in the social sciences in the region. It has accounted for the emergence of the intellectual entrepreneurs (Romani 2001), expert-sociologists (Kabanji 2005), and consultants (al-Kinz 2005) who have become part of the networks of the donor agencies and thus use the cognitive code of the donor agencies in the research field. All of them have in turn become part of the network of the donor agencies, each using their respective discourse in the research field. Although sociological research has flourished in the Arab East recently (as against the earlier dearth) due to academics’ attempts to present plural and diverse approaches, their studies have lacked a critical emphasis because of the donor-driven orientation discussed earlier. Thus this research field is not structured by interests of social classes or ideologies but rather is an arena wherein researchers compete to maneuver for material resources and/or contracts. The donor agencies play an important role in setting the rules of the field. This partially explains why current research is policy oriented, commissioned and packaged to assess the “pulse of the Arab street,” rather than being driven by academic research program and social demands. The end result is an empiricist-oriented research, often lacking theorization. Although some authors have tried to transcend these constraints by conducting qualitative, in-depth research based on theoretical frameworks, publishers have not encouraged the publication of these texts, indicating the close relationship between donors, knowledge and academic culture.

The most salient issue is the form of funding. Funding disparate projects, instead of coherent research programs raises a major problem concerning the accumulation of knowledge, methodology, topics, and specialization which are necessary to ensure good research. The scarcity of public funding for research, the lack of fundraising from the wealthy local community, and the exclusive appeal to and for foreign funding hinders the ability of the research centers to make long-term plans and hire suitable personnel.

For instance, endowments that generate minimal revenue for research centers, often found in North America and some European countries, are very rare. As Mustapha Barghouthi explains, endowments have been proposed by NGOs, but the donors often refuse them since there is no guar-
antee that the character of the organization will not change over time (1995). In June 2000, at an IDRC (International Development and Research Center) meeting for Palestinian partner organizations, many Palestinian NGOs suggested that international NGOs should help NGOs set up endowment funds. Yet as the present discussion revealed, this form of support is very difficult for donors to justify financially. It is apparent that donor support for Palestinian research centers remains confined to a short-term emphasis on obtaining “results” in donor-relevant thematic areas of concern. This comes at the expense of long-term institution building. While it can be said that the question of research center sustainability is ultimately the responsibility of the local organization, it is also true that donors have hindered them in this matter by prioritizing short-term gains over long-term mechanisms of support for these institutions.

With research done outside the university, sociological practices have become prone to many pressures. Even the Universitat in Italy in the Middle Ages was autonomous vis-à-vis the city. This was a necessary condition for creating a community critical of its society. The fragmentation of research sites makes research centers vulnerable to attacks from political and security authorities and also from religious, leftist, or conservative groups. Thus researchers fail to be critical of their own society. In this globalized order, in which donors are not interested in empowering state institutions to conduct research so as to play a role in social change, the marginalization of the university need not be inevitable. Ali Al-Kinz noticed that the university tradition in Brazil, Argentina, India, and South Africa is so strong, that universities take a leading role in the production of research (2005: 35).

Finally, if the current situation continues and research centers remain disconnected from universities in the Arab East, one can eventually expect a research field without professional researchers, mirroring Ghassan Salameh’s (1994) characterization of a democracy without democrats. It will be a dark future for the research field itself.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


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29 One exceptional case is when the Ford Foundation provided $1 million as an endowment to the Community Health Institute at the University of Birzeit.
30 The Birzeit Health Institute was an exception because it is affiliated with the university and, therefore, was perceived as being part of a public institution.


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