Academic (In)Dependency in the Arab World and Latin America
A Comparative Perspective

Sari Hanafi and Rigas Arvanitis

In June 2014, our university department organized a tribute to Samir Khalaf, who is a professor of sociology at the American University of Beirut. When we sent this invitation to our mailing list, we received seven phone calls and emails asking us when Samir passed away, and four other emails asking when he retired. This anecdote alludes to the fact of a lack of tradition in the Arab world of giving a tribute to someone if he is still alive or during his professional life. It indicates the absence of a “scientific community” in Lebanon that acknowledge the contribution of its members. Of course traditions are the result of an active re-enactment of our history. Scientific academic and disciplinary communities are fond of these small rituals that revive the intellectual standing of its members and permit us to gauge our own position as a group, inside the “community”. What is at stake in any of these informal evaluations is where we stand, and at the same time to which group do we belong. Institutions make some of this boundary work, and is important to understand the institutionalization process that has taken place in the Arab world and particularly in Lebanon. We will ask ourselves why was it so late; why did the scientists wait so long to create an active scientific community?

In March 2014, the Lebanese Association for the Advancement of Science held its 20th annual conference. It was the opportunity to present more than 400 posters and presentations in the natural and exact sciences. For a small community, in a small country, these numbers are relatively high: it is not so much a question of the mere size of the scientific community, but rather a question of proportions. The researchers are there, but is there a community? “In this country, you can find a specialist in any specialty, but you will never find two persons in the same domain” was the witty remark of a research director that we interviewed last year. Maybe it appears as an exaggeration but certainly it reflects a very widely felt reality. This lack of “community” appears so strange in a country where the notion of community is so present, referring to the religious and social “communities” that are recognized in the political life of the country. And maybe a part of the answer lies, precisely, in the division of the country among its many competing fragments. The particular context of Lebanon is a nuance of a phenomenon evident throughout the Arab world.
Why is the scientific community so little recognized in the Arab countries, even though they are often rich with universities and university hospitals, and some level of scientific production? Is it an institutional problem or a political matter, the State being rather less active than other similar regions, such as Latin America? Or is it a deeper social and political problem that concerns the production of scientific knowledge?

This chapter is based on our forthcoming book *Arab Research and Knowledge Society: The Impossible Promise* and the edited volume by Fernanda Beigel (2011), *The Politics of Academic Autonomy in Latin America. Public Intellectuals and the Sociology of Knowledge*. We will mainly examine the question of institutionalization and professionalization of the scientific community in the Arab world and Latin America and how globalization has affected these processes. Both regions are not part of the hegemonic centers of knowledge production yet they are not simply peripheries. We thus reject the temptation of center/periphery theory and its deterministic view. Both fields are somehow relatively autonomous but also internationalized. We also challenge the way the World Bank and other international organizations have created benchmarking using the concept of knowledge economy and knowledge society. This benchmarking is misleading and cannot help either the Arab world or Latin America to engage in research and innovation.

### Identifying the Local Engines of Globalization in Research

As we know, since the seminal book of Roland Waast and his colleagues (Gaillard et al., 1997, p. 12), scientific communities were born in the age of national science, after colonial rule recessed: “For almost three decades or so after the War, [a] national mode of scientific development, which promoted the strategies of import-substitution and self-reliance in the overall economic policies, also governed the organization of science and the goal orientations of scientific communities”. But this new era of “national science” has been short lived: we can date this period from the independence or liberation wars, when the National States were set up, against colonial rule, until the eighties, when globalization became the new rule of the game.

At that time, and until approximately the eighties, research was really equated to science. National states were creating new institutions, among them universities and public research centers. The debates on development always mentioned economic growth, and science was just a background activity useful for technological development. All that counted was technology, and for those who recognize the unequal exchanges between developing and rich countries, it was technological transfers. The endless debates on technological development translated the frustration of those newcomer countries that did not have access to up-to-date technology. This debate, as Ruffier (1991) told us, went to a dead end since we found out, in the process, that technology cannot be bought: it had
to be developed, it had to be incorporated locally, mastered in-house; it had to rely on previous knowledge, and it also had to rely on research. Technological developments do not depend on research exclusively; rather, they relate to the technological experiences of companies, out of which R&D (and public research) are indeed a vital input.

Since the eighties, a second fundamental change has taken place: globalization has profoundly affected research. Research is no more an exclusively national endeavour. The divided world of the aftermath of World War II gave place to a hierarchical world where centers and peripheries are more widely distributed. Scientific collaborations are all about how to link this “national” science (that is, the local scientific community) with the available international competencies, as we will see later.

As a result of this globalization process, science has grown very rapidly. Estimates$^2$ of the world’s expenses in R&D show a figure around €1,113 billion—which represents 2.15% of World estimated GDP; this figure has grown 77% in 7 years from a low €640 billion in 2000 to today’s €1.2 trillion. At the same time the World GDP grew at a somewhat slower pace (72% in 7 years).

Not only has the scale of science changed in large proportions; its geographic distribution has also changed. World production, in terms of publications (excluding social and human sciences), is no longer entirely bound to North America and Europe. The geographical distribution is the following: 38.6% of publications come from Europe, followed by North America (28.4%) and Asia (24.3%). China represents around 11% of the global share of publications. New players in the world’s scientific production have appeared since the early years of our new aeon: China, India, Brazil, Turkey, South Africa. The club of countries that give priority to research has grown; it includes now countries such as Mexico, Thailand, or Chile, for instance.

This increase in the size of science also reflects a larger scope of activity and a stronger interest in the results of research. This was the impetus for the increasing importance of PhD programs created in every country, and as a result, flows of students worldwide have been soaring. The information and telecommunication technologies created a global information infrastructure, which has triggered further collaborative activities within research networks and for users of scientific knowledge.

Also, the governance, and predominance, of science in political debates (think of climate change, genetically modified organisms [GMOs], international property rights, negotiations on drugs, biodiversity, and the like) has changed. Scientific questions have become global. Scientists, of the natural and social realms, have become accustomed to thinking about issues at the global level. Comparing the two scientific fields, this phenomenon possibly occurs more so in the natural scientist. Objects are global, communities of specialists are global, and training specialists has become a question of feeding an international distribution of competences, making every new PhD candidate a future emigrant. Caroline Wagner (2008), among many other authors, has quite brightly defended the idea that international
scientific networks are essentially made of individuals who seek collaboration with peers of mutual interests and complementary skills around the world. In this globalized world, international collaboration functions as a global self-organizing system through collective action at the level of researchers themselves (Leydesdorff and Wagner, 2008).

In this global era, according to this view, the researcher becomes the hero of international collaborations, making decisions where individual interests would be the main driver; the pitch of this explanation is based on the idea that the individual recognizes potentially interesting collaborators and is able to evaluate and size the expected outcomes of the planned collaborations. Leaving aside many flaws in the argument, we believe this view of a sort of gigantic, worldwide network of scientists where competences and resources circulate easily does not correspond to reality. Individual scientists, even the best among the best, need to be able to objectively “choose” their collaborations, a judgement that relates to his/her insertion in their local environment, institutionally, politically, and economically. The existence of a local scientific community as well as the institutionalization of scientific activity plays a very important role here. It is through the participation in local training and local scientific teams that the young, individual scientist can become increasingly involved in international collaborations and, consequently, be involved in the global scene. Personal decisions are important, but choices are also influenced by other factors that go far beyond what we are usually ready to accept when assuming that research (and international scientific collaborations) is beneficial.

We will insist on this aspect, as we want to follow this simple idea that globalization is also a matter of locating the actual places where globalization is based (Sassen, 2007). The particular networking that scientists produce through their movements (for training and research), their intense travels in order to participate in international conferences and meetings, the broad and pervasive movements by the scientific diasporas in foreign countries to study and occupy post-doc positions or work abroad in order to acquire a specialty that will permit a better return home—all these more or less permanent migrations are, in fact, dependent upon the local engines of globalization.

Two processes apparently build these engines of globalizations. First is an institutionalization process where “capacity building” becomes a reality. In most developing countries, through the “national science” period, scientific research has been closely linked to universities, instead of national public research organizations. The role of research inside the universities has become a crucial aspect of the institutionalization process. The evolution of research, the acceptance of science as a legitimate source of knowledge, is not a mere question of “development”: it is a question of political willingness and of its embodiment inside the national institutions. We would like to trigger a discussion on these aspects inside the universities, inside scientific communities.

The second process at work is the building of the scientific community—we should add the national scientific community—and this process, as explained
above, is dependent on the historical momentum and the resources available, which relies on whether the political system is willing to disburse for research. In the case of Lebanon, the apparent lack of a scientific community is also a reflection for a large majority of countries in the Arab world. Very few, if any, Arab scientists are involved in any of the large international scientific debates we have been discussing.

Since the nineties, policies have moved away from the import-substitution model to the neo-liberal dogma (the “Washington consensus”) that obliges one to think about socio-economic issues only as market issues; the institutionalization process that was slowly taking place was shattered by the lack of resources of public institutions, which directly affected universities and public research organizations. Thus, science policies also changed. It is important to underline that Latin American social scientists have been quite active in delineating these changes. Hebe Vessuri, Simon Schwartzman, and Marcos Cueto have described the institutionalization process in detail. A long forgotten book by Brazilian sociologist J. B. Araujo de Oliveira was the first empirical research in Brazil on research careers (Oliveira, 1984), in the same way as the book by Olga Gasparini in Venezuela (1969) was the first survey ever to be done on research on the subcontinent. The groundbreaking work of Hebe Vessuri on the institutionalization process has permitted sociology of science to root in the continent (see Arellano et al., 2012 for a review in English, also: Kreimer, 2007) and explains the importance of having active scientific communities. The sociology and economics of technological learning and the active technological policies in large countries such as Brazil had been the forefront of analysis of this change of orientation in science and technology policy. There is no equivalent lively debate in Arab countries on any of the science and technology issues as can be found in the meetings of ESOCITE, for example.

All these processes (institutionalisation, community building, and internationalization) were driven by certain understandings of the economy. Since the end of the nineties, the emerging knowledge economy has become the concept of the day. At the start of a new century, the world appeared increasingly multipolar, with “knowledge” playing many different, but vital, roles. In this process, developing countries seem to have disappeared from the radar within the new knowledge economy. A new concept was needed for what Alice Amsden rightfully called “the Rest”, in contrast to “the West”. (Amsden, 2001) If “developing” is no longer the right word for these economies, what should it be? Have the modes of producing, using, and diffusing knowledge changed so much that development itself is an obsolete concept? Are we all living in a “flat world” (Friedman, 2005) without borders, where power structures have disappeared? Whether one views globalization as beneficial or harmful, there is a tightly interconnected economic structure with science and technology, as stressed by the Arab Knowledge Report (2009). Multipolarity, indeed, does not indicate the disappearance of hegemony: on the contrary, it is a clear indication that several large centers of research and innovation will exercise hegemony over the field, in a far more aggressive
competition than had existed in the divided world of centers and peripheries. If we look at the geographical distribution of the number of articles over time (1978 to 2008) we realize that the distribution in the number has not changed for most countries, although absolute numbers have grown immensely. China, Brazil, South Korea, and Taiwan are still exceptions (see Figures 6.1 and 6.2). The next to
come seem to be South Africa, Turkey, Thailand, Malaysia, Chile, and Argentina. It is not so much a question of more numbers of publications but rather a changing position these countries are acquiring. Losego and Arvanitis (2008) have proposed to call those countries that belong to neither the old center nor the new emerging economies “non-hegemonic countries”.

The notion of a non-hegemonic country relates to two essential dimensions: the position of the country in the international division of scientific work and the fact that these non-hegemonic countries do not have financial instruments capable of influencing the broader goals of knowledge production, unlike the United States, the European Union, and a small number of Asian countries. The issue of the country’s position is probably different for innovation as opposed to research, since not all innovation is research-based, and since innovation can include more multi-faceted activities than research. Nonetheless, non-hegemonic countries have usually adopted an incremental development model, based on a game of technological catch-up. The experience of Asian Tigers is precisely one of catching up, learning, and adopting technologies that then become key tools of economic development.

In brief, we need to examine the local roots of globalizations or rather how “globalization” functions locally. The large internationalization process of research that we have mentioned above can be the expression of two very different things: either it is just a by-product of more research (more money, necessarily from outside of poor countries, more human resources, and also more institutions); alternately, it can be a canal for “exit” (pure and simple brain drain, and lack of interest for research locally).

**Knowledge Society/Economy: The Impossible Promise**

As we began this research as a regional project, Egypt was one of the countries we initially wanted to examine in-depth. “We are not in modernity” was the statement of an Egyptian colleague some four years before the 2011 revolution when talking about research. He was expressing, in this way, the fact that research was absent from any policy consideration. The country had left aside all reflexive work on how and why it should produce scientific knowledge. This commonly made statement was also accompanied by a reproach: “why are Egyptian researchers not taken seriously?” Was it that the country in fact impeded development of research? One can see that is largely not the case, but the research system had recently come to a halt in these years (Bond et al., 2012). An example and a case that is even stronger is represented in the work of Kyriaki Papageorgiou (2007) on the development of biological technologies in Egypt, where she shows the paradox that Europeans working in Egypt have been less “modern” than their Egyptian counterparts in their explanations on causes in the biological sciences. Political difficulties impeded some European scientific collaboration in Egypt. The Mubarak reign left feelings of discomfort by fellow academic colleagues at the University of Cairo.
The stress on the university system was enormous: lack of funds, inappropriate structures, and bad management. All that made the public research institutions almost paralyzed. Egypt seemed like a showcase of the disastrous situation we just mentioned above. While some research fields were finding their way, as we show in the ESTIME project, a Revolution happened in the meanwhile. We cannot but be convinced that some of the dry wood that fed the Revolution were among the frustrated academics and students.

We began a second project in 2012, based on the same idea: describe the state of knowledge production in Lebanon and (to a lesser extent) Jordan to try to advance understanding of what makes research so rare an interest. The project began with the idea of describing the dynamic of research, as we will explain later.

Since then, research and analysis on knowledge production and innovation in the Arab region has grown exponentially in recent years. Research has become a bit more interesting topic with an expanding awareness of the importance of knowledge in society. The best among all this literature is the book *Science, Development, and Sovereignty in the Arab World*, by Antoine Zahlan (2012). The worst case for awareness are general statements about the competitiveness of the Arab Economies, where research appears as one among other “pillars”, accompanying claims that Arab countries need to enter the Knowledge Economy. These claims are so broad because they are based on macro-economic assessment themselves “empirically” founded on broad indicators with little or no understanding of the research dynamic. Essentially, they are ostensibly grounded on a thin theory of development. Unfortunately, such statements are to be found in many recent reports. They include a promise for development based on a sort of miraculous inclusion into the knowledge economy. With a milder tone, the World Bank reiterated this impossible promise by publishing the report titled “Transforming Arab Economies: Travelling the Knowledge and Innovation Road”. Again the proposed way is to enter the knowledge economy, and again the awaited revolution seems far away when a real Revolution has just happened two years before this publication. And this is why Rigas Arvanitis and myself entitled our book *Arab Research and Knowledge Society: The Impossible Promise*.

Perhaps prematurely, Arab countries have wanted to be called “knowledge societies”. Every country appears driven by the need to become a “knowledge economy”, a title that became popular since the 1999 World Bank Report (1999). Building a knowledge economy became a policy objective alongside, and sometimes in contradiction with, the goal of establishing national innovation systems. The concept of a knowledge economy was formulated for developed economies that enjoy a dense network of research institutions, a high degree of investment in research and development (R&D) in both public and private institutions, and a strong infrastructure, known, since the rise of the digital age, as “knowledge infrastructure”. This is sufficiently true for the US and other G8 countries with the importance of what Richard Florida (2014) calls the rise of a creative class. But even if we did not agree with the sociological explanation, on the mere grounds of economic development, it is very difficult to maintain that
entering the knowledge economy will, by itself, boost growth. The information economy, not knowledge, is mostly considered, just as the growth of information exchange, not the growth of knowledge, is measured. Knowledge is about using information, not about mere exchanges; it is a practice rather than a possession.

Curiously enough, the “knowledge economy” was proposed by the World Bank (1999) on the basis of a comparison of the trends in Asia and Latin America, which was under the direction of a bank official based in Mexico City. Probably one of the very first authors who wrote about the “knowledge society” was Nico Stehr (1994). He noted that, as a result of the remarkable growth of science and technology in modern society, it had undergone a fundamental shift and become an immediately productive force. Technology was no longer a “cultural” product, but a basic ingredient of any sustainable, long-term economic strategy. The closeness of science and technology that research has uncovered is here to stay, and will run ever deeper in social and political decisions. As many scholars from different regions have shown, a new set of institutional capabilities is deployed everywhere (Valenti et al., 2008). Yet, beyond glorifying the word “knowledge”, there has been little reflection of these changes in the Arab region.

We could summarize how the knowledge society discourse has been projected in the Arab world as following: the UN/World Bank ring alarm bells concerning the situation of knowledge production but at the same time they adopt a methodology and indexes that cannot help the Arab world in how to create knowledge that is useful to their political and socio-economic status. As Tremblay (2011) reminds us, the industry in Arab countries has rarely developed typical knowledge economy industries, such as production or assemblage of electronic components, biotechnology, or pharmaceutical industry. The indexes used for post-industrial society (Bayat, 2010) do not fit the reality of many countries in the Arab world. Two examples may show methodological and/or data collection problems. The ICT (information and communication technology) indicators for Tunisia have showed positive progress in the early 2000s. In that time Ben Ali took over the Internet from the very prestigious research center the Regional Institute for Computer Sciences and Telecommunications (IRSIT). ICT ranking is not sensitive to state repressions, surveillance, and filtering; they even tend to favor countries that apply these repressive technologies. The second example is related to the innovation leaders opinion surveys and ICTs; these surveys conclude an advancement of many Gulf countries ranked better than Lebanon. This claim is wrong (see Kumar & Welsum, 2013) mainly because it equates development to the opinions of some leaders in enterprises more interested in their getting access to the world markets than to the local economies. Finally, one of the major effects of the “knowledge society” discourse is to legitimate some policies, as was the case with the promotion of the concept of good governance by the World Bank when it was used as a word that permitted one to avoid the use of the word democracy, seen as politicized. So far we don’t know if the knowledge society discourse is just a mask without real effect or if it will, somehow, trigger some unintended effects. It is not anecdotic to mention that in Saudi Arabia, the Center for strategic studies...
of King Abdul Aziz University launched a series of e-books on knowledge society where we were positively surprised to find that while writing on the contribution of Saudi women in research, the author alludes to the violation of women’s rights in this country. It is too early thus to see how society will benefit from such discourse to “reform” society and produce a critical thinking based research.

We have tried, as others, to keep an optimistic view about the future (see our report published by ESCWA, Hanafi & Arvanitis, 2013). But hiding the situation by the ritual invocation of the “knowledge economy” or the “knowledge society” as a solution to the problem of research is nothing but a rhetorical tool. We, as social scientists, cannot but convey this permanent feeling of unfulfilment that our colleagues express in their own words when they blame the “brain-dead country”(1), the inadequate procedures, the short-sighted policies. Although not unanimous, these negative judgments are quite common and contrast strongly with the positive and political platitudes served by governments concerning research: that we should enter triumphantly in the new knowledge economy, leaving behind us under-development, and embracing willingly globalization and its benefits! Engineers and economists are challenged to accompany this change. Political challenges have little to do with that, nor the democratic ideal that was behind the nahda (Arab renaissance). Worse, social sciences have no part in that, and national councils and ministries are very cautious in dripping resources by small amounts such as to justify support for social sciences and thus not be accused of barring the research support against social scientists, while simultaneously pretending social sciences are not “of the same nature” and thus do not “really” participate in the research environment. Social scientists themselves have done little to overcome this state of affairs. Social sciences are still very segmented (interdisciplinarity having not yet entered the Arab world), while the scientists publish too little, reject the collective and teamwork, seeking simply to survive in the university system. To our knowledge, the Arab Social Science Council is one of the very few initiatives that seeks to overcome all these issues and create a funding scheme that can appropriately benefit the social sciences. The diagnostics in social sciences are worse than that of the natural sciences: it often relates excessively to the political engagement of its members at the expense of the content of their research (and sometimes the opposite: technical social science with no political soul). It relates to the way social science is barren as a research domain and is still very much thought about as “intellectual work” of some kind (presumably different from that of an ecologist or a physicist) or as a political and ideological activity.

Strangely, research (even in the social sciences) may still be a marginalized activity in the Arab world, but scientists today are more likely to be equivalent in training and social profile to their European or American counterparts. In retrospect of the past twenty years, this is an extraordinary change (Gaillard, 1994; Gaillard & Schlemmer, 1996). Thus we have a paradox well-illustrated by a Syrian professor, an engineer in material sciences who told us, back in 2007, after having spent 12 years in Japan: “I have produced 12 high-level peered articles in twelve years in Japan; today, I am closing twelve years in Aleppo since I came back and
I have not been able to publish not even one paper!”. So the environment is what makes the difference, not individual capabilities.

Consolidation of research cannot be done without creating an environment for research. In the late 1970s, when the research system in Brazil was beginning to grow, a Brazilian sociologist conducted a series of interviews with researchers in many fields under the title “Islands of Competence” (Oliveira, 1984). This is a most accurate description of the situation in many Arab countries: a series of islands of competence, niches of peculiar expertise which have been built or are being built. These islands are relatively independent of one another, even in similar domains. They will objectively seek the best expertise and will avoid local competition. They will also play on national pride as a means of securing funding. Local networking will be avoided. This experience was common to most Latin American countries during the 1980s and 1990s. New institutions were created, geared towards creating bridges between productive entities and universities. However, these countries, like Tunisia some ten years later, created “national systems of research” that served mainly as promotion systems, identifying and consolidating the research activity of individuals. These evaluation structures of research funded an additional incentive for good publication patterns. Universities adopted similar schemes. Brazil, in contrast to Mexico and Chile, adopted incentive schemes that were collective rather than individual. Today, this gives Brazil a decisive advantage in research.

The Academic Field in Latin America

Fernanda Beigel’s The Politics of Academic Autonomy in Latin America. Public Intellectuals and the Sociology of Knowledge (2011) is an edited volume that investigates the social science academic field in Latin America in the 1960s and ‘70s: historical formation, structural factors boosting or creating hurdles for the consolidation of this field. Through more than 30 years, it explores a current phenomenon—not only because most of the interviewees are still alive, but also because those past structures continue to play an active role today. It is the outcome of a successful research project with the participation of 12 authors from Argentine universities. This concentration of researchers led sometimes to a reflection which is Argentina-centered and did not take into account specificity of some Latin American countries such as Brazil. These four sessions and 13 chapters have subtly combined theoretical reflection and empirical studies, deploying ethnography to investigate life stories, prosopography, and statistical analysis (using primary and secondary data).

The four sessions and 13 chapters question many dichotomic oppositions: central vs periphery and “internal” dynamics vs “exogenous” forces that shape intersections of the academic field with other social spaces. In the introduction, Beigel distinguishes three empirical levels of the notion of “academic autonomy” (see also Beigel, 2012).
The first level is the “institutionalization and the effective specialization found in the construction of “academics”, largely manifest in full-time teaching and/or research positions at universities. At the same time, several cross-section phenomena occurred, such as massive university enrollment, “feminization”, and “modernization” of universities. Regional academic centers, graduate schools, and research institutes also date back to this period, largely supported by foreign aid.

This level is thus associated with university autonomy—a long-established tradition in Latin America, featured in many national constitutions, starting in 1918 with Argentina’s university reform movement.

The second level of academic autonomy refers to the existence of a set of beliefs and narratives that separate the academic world from other cultural realms. Professors in universities shared certain values such as altruism, loyalty, and “teaching freedom” that Bourdieu (1999) labels as “illusio”, which he views as a specific aspiration shared by academics engaged in a field and in the search for peer recognition.

The third level of academic autonomy refers to the effects of “internationalization” and the fact that several forces participate in the professionalization process. Fernanda Beigel discusses the “internationalization” process in order to show a heated debate about the ability of peripheral intellectual communities to create innovative knowledge and to craft their own research agendas. International networking is seen as an asset by a part of the authors while others maintain that it creates “intellectual dependency”, this time not vis-à-vis an external force such as the State but Western power.

Part of the internationalization is transfer of material and symbolic resources—financing selected research agendas or introducing theoretical and methodological models. Fernando Quesada in his chapter (8) challenges the simplistic view that considers these activities as “unilateral transfer” that undermined the recipients’ autonomy. For him, the Rockefeller Foundation funding the University of Chile research cannot be understood as an institution replicating North American political dominance over the periphery. This perspective denies self-determination of the beneficiary institutions and assumes that they enter into philanthropic relationships with “zero degree of historicity”, as if they emerged socially solely only upon receiving funds.

The term “academic dependency” refers thus to domination scenarios stemming from the Latin American national field’s positioning in the international academic system. While the book discusses this uneven structure of the system and how it affects knowledge production in the periphery, it rejects the temptation of center/periphery theory and its deterministic view which argues that “structure determines practice which reproduces the same structure” and argues for the emergence of peripheral centers. For Fernanda Beigel and her colleagues, the position in the structure determines the social strategy, and the determinisms applying to a given position operate through the complex filter of dispositions acquired and articulated over the whole social and biographical trajectory of the academics in the social sciences, and of the history of their structural position in social space.
Since the second half of the 1970s, many studies have formulated a theory on the international structure of uneven academic exchanges (Altbach, 1977; Arvanitis & Gaillard, 1992; Diaz et al., 1983; Gareau, 1988). Nonetheless, according to Beigel, the fall of dependency analysis and the theme shifts of social sciences in the 1980s and 1990s from academic dependency analysis to a more complex scheme eventually cast this issue aside. Nowadays, talking about “cultural imperialism” is deemed old-fashioned, and not even Bourdieu could rally attention to it. In the area of the history of social science, these analyses have reviewed the role played by technical assistance policies and aid programs instituted by international agencies and private foundations. As a result, the notion of “internationalization”, which had been virtually left behind in global studies, was revisited. There is no consensus in the available literature on possibilities and paths to overcome dependency, largely because there are scarce empirical studies on academic professionalization in the periphery. Keim (2011) believes social sciences in peripheral countries can yield anti-hegemonic traditions. Her study of South African sociology enables her to plot an autonomous academic development process that follows a pattern: a) it starts with the emergence of a public sociology, as social scientists shift their attention from international concerns to locally relevant issues; b) it continues with the dawning of a critical sociology, followed by a professionalization process; and c) it finally leads to an integrated community that interacts with the international community on more egalitarian and even terms. This process resulted in “disconnection” with the North Atlantic dominance and enabled the emergence of an autonomous tradition that “completes local sociology” (2011, p. 131). Keim views this path as more conducive to autonomy than the strategies depicted by Jacques Gaillard (1996), as “catching-up” strategies through internationalization strategies brought about by individual. Nonetheless, as a recent survey on international collaborations driven by Gaillard and Arvanitis (2013) shows, “the asymmetrical relations in the main sectors of international scientific collaboration, which was highlighted as a burning issue in the 1970s and 1980s, have turned into a more equal partnership between [Europe and Latin America]”. This is empirically visible in the way scientific activities and interests in cooperation as well as advantages and disadvantages of such collaborations are perceived by scientists in the two regions.

Fernanda Beigel advocates for the study of “cultural transferences”, which in her view proved to be fruitful, as they focus on mediation processes (and mediators) involved in the international circulation of ideas: publishing (and publishers), translating (and translators), libraries, intellectual networks, and scientific missions, among others. For the most part, the analysis of cultural transferences tries to overcome the limitations of traditional comparisons that identify national cultures as isolated entities, rather than exploring their interactions.

The use of a center/periphery approach in social studies of science may lead to the assumption that a dependent economy goes hand in hand with an equally subordinated knowledge production “state”, which, in turn, means that peripheral contributions to international scientific development are expected to
be null (Kreimer, 2007). At the very end, these categorizations tend to have a counterproductive effect in the history of science, preserving images of a universal science supported by symbolic violence.

The treatment of international knowledge circulation through the notion of “import–export” is a simplistic approach, ineffective in analyzing notional and intellectual exchanges from the perspective of the periphery. It mainly reinforces the very idea that there is a dominant science, grounded in European or American traditions, that yields “originality”, rendering the peripheries as passive scientific spaces necessarily “lacking originality”, and merely consuming imported knowledge. Many debates on “intellectual dependence”, according to Beigel, prove to be rather fruitless, as they rely on a “nativist” benchmark that assumes the existence of national knowledge based on a unique “indigenous” outlook. We can also add to her acute analysis that a very similar debate was triggered in Latin America and worldwide on technology transfers that was initially based on the theory of dependence and had arrived to a dead end, overcome only by changing the perspectives by introducing the analysis of technological in-house developments of firms, and the consequent spreading of new sociological and economic ideas in the continent (De la Garza, 2010). As Arvanitis (2010) mentions, the dependence theory as well as its opposition (for example with the notion of “technological learning”) both appeared in Latin American and were genuine local theoretical constructions.

Conclusion
In this conclusion we would like to put emphasis on the classical Foucauldian problematic of power in the academic field as well as deconstruct the simplistic view of previous central periphery theories.

Working the nexus between power and knowledge in the case of Brazil, Cláudio Costa Pinheiro (2010) brought two compelling examples: first, the case of French demographer Alfred Sauvy, who introduced the idea of the “Third World”, developed in Brazil and published first in 1951 in a prestigious Brazilian academic journal. Nonetheless, the notion became a “universal” concept only after it was published the following year in the French magazine *Observateur*. “Third World” theory obliterated Brazil from the debate. For Costa Pinheiro, the development of social theories reproduces the cleavage between the North (theory developer) and the South (theory consumer) and the memories of this debate were erased from the wider narrative of the concept—“Third World”—and its consequences. However, in contrast with the transitivity of “Third World” theory, Pinheiro gave an example of “dependency theory” that was able to directly travel from Brazil to the global south and north. So “dependency theory”, whether we agree or not with some of its explanations, is an example of the originality of the South and the possibility of a theory to move from there to become international. Yet, for the North, this theory was blamed as being an “ideology” although it was a truly intellectual movement with a largely shared problematic by most economists in
the continent. Pinheiro is in line with our thesis defended here, as well as with Losego and Arvanitis (2008), who argue on the existence of a multi-staged and multi-centered world with strong hegemonies. In the international Sociological Association’s conference “Sociology in an Unequal World” (2009), there was a sort of consensus on the existence of a type of domination of Western sociologies over the national ones, although it did not amount to a hegemony, in the sense of Antonio Gramsci. The conference also painted a more complex picture than the mere existence of a center and dependent peripheries, because it considered that there are peripheries at the center, and centers in peripheries, or semi-peripheries (e.g., Australia). To understand this multi-leveled world system (as was proposed quite early by a Chilean sociologist in France, Polanco, 1989), one needs to render the “invisible” knowledge “visible” in each national sociological tradition. This organic form of knowledge has the ability to unfold the colors of reality and the historical development in each context, although it does not preclude cooperation between the North and South, nor does it impede the search for new social theoretical directions.

We predict (maybe imprudently) the decline of the waves of post-modernism and post-structuralism that shattered most thinking without theory, and the return to a more central role for social theory, yet a flexible theory allowing pluralism and able to include the empirical variety that is feeding constantly our literature. Hence, Singaporean sociologist Sayed Farid Alatas calls for the “Indigenization” of social theory. He invokes the example of how to take theoretical advantage of Ibn Khaldun’s thoughts about the development and ‘asabiyya, and not just in a cosmetic and folkloric way (to show that one is proud of the Arab social thought tradition). Having pointed out that this Indigenization is part of the process of universality, it is not in the name of specificity (Alatas, 2010). Alatas’s call is therefore very different from the calls for the Islamization or Judaization of knowledge, advocated by some scientists in the Islamic world and in Israel. These latter calls have not only led to an ideological eclecticism in social research but to a sterile attempt of reading, even the local reality. Moreover, we predict that theoretical renovation, the capacity to introduce original and innovative concepts that has been so striking in Latin America, will come in the Arab world only after a serious reflexive turn has been triggered, a capacity to think about our own knowledge producing institutions, and consequently a drive toward developing counter-hegemonic instruments in funding, setting the agendas, and practicing international scientific collaborations.

Notes

1 For the concept of boundary work, see (Gieryn, 1995).
3 See the first chapter of the Arab Knowledge Report (UNDP, 2009) that stresses the different meanings and visions that the term entails.

4 A knowledge economy is an economy in which growth is dependent on the quantity, quality, and accessibility of the information available, rather than the means of production. It is thus primarily defined by ensuring access for all to computers and the Internet.

5 Countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, and Morocco have an industry whose major bulk specializes in international sub-contracting, which requires an upgrading process rather than what is assumed by the recipe of the knowledge economy.

6 Curiously, all these books are without authors.

7 Unfortunately, he will not be able to produce more science, given the current situation in that devastated country.

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