Knowledge Produced but Not Used: Predicaments of Social Research in the Arab World

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Abstract The Arab world has more problems in knowledge use than in knowledge production. Without translating academic research into policy and public awareness, research will be read by few people who constitute an elite that is disconnected from their society and thus the research will not impact on it. It is rare to hear professional social researchers speak in the public sphere. This is due not only to the absence of their products in the mass media or newspapers but also to the difficulty of conversing with the policy makers.

This chapter is the outcome of a long reflection on the status of knowledge production in the Arab world by the use of not only empirical observations but also historical-structural analyses. Some of these results were co-published with Rigas Arvanitis. In addition, I conducted empirical and desk research. As I have long-standing experience in this field as a researcher and professor and participant observer, I will deliver some personal thoughts about the connection between social science with policy making and with public debate.

Keywords Social impact · Scientific research · Arab world · Public social science · Editorial piece · Scientific community

1 Introduction

The Arab world has more problems in knowledge use than in knowledge production (ACSS 2015; Hanafi and Arvanitis 2016). Without translating academic research into policy and public awareness, research will be read by the few people who constitute an elite that is disconnected from their society and thus the research will not have an impact on society. It is rare to hear professional social researchers speak in the public sphere. Here I am using Michael Burawoy's (2005) typology of

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knowledge: professional, critical, public and policy. This is due not only to the absence of their products in the mass media or newspapers but also to the difficulty of conversing with the policy makers. Historically, we have tended to consider the importance of the social impact as being of relevance exclusively to the social sciences and humanities. However, while admitting that not all research can have an immediate relevance to local society, the social impact of scientific research concerns all sciences including applied ones (e.g. engineering and medicine).

Knowledge production cannot be understood without investigating both the locus of research (institutions) and the researchers themselves. As far as Arab countries are concerned, research is very much concentrated in universities. Previous studies I have conducted show that these universities have produced compartmentalized elite even within a state: those who publish globally and perish locally, and others who publish locally and perish globally. The local relevance of research needs knowledge translation. There is a fear of being normative among many academics in the name of the positivism of science. This often hinders the translation of academic research into public awareness and policy relevance.

This chapter is the outcome of a long reflection on the status of knowledge production in the Arab world by the use of not only empirical observations but also historical-structural analyses. Some of these results were co-published with Rigas Arvanitis (Hanafi and Arvanitis 2016). In addition, I conducted empirical and desk research (interviews with 210 academics mainly in Lebanon and Jordan but from other Arab countries and analyzing 240 CVs). As I have longstanding experience in this field as a researcher and professor and participant observer, I will deliver some personal thoughts about the connection between social science with policy makings and with public debate.

This chapter has three sections. First, I highlight the difference types of research activities and to highlight the whole cycle of the research and not only the publication moment in academic outlets. Second, I bring three examples of knowledge translation into public policy with some general conclusion from them. Finally, I highlight one form of knowledge translation focusing on academic writing in newspapers.

2   Whole Cycle of the Research

The university system and the system of social knowledge production greatly influence formation of elites in the Arab world. Many factors will play role but one of them that we will focus here is compartmentalization of scholarly activities. Universities have often produced compartmentalized elites inside each nation-state and they don't communicate with one another: they are either elite that publish globally and perish locally or elite that publish locally and perish globally (Hanafi 2011).

To understand the problem of visibility of the Arab social production, we use the seminal four-dimensional typology elaborated by Michael Burawoy for sociology,

applying it more broadly to all of the social sciences. Burawoy distinguishes between four types of sociology: two (*professional* and *critical* sociology) are relevant to academic audiences, and the others (*public* and *policy* sociology) pertain to a wider audience. Professional sociology consists of 'multiple intersecting research programs, each with their assumptions, exemplars, defining questions, conceptual apparatuses and evolving theories' (Burawoy 2005: 10). Critical sociology examines the foundations – both the explicit and the implicit, both normative and descriptive – of the research programs of professional sociology. Public sociology 'brings sociology into a conversation with publics, understood as people who are themselves involved in conversation. It entails, therefore, a double conversation' (Burawoy 2005: 8) and reciprocal relationships, in which meaningful dialogue fosters mutual education that not only strengthens such publics but also enriches sociological work itself and helps it in setting the research agendas. Community participation in the design of research proposals as well as lectures and workshops with different stakeholders for dissemination of the results of research are forms through which social scientists can interact with the public and determine the relevance of future topics of study, both for the needs of society and the public. Public social science thus has four levels: first, privileging the method of sociological intervention[1] and action research; second, speaking and writing for the public exclusively about the researcher's discipline; third, speaking and writing about the discipline and how it relates to the social, cultural and political world around it; finally, speaking, writing and taking a stand for something far larger than the discipline from which the researcher originated (Lightman 2008). Here we should admit the public researcher's normative stance without necessarily uncritically espousing a cause (Marezouki 2004; Wieviorka 2000).

Finally, policy sociology's purpose is to provide solutions to problems that are presented to the society, or to legitimate solutions that have already been reached. Some clients (international organizations, ministries, etc.) often request specific studies for their intervention, with a narrow contract (Burawoy 2005: 9).

Beyond social science, many scholars (El-Jardali et al. 2012; Brandt and Pope 1997; CIHR 2004) use the concept of knowledge translation that cover both public and policy activities. The Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR) defines it as "the exchange, synthesis, and ethically-sound application of knowledge—within a complex set of interactions among researchers and users—to accelerate the capture of the benefits of research [..] through improved health, more effective services and products, and a strengthened health care system" (CIHR 2004) It was promoted thus for public health and medicine research but cover now all disciplines.

Lavis et al. (2006) provides a framework to assess what should be transferred, to whom, by whom, how and with what effect using four strategies: push efforts by researchers or purveyors, user pull efforts, exchange efforts and finally integrated efforts (see Fig. 1).

While all four types of social science are equally represented and being debated in Europe and partially in North America, this is not the case in the Arab East. The

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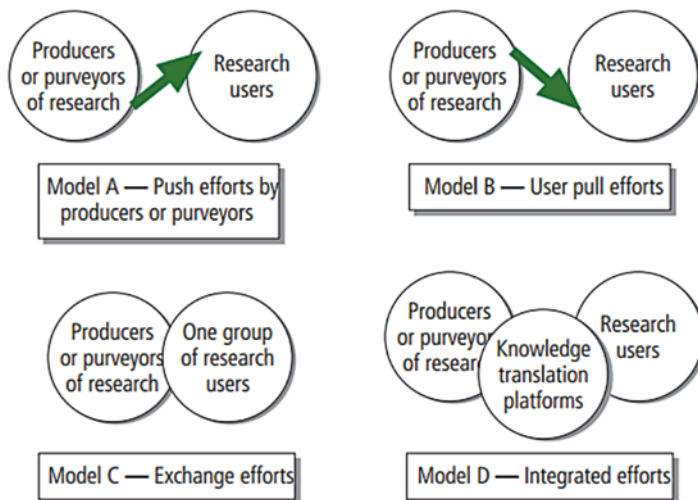[1] This method was developed by Alain Touraine (1981)

Fig. 1 Models of knowledge translation. Source: (Lavis et al. 2006)

lack of dialogue/debate regarding this issue in the Arab East can be noted from the ratio between published articles, newspaper articles and unpublished reports in 203 CVs of social scientists in the Arab East. Research shows that scholars often specialize in one type of social science and there is no debate between these individuals. In the Arab East, the profile of the intellectual is well known: typically, he or she is a theorist who talks about tradition, modernity, authoritarianism, democracy, identity, Arab unity, globalization and so on but avoids stepping into society to conduct empirical research. Even social scientists are often guilty of pontificating like philosophers, raising questions rather than offering concrete answers. It is even rarer to hear professional social researchers speak in the public sphere. This is due not only to the absence of their products in the mass media or newspapers but also to the danger of being visible in the authoritarian states.

Projecting Michael Burawoy's typology of the research activities (professional, critical, public and policy) into a model that fits better the Arab world, I will point out four moments:

First, the global/universalistic moment: this Aristotelian moment of the *Reason* insisting that social science is like any science and hence needs techniques of conducting research. This requires rather a nomothetic approach to produce data that allow comparability with other contexts. This comparability is the equivalent of laboratory experimentation in the hard sciences.

Second is the local moment where the notion of consciousness, to talk like Hawari Al-Adi (2014) is very important. The subjectivity of actors and influence of culture become compelling requiring a more idiographic approach that seeks to fully understand the causes of what happened in a single instance taking into account the local culture. Here the importance of echoing Ziauddin Sardar (2015)'s call for

integration of knowledge and connecting the social science to all local intellectual resources including religion. The first and second moments are the professional and critical moments in Burawoy's typology. However, there is a trend of polarization. For instance, browsing two social science journals in the Arab Gulf, we found that social science is lacking consciousness. Sociology becomes studying micro problems using science technique but without addressing the authoritarian nature of monarchies there in addition to other power structures. The absence of this moment is also clear when Arab researchers have deserted their traditions and this is contrary to their European counterpart (Ju'eit 2001).

The third moment is the semi-normative moment that is similar to the public and policy social science in Burawoy's typology. It involves the application of the two previous moments to engage in a dialogue with the community and with decision makers. This moment needs to use local/global moments (or professional/critical moments) to solve problems of society through awareness campaigns, advocacy, lobbying, but also strategies and scenarios. We call it a semi-normative moment because it is mainly driven by scientific results but with choices that stem often from political, ideological and moral underpinnings.

Our preliminary results of the content analysis of the contribution of Arab social scientists in the public debate showed that social researchers do not often contribute to the public debate: we find more in North Africa than in the Arab East, more in the countries where there is freedom of expression than despotic countries. If there is some use of public social science there are as well some abuses, as we will see in the sext section.

Finally, there is a normative moment related to the moral, the religious and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. To reach this moment one needs to engage with all moral entrepreneurs in the society including religious leaders. Thus so far the data gathered from analyzing the op-eds in Lebanese newspapers reveal a very limited dialog and interaction between these groups (see next section; Hanafi and Arvanitis 2015a). For instance, many Lebanese scholars hide themselves behind the position of the majority of Lebanese who reject giving the Palestinians in Lebanon basic human rights (right to work and to own property). They often end their articles by stating that such demands cannot be realized, as the majority of Lebanese would refuse it. In taking this position, these authors have chosen not to adopt a normative stance that can remind people of the moral stance and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights aspects of this issue.

2.1   Fragmented Research Activities

In terms of researchers' profile, critical social scientists are generally over 50 years old. The trend is often that senior scholars do not do fieldwork. Policy and public social scientists are often male. The high competitiveness and aggressiveness of the consultancy market could explain this male bias.

Table 1 Source of references
in the 2009 Arab Human
Development Report (UNDP)
(Source: author calculation)

	Number	%
UN documents	113	47
International organizations	40	17
Internet documents	30	12
Academic publication	**30**	**12**
Official documents	21	9
Newspapers	8	3
Total	242	100

Some professional and critical social scientists that I interviewed expressed a condescending attitude towards public and policy social research. A recent study surveyed 238 researchers from 12 counties in the Arab Region, showing little use of health systems and policy research evidence in health policy-making[2] (El-Jardali and et al. 2012; cited IFI-CAPRI 2014). Many other studies deplore the lack of policy impact for many of the research centers (al-Khazendar 2012; Shehadeh and Saleh Tayyara 1999; Mohamad Ahmad Afandi 2012) in the case of Jordan, Yamen and the Arab world in general. One of the reasons of lack of interest is the feeling that policy makers are not interested in listening to the scientific community. One professor from Jordan reported: "Policy-making is the prerogative of the minister, particularly one whose appointment is subject to tribal, regional, geopolitical, or international considerations upon which the regime accounts for when composing its government".

For a long time, professional researchers have taken a positivist approach and set aside their ethical responsibilities by avoiding both expressing their views (pro or con) in public forums and lobbying public officials. Some scholars (Harb 1996; Balqziz 1999) tend to discourage academics from being involved in politics and consider that this cannot be accompanied by any critical discourse. This attitude becomes clearer when the faculty serve in elite universities. The rupture appears not only by the fact professional academics don't care about policy but also the other way round. A glance at the profiles of the consultants conducting policy research for state and international organizations revealed that around three-quarters have never published in academic journals/books, there are no traces of fieldwork, and most of the output recycles the work of the others instead. These consultants seem to be lacking consistent reflexivity.

There is unequal competition between policy researchers and other types of social scientists, resulting from the intervention of the donor agencies, which often favor the former, coined 'expert social scientists', at the expense of the latter. This reflects what Lee et al. (2005) called the tumultuous marriage between social sci-

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[2] Findings showed that only 16 percent of the participants interacted with policy-makers and stakeholders in priority settings, and 19.8 percent involved policy-makers in the process of developing their research. As for research dissemination, it was found that researchers are more likely to transfer their research findings to other researchers (67.2 percent) rather than to policy-makers (40.5 percent)
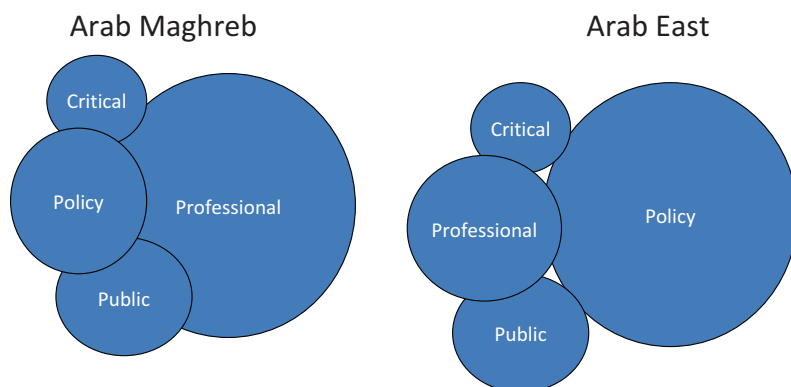
Fig. 2 Typology of research activities in the Arab World

ence and social policy, in which the rules of conjugality are never fully established or agreed on by both parties. For instance, UN agencies sometimes produce policy knowledge which is self-legitimized and disconnected from professional research. The 2009 *Arab Human Development Report*'s text references (UNDP 2009) (which are different from the statistical references) reveal only 12 references from over 242 (14 percent) and almost half (47 percent) of those references are UN documents (see Table 1).

Examination of CVs shows that public social scientists in the Arab East are also often disconnected from professional social scientists. They become experts on any topic that they are requested to research by media or public institutions. Although anecdotal, I have watched TV programmes in some Arab channels (al-Jazeera, Future TV, Syrian TV, Palestinian TV and al-Arabiyya) during last year, to look for the presence of Arab public social scientists. We have noticed a small number of them being interviewed on different topics that are sometimes related to their field of expertise, but in many cases the topics are not related at all. Reviewing some of these media-savvy scholars' CVs shows that they have not been producing much professional and critical research. Rachid Daif has noted how simplistic the academic discourse is in the Lebanese media (Kabbanji 2010, 78). Similarly, it is rare to find books written by social scientists that are read beyond the academic realm, and they become the vehicle of a public discussion about the nature of Arab or local society – the nature of its values, and the gap between its promise and its reality, tendencies and malaise.

All that we can summarize it in Fig. 2, which shows the following:

- inflation for Policy Research in the Arab East at the expense of professional and critical research, by the effect of the foreign funding that privilege research that yields directly to recommendation to 'resolve" a social problem. This is not the case in the Arab Maghreb.
- Weakness of the public research in all the Arab World but particularly in the Arab East.

- There is no connection between these four types of research in the Arab East, while there is a more "healthy" situation in the francophone Arab countries, where we note balance and overlap between the four types of research, and the magnitude of the professional research in this later area is a good indicator of a healthier situation there.

Having said that, we are not suggesting that each scholar should do all four types of social research. However, when there is a trend of compartmentalization at the societal level, this risk producing mediocrity in each type of social science and, in particular, risks rendering professional and critical research more elitist and irrelevant (Alatas 2003); disconnected from society's needs. Structures such as universities, donor agencies and media are pushing towards this specialization.

3 Knowledge Produced but Not Used

There are different 'policy advisory systems' to decision makers (Craft and Howlett 2013) which include advisory commissions, working groups and consultations. Also there are or 'knowledge regimes' (Campbell and Pedersen 2014). For instance, the American knowledge regime in economic policy is characterized by competition among a multitude of private knowledge providers, while in European countries rely more on policy knowledge from public and semipublic research organizations and standing advisory bodies. (Christensen and Holst 2017) To understand the weak influence of the Arab academic community on political decision making in the Arab World, I will give three examples which I witnessed: one from France and two from Lebanon. In the early 90's, the Islamic veil was in the center of public debate after two school principals expelled veiled students from their schools. Following this, the Minister of Education ordered a white paper on the issue of veiling. A committee of social scientists belonging to different schools of thought was commissioned to carry out this task. One of them was Alain Touraine. At the time, I was affiliated to the Centre for Sociological Analysis and Intervention (CADIS),[3] which Touraine headed. I witnessed how the request for this white paper mobilized the center in terms of fieldwork and reflection. Many editorial pieces were written by CADIS researchers, thus engaging with the public, and therefore receiving counter arguments from scholars and activists. After a few months, the commissioned paper was ready and delivered to the Minister, who in his turn called for a press conference. He was sitting among other committee members while the head of the committee was summarizing the white paper and made it available not only to journalists but any concern persons. One month of public debate about the Islamic veil in mass media followed, and this paper became a tool for rationalizing the public debate. Then the verdict came: the Minister called for another press conference, to be given accompanied by the members of the commissioned white

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[3] Based on EHESS (School for Advanced Studies in Social Sciences)- Paris.

paper in order to announce his recommendation to the French parliament to prohibit religious symbols in public schools including the veil. What is interesting about this process is the centrality of the white paper as a tool for rationalizing the debate and the important role research played in deliberating societal issues. The press conferences were part of the ritual of generating public trust in research and science.

In Lebanon, unbearable odors hung heavily in the dense summer air of 2015, as mounting heaps of garbage simmered in the heat. This issue, known colloquially as the 'garbage crisis,' has mobilized a social movement against the government waste management policy resulting in the largest demonstrations since 2005 and accompanied by state violence. A heated debate as to what would be the best option in dealing with the mountains of garbage piling up daily not only in Beirut but in many other localities followed these massive demonstrations. This story has mobilized a great deal of writing, and media interviews of activists, academics, and politicians. During one of these interviews on local Lebanese channel, Tamam Salam, then the Prime Minister, defended some of the proposed options to resolve the garbage problem. Only when the presenter queried regarding the involvement of scientists and environmental researchers in the consultation preceding the government decision, Prime Minister Salam mentioned that there was a study which was commissioned and its results were considered. He relayed a number of the factual findings of the report, which demonstrated that this very report was simply an ad hoc tool in the decision-making process. There was no ceremony of showing the Lebanese public how such an issue was debated with the scientific community. Additionally, Salam did not mention the various consultations with different social and political constituencies, as the garbage problem is, by essence, not only a scientific issue but also a social and political one. On one side, there are competing vested interests from different political groups who wanted a share in waste collection (which turned out to be lucrative business) and from the other side, many stakeholders related to the different interests of groups that are divided by social classes, rural/urban, sects, etc. While Prime Minister Salam reported figures from the study in an interview, he failed in showing the complexity of such issue and how the government made its decision in relation to both the scientific report, and to different social demands. In comparison, one can notice that in France, decision makers (ministers, parliament) have mobilized alliances among the scientific community to support certain policy options and this community also mobilizes the public (debating publicly their white paper).

The third example is the Palestinian refugee issue in Lebanon. On this subject, there is ample research, and yet it has hardly any impact on political decisions. In fact, the Lebanese political authority was aware of the dramatic situation of the Palestinian refugees and created in 2005 the Lebanese–Palestinian Dialogue Committee (LPDC) in response. This committee functioned as an agency attached to the Prime Minister's cabinet, and was heavily funded by the many donors interested in improving the situation of Palestinians in Lebanon. Some 12 years after its establishment, very little advancement has happened especially in terms of their legal status. This dialogue committee revealed itself as a monologue committee.[4]

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[4] Credit here to Nadim Shahadeh who labeled LPDC as such.

The Palestinian refugees remain without the right to access a vast number of professions in Lebanon, and are additionally forbidden to either to get a work permit or own property. I cannot express my frustration about the lack of social impact of our research, not only as someone who has long-term experience in producing research and action-research on Palestinian refugees, but also as someone who led the 2009 March for the socio-economic rights of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon (the first March demanding these rights). In spite of hundreds of studies that have been conducted (the cost of which would amount to multi-millions of dollars), the absence of the will to change policy among the Lebanese government and political class makes all the knowledge produced achieve little social impact. In addition, every time there was momentum for policy change, these actors have requested more studies.[5] Knowledge becomes indeed a means of non-policy and delay.

The decision makers may not have the opportunity to read these studies, but they may as well be not interested to do so (ignorance as lost realm or selective choice), or they may manufacture the ignorance being deliberately engineered as a strategic ploy or active construct. It is very easy to know the demographic characteristics of the Palestinian refugees and to provide the public with the real numbers of those who live in Lebanon. The Lebanese authority has never published an official number of this population. The result of this is that two ministers provided in official statements figures that are very different (respectively 600,000 and 400,000 inhabitants). This has seeded doubt and allowed right-wing politicians to argue on the impossibility of integrating such a sum of refugees. These figures were circulated in the media while the numbers estimated by a large survey conducted by AUB and UNRWA estimated the number of inhabitant to be around 270,000. I myself did Internet research about the number of Palestinians in Lebanon, only to find that their number varies tremendously. The Internet has indeed fostered the spread of falsehoods along with facts. This disagreement regarding numbers would also be repeated with the Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

Robert Proctor (2008) developed the notion of agnotology, the study of socially constructed and politically imposed ignorance. This offers a framework with which to empirically explore the things people are intentionally unaware of, and seek to maintain that lack of awareness (deliberate ignorance) and the things people are aware of, yet would express a similar lack of awareness (professed ignorance). He suggests there could be certain situations where one could argue ignorance is virtuous, and 'not knowing' can be seen as resistance or moral caution. In the context of the politics of uncertainty or intentional ambiguity, vis a vis the Palestinian refugees population, or what I called the power of inclusive exclusion, the Palestinian population has developed "Agnotology tactics", as Nora Stel (2016) put it. According to Stel, some of Lebanon's Palestinian refugees, who live in unofficial camps (gatherings)

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[5] Some of these requests for study pose a moral dilemma for me. For instance, while I accepted to conduct research on the situation of the Palestinian professionals in Lebanon, I refused to do a study that aimed to show that the right of the Palestinian refugees to work would have little affect the labor market. For me, whether this would affect it or not, this is simply a right and ethics of care for a population who live in the country for more than four generations.

are now threatened with eviction. Residents of these gatherings, it turns out, engaged in deliberate disinformation and stalling tactics and invoke both a professed and real ignorance about their situation (Stel 2016). Building on concepts such as 'structural amnesia,' 'non-thinking' and 'states of denial,' agnotology refers to a social theory of ignorance that supposes that ignorance is pervasive; that it is socially constructed; and that it can be politically advantageous. Ignorance, from this perspective, is not 'a simple omission or gap', but 'something that is made, maintained, and manipulated' (Stel 2016).

Many supporters of the Syrian regime were glad of their ignorance of the systemic torture of that government and enter into state of denial when confronted with any and all reports produced by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch during the last six years about the massive violation of human rights by the regime (compared with that violation produced by different Syrian military opposition groups). This includes the number of people killed in the regime's prisons. There is in fact a trend of empiricism that is disconnected from discussing the political economy or the moral imperatives of justice and the respect of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In this regard, and as Ghassan Hage has aptly pointed out, many requests for scientific empirical rigor are often selective in the face of overwhelming evidence and become a technique of denial, as in the case of denying the Syrian regime responsibility in mass killing, bombing and using chemical weaponry. This technique was observed as well among those who denied the holocaust in the name of the absence of conclusive evidence about gas rooms or about the precise number of holocaust victims.

From these three stories, I will draw seven general conclusions.

First, trust in science is much less related to culture and more closely tracks with the desire of societal institutions to either foster or denigrate that trust. Bruno Latour (1993) points out how Louis Pasteur mobilized the rural community whose cattle are affected by disease. His success depended upon a whole network of forces, including the public hygiene movement, and the medical profession. Latour details Pasteur's efforts to win over the French public (the farmers, industrialists, politicians, and much of the scientific establishment). This alliance building was very important in convincing political elite to give him funding for developing pasteurization.

Second, by highlighting the importance role of research and science, I am not suggesting at all that they are neutral: "Science is a sort of metaphor for politics, because its ostensible rationality covers up any messy conflicting interests and is also the purest expression of development and modernization" (Siino 2004: 73). While some scientific results are stabilized over time, much of them are unsettled and this is where we find chains of conflict, controversy, and modalities. Latour tries to show the simultaneous building of a society and its scientific facts (Latour 1993).

When it comes to social sciences, researchers are more free to interpret. The social theory could be understood not as a collection of verified facts on a given subject, but simply as an interpretation that makes society intelligible; i.e. we don't provide the public with facts and factual categories, but we reveal only their ostensible factuality and present them as merely incomplete answers to sociological

questions (Horák 2017). This is particularly true for a story like that involving the Islamic veil, where the post-colonial and secularistic imaginary would become salient in negatively judging this dress to French society. Nevertheless, social research has injected to the French public debates figures, facts and analytical complexity in order to minimize the heated and sensational debate that polarized French society. In addition, while sociology, according to Burawoy, went to the left and society to the right is true, academics including sociologists can be very conservative. The knowledge producer is a Gramscian organic intellectual bound to specific social classes. This is why public policy should be informed not only but knowledge in abstract way but by different constituencies (civil service, interest groups, political parties and private sector). It is interesting to note that in the public debate about the Islamic veils, Muslim voices were almost absent from French newspapers and audio-visual media. There were those who talked on their behalf. This may explain how some members of the committee have argued that teenage girls were "forced" to put the veil by their family. Some scholars later argue that there was a lack of phenomenological depth, as the voices of the concerned Muslim families were not heard in order to understand how they, as actors, give meaning to their own cultural behavior.

Third, during the time of preparing the committee reports, societal debate (through editorials, mass media and social media) was part and parcel of the research. This public sociology is different from the Burawoy-ian type of sociological work complementary to traditional professional sociology. It is rather in hermeneutics sociology tradition whereby public sociology through dialogue and language is inherent part of the professional sociology.[6] It is also a Touraine-ian sociology that develops sociological intervention as a method. According to this theory, sociologists can simply help actors to enhance the meanings of their actions. In fact, actors are seen as having the capacity for action, but also of being able to account for the actions and situations in which they involve themselves. It is for this reason that sociological intervention relies on the reflexive ability of the actors (Cousin et al. 2011). However, while I believe in hermeneutics and interventionist sociology, one should be very careful about the normativity. The way many social researchers are blurring the necessary boundaries between professional/critical research (a sort of a Weberian idea-type of a value-free science) with the normative moment is problematic. This can be, for instance, through writing in a way that a reader does not know the boundaries between empirical findings and ideology and between the scholar's vocation and the politician's trade. This trend is recurrent in the Arab social science, as this was reported even in the early 90's and before (see Kerrou 1991).

Fourth, the Arab authoritarian states are not interested in having evidence-based policy. Or, at most, selecting some facts and disregard analyses that counter a proposed policy. This can be observed in the practice of the Lebanese government by Tarik Mitri during his tenure as Minister of Information. This was labelled by Françoise Héritier as selective deafness (*surdité sélective*). (Héritier 1996; cited by

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[6] See criticism of the Burawoy public sociology from this point of view in Horák 2017

Boukhris forthcoming). Mouin Hamza, Director-General of the Lebanese Council for Scientific Research, provides interesting nuance to this arguing that Lebanese government more and more requests research for their policy and only when the problem is technical and less when it is of a social nature.[7] This show the lack of legitimacy of social science in the Arab world compared with other sciences.

This general lack of demand will discourage researchers' engagement with the public and policy-makers and will reduce their knowledge production to the professional type of research only (Hanafi and Arvanitis 2016: Chapter 5). Alternatively, policy research will be developed but only when it is funded and used by international organizations, as we noticed from the size of the circle in the Arab East compared with that of the Maghreb (North Africa) in the above chart. Some Arab researchers (Boukhris forthcoming) are worried about the transformation of sociologists into social engineers. My position is that sociology as a profession requires different profiles, including policy researchers. The problem would be raised only if the size of this type of profile exceed those who produced critical and professional research or when the policy research is not based on professional and critical research.

Fifth, good critical research produced under authoritarianism often leads to the marginalization of the career of its authors. Even worse, since the starting of the Arab uprisings, we heard on a daily basis evidence of the violation of academic freedom: expulsion of Dr. Moulay Hisham Alaoui from Tunisia while being invited to participate in an academic workshop there (8 September 2017), expressing sympathy for Qatar is an offense punishable by a lengthy jail term in Bahrain and UAE,[8] demanding an independent inquiry into the deaths of four Syrians who died while in Lebanese army custody in Aug. 2017 was considered crossing a red line and undermining the national unity in Lebanon,[9] etc. In this context, one can notice the development of the figure of prolocutor, in the sense that the Oxford English Dictionary put it, "the use of ambiguous language so as to mislead", ie to use "persuasion to capture free-floating disposable loyalties with success dependent upon their rhetorical capacity to present, create, and appeals to new situations" (Stanton 2009: 223). This is often driven by a mix of the fear of the State and of religious/ideological authorities. It is only by consolidating the scientific community that researchers and faculty can be protected and their research achieve social impacts. In Lebanon, where one could notice a quite consolidated community in the science of education, Maha Shuayb provides evidence of an important role of the Lebanese

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[7] Informal conversation with him, 14 Sept. 2017

[8] Bahrain and the UAE announced in June 2017 that expressing sympathy for Qatar is an offence punishable by a lengthy jail term. In Bahrain, "Any expression of sympathy with the government of Qatar or opposition to the measures taken by the government of Bahrain, whether through social media, Twitter or any other form of communication, is a criminal offence punishable by up to five years in prison and a fine", while in the UAE announced a similar decision, warning that offenders could face between three and 15 years in prison and a Dh500,000 fine. See https://www.the-national.ae/world/uae-and-saudi-arabia-cut-ties-with-qatar-live-updates-1.24574

[9] For more details about the violation of academic freedom in the Arab world see Hanafi 2015.

Association for Education Studies (LAES) in developing an education strategy for the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (Shuayb 2016).

Sixth, knowledge production becomes more "socially distributed". (Gibbons et al. 1994) knowledge is indeed not only produced by academics but also by researchers located outside universities and research centers. Civil society organizations (CSOs) and international organizations (IOs) become important sites of knowledge production. Activists through their action produce often research action and the knowledge produced by grassroots movements can prove far more relatable than abstract knowledge produced by academics. In the time of conflict, Human rights organizations have produced unique reliable data regarding the violation of human rights in the Arab world and Israel. At the same time, CSOs and IOs are sites of policy making. Organizations such as ESCWA, World Bank, UNECEF, UNRWA, UNHCR, FAO and ILO are active in the Arab world, requesting research and providing advice to different stakeholders, including governments. From the CVs of Arab scholars I analyzed, between 2008 and 2014, I noticed that research and studies in the form of consultancy are often commissioned by these organizations and rarely by the state agencies.

Seventh, the Arab university attempt to connect research into society and private sector has little impact. There is a need to think about intermediary institutions (research councils, associations, incubators) who should bridge between professional research and its dissemination into public and policymakers. In this regard, the experience of the Lebanese Industrial Research Achievements Program (LIRA) and Berytech incubator in Lebanon are very important in terms of facilitating contacts between the private sector and universities. However, these initiatives are not sufficient and there is a need of a more systematic effort. In the conclusion of this chapter I will propose the creation of a portal to deal with social impact of scientific research.

4   Serving Arab Societies: Op-Ed as a Case Study[10]

There are different ways of serving Arab societies but here I will put emphasis about the importance of disseminating academic knowledge beyond a close circle of peers. As Hanna Arendt (1953: 392) once wrote: "True understanding does not tire of interminable dialogue and 'vicious circles' because it trusts that imagination eventually will catch at least a glimpse of the always frightening light of truth", one cannot separate the knowledge production process from the "interminable dialogue" with the public. Op-eds are independent opinion editorials formerly opposite the publisher's editorial page in newspapers and magazines. They not a collection of polished articles, following the protocol of an academic article, nor are they supposed to be documents that solely function emotionally; they are interventions in a

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[10] This section was written with R. Arvanitis. For more details about this topic, see Hanafi and Arvanitis 2016.

possible debate, be it an actual debate or the designation of an important issue that should be put to public enquiry. In all cases, academics could use the public forum that is offered by newspapers to rationalize an issue or open a debate. Although infrequent, op-eds written by academics do play an important role. Not publishing more academic voices has important consequences, since they impoverish public debates in all Arab countries. In effect, academics could utilize the op-ed pages as a laboratory to test their ideas and to enter into direct conversation with different audiences. This could be the case for all kinds of positions, either when contesting the social and political order, an activity that requires direct interaction with the public, or by exploring public policy issues.

Three styles of expression are identifiable when glancing into the content of op-eds written by Lebanese academics: a reflective style, a provocative style, and a "citizen" style. These styles may help provide an explanation on the type of contributions that academics use in the op-eds.

The reflective style is both *analytical and reflexive*. Analytical, in the sense that it is bringing complex arguments to understand/explain a social phenomenon or a political event, using information from history and geography. Reflexive, in the sense of self-criticism beyond the ideological entrenchment and of revising questions and even re-framing the way we read a social phenomenon or a political event. Having said that, I don't want to idealize what is analytical as neutral: being analytical can embody an utopia and a will to help a social movement in the making. The relationships between the scientific, journalistic, and political fields are complex and the risk of co-option is there (Mauger 2011). There are many examples of the good use of this style. In his piece "Syrian Revolution in 2012: 'good and evil' or 'in favor and against", Samer Frangieh, assistant professor of political science at AUB, captures the reader's attention with new information and fresh analysis, comparing for instance the Syrian uprising with the French revolution, showing the ambivalent relationship between ethics and politics. "Those who don't want to take position from the Syrian uprising choose to hide behind a moralistic stance of 'good vs. evil' arguing that the Syrian opposition is also violating human rights". He is also reflective by starting his article by pointing out the violation of human rights by the Syrian opposition. His writing is analytical but occasionally uses anecdotes, helping readers to enhance their understanding of complex issues. There is always an educational side without becoming preaching. In "Kamel al-Assad and the identity in Crisis", Kamal Wahbeh (2010), professor at the Lebanese University (LU), contested an op-ed written by Talal Atrissi that the Lebanese Shia get their conscience as a community thanks to the Sader movement in early 1980s. He used the work of historian Philippe Hitti and treats the notions of community and class consciousness, using Karl Marx and other social scientists. In the same vein, we find a very analytical article in *Assafir* newspaper (17 August 2013) by Ahmad Balbaki, sociology professor retired from the Lebanese University, about a crime caused in a mixed marriage between a Druze and a Sunni.

The second style of expression is not only analytical but also *goes against the mainstream common sense and opens new venues for the debates*. As an example, one can mention some articles of Mona Fayyad, professor of social psychology in

the LU ("To be a Shia today" or "Are the Arab Shia 'enemy collaborators' in their countries?") or those of Bashar Haydar, professor of philosophy at AUB ("Syrian revolution is a moral act but not Gaza rockets" or "Supporting the occupation is a moral duty"; both are in *Al-Hayat*). These articles are provocative and full of passionate strong opinions. They open discussion through the online section of media and also through replies to other op-eds. Regardless if one agrees or disagrees with these authors, academics here bring about new paths of reflection and creative imagination to the public.

A third style is when academics *write as citizens,* and one cannot find a disciplinary reference, or any theory or empirical research mentioned. It is sometimes difficult to differentiate when an author writes as a citizen or as a researcher, as is the case, for example, of many articles by Asaad Abu Khalil in *al-Akhbar*, or some of Samer Frangieh in Al-Hayat. This style is frequent in op-eds and is usually expressed by academics that are politicized. The major characteristic of this style is their expression of emotion or opinion without factual backing. Some of these articles can be considered as advocacy and denunciations.

5 Conclusion

Generally speaking, the world is moving toward more scientization of public policy through different mechanisms (white papers, advisory committees, working groups, etc.). There is a debate whether this would constitute a challenge for the democracy. Some are rather pessimistic about the expertocracy or "the rise of the unelected". (Vibert 2007). Other such as Johan Christensen and Cathrine Holst (2017) (who based their conclusion on the case of Norway) consider evidence-based policy as an inherent part of reasonable conceptions of democratic legitimacy. Even if this later trend is problematic mostly from approaches that regard democracy as aggregative,[11] participatory, and intrinsically justified. It is not if one takes the perspectives of deliberative and epistemically justified democracy. I am closer to this position which advocates the reduction of the power of politicians, bureaucracy and public servants in public policy and makes this policy more inclusive. Deliberative democracy stresses indeed the importance of public discussions prior to a vote. Citizens' political will are not considered synonymous with their revealed preferences, but as the transformed outcomes of processes of argumentation and intersubjective scrutiny. (Christensen and Holst 2017) At the same time, I don't argue that the ascent of the (organic) academics will be translated automatically into epistemic merits. Only a closer scrutiny would qualify this ascension.

In retrospect of the past twenty years, this is an extraordinary change in the Arab world, compared with the situation in the mid-nineties (Gaillard and Schlemmer 1996; Gaillard 1994): scientists today are more likely to be equivalent in training

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[11]Aggregative democrats consider democracy as a way of aggregating individual preferences to collective choices. (Christensen and Holst 2017)

and social profile to their European or American counter-parts. However, this good training was accompanied by relative isolation of the university from society and even the economic sector. This is why we first blame universities that push for certain forms of research activities. As the bibliometrics approach may inform, but not replace peer review, there is an urgent change needed to the promotion system from a simple counting the number of articles in refereed journals to benchmark the whole life cycle of research (ie including knowledge transfer and public or policy-oriented research activities). We admit that not all research should have an immediate relevance to local society. Thus, research should be classified by temporality (research that needs time to have output [because of long fieldwork or because of political sensitivity of its content] versus research that yields quick results) and by public/policy relevance and knowledge transfer/innovation (looking at how much research income an institution earns from industry). If the trend will be kept to quantify that, indicators of public/policy activities for the relevant research should be developed, including when these activities will yield to relevant public and policy debates. Also one should blame the trend of adopting American research ethics that were developed and controlled by the Institutional Research Board (IRB) that don't fit the cultural sitting of the research practice in the Arab world.

Based on some of the results of *Knowledge Production in the Arab World: The Impossible Promise* (Sari Hanafi and Rigas Arvanitis) and the European project Social Impact Open Repository (SIOR), I launched a **Portal for the Social Impact of Scientific Research (PSISR)** in order to benchmark the whole life cycle of research including knowledge transfer and public or policy-oriented research activities. Historically we have tended to consider the importance of social impact as being of relevance exclusively to the social sciences and humanities. However, while admitting that not all research can have an immediate relevance to local society, the social impact of scientific research concerns all sciences including applied ones (e.g. engineering and medicine). This portal is a platform for researchers and faculty to display, share and store the social impact of their scientific research results: i.e. all information on their research and how it has been disseminated.[12]

Finally, one should blame wealthy Arab governments that spend so much money in fragmented research activities and funding shadow professors instead of creating national/language portals for academic research (such as The Flemish Academic Bibliographic Database for SSH). The newly established E-marefa, Dar al-Mandhoma, al-Manhal are a starting point for the Arab world but they still insufficient and it is better to have a national or an official pan-Arab organizations to create such portals. The whole debate on visibility of Southern knowledge production is related to not only to the Open Access movement but also to the creation of regional portals (such as SciELO, Redalyc). The efforts of the **Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO)** in this regard is very important: according to the

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[12] This portal is collecting research projects on the Arab World through a three-language interface (Arabic, English, and French) and is supported by a powerful data search engine (supporting the use of research field(s), keywords, researcher, beneficiary's institution, beneficiary's target group, etc.). See http://www.psisr.net.

CLASCO 2015 annual report, The CLACSO Virtual Library has more than 40,000 open access documents and 1,000,000 average monthly downloads. It is one of the largest Virtual Libraries in the field of the social sciences in the world.[13] Personally I was able to get some readings for my seminar on transitional justice, written by Latin American scholars, thanks to CLACSO's virtual library. This sub-discipline indeed has been developed in Latin America and provides amazing lessons learnt how to deal with the mass violation of human rights, prosecution, reparation, truth commissions, and victims' memory.

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[13] In addition of this database there is another one (but not open access) created by ProQuest: The Latin America & Iberia Database includes ongoing full-text academic journals that are locally published in a number of Latin American countries, Spain, and Portugal.

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