

The Arab-German research project

Local, Regional, and International ‘Borrowing and Lending’ in Social Sciences at Egyptian and Lebanese Universities

is performing its concluding workshop

**Social Sciences at Arab Universities:
Opportunities and Constraints**

at the
Orient Institute Beirut
in Zokak el-Blat
on
27 and 28 February, 2014

Project Abstract

Social sciences and humanities at Arab universities are often described as suffering from a lack of academic freedom. However, institutional autonomy and the individual academic's opportunities and constraints in Arab countries seem to differ considerably between institutions and individuals conducting social sciences and humanities research and education under different configurations of local, regional and international influences from the state, the market and the civil society.

From April 2012 to November 2013, a team of educational researchers, two Egyptian and one German, explored conditions under which opportunities and constraints vary between different universities in two Arab countries, Egypt and Lebanon, in cooperation between the *Orient-Institute Beirut* and the *Ruhr-University of Bochum*, with funds from the *Volkswagen Foundation*. The aim was to outline the formal institutional structures through analyses of laws, regulations and statistics, and to describe, with the help of ethno-methodology, how individual academics exercise them, not least under the conditions of recent and ongoing political change. The focus was on correlations between institutional and individual autonomy, the services an institution offers to its clientele, and its local, regional and international connectivity. The sample of institutions comprised educational and political science departments at six universities, two of them based in Lebanon and four in Egypt.

The results are intended to benefit educational planners in their strive to increase academic freedom and to advance quality in the teaching and research of social sciences, as well as individuals and institutions searching for partners for academic cooperation in the two countries. Therefore, all sessions of the workshop are public. They shall present some of the evidence produced in the frame of our project, discuss them with participants in the project as well as experts independent from it, and juxtapose them with research done in neighboring fields.

Program

Thursday

9:30-10 a. m.: Introduction to the Project, Prof. Stefan Reichmuth,
Ruhr University of Bochum/Germany

10-11:15 a. m.: *People's Struggle for Human Dignity and the
Dissemination of Humanities*, Dr. Elizabeth Kassab, *Center for
Advanced Study*, Bonn/Germany

Refreshments

11:45 a.m. -13:15 p.m.: *Social Scientists at the American University in
Cairo and at October 6th University: Opportunities and
Constraints*, Dr. Ramadan Nassar, *Ain Shams University*,
Cairo
Comment: Dr. Gihan Osman, *American University in Cairo*

Break

2:15-3:45 p. m.: *Lebanese Social Scientists in their Scientific
Community*, Dr. Jonathan Kriener, *Ruhr University of
Bochum/Germany*
Comment: Prof. Melhem Chaoul, *Lebanese University*, Beirut

Refreshments

4:15-5:45 p. m.: Panel: *Different Planets? Arab Social Sciences and
Humanities at National and Foreign Institutions*

Prof. Ridwan as-Sayyid, *Lebanese University and Higher
Institute for Islamic Studies*, Beirut (national institutions)

Prof. Sari Hanafi, *American University of Beirut* (foreign
institutions).

Friday

9:30-11: a. m.: *Social and Epistemological Dimensions of Producing
Scientific Knowledge at Egyptian Universities*, Dr. Ahmad
Moussa Badawi, Sociologist, Banha/Egypt
Comment: Dr. Khaled Abdel Fattah, *Helwan University*, Cairo

Refreshments

11:30 a. m. – 13:30 p. m.: Panel: *Academic Networking among Arab
Social Scientists: the Lebanese Association for Educational
Studies, Shamaa, and the Arab Council for the Social Sciences*
Prof. Adnan El Amine, *Lebanese Association for Educational
Studies*, Beirut
Prof. Sari Hanafi, *Arab Council for the Social Sciences*, Beirut