

## Knowledge Production in the Arab World: The impossible promise.

Sultan Al-Maani

Hanafi, Sari and Rigas Arvanitis. *Routledge (Taylor & Francis Group), 2016. 345pp. ISBN 9781138948815 (hardback); 9781315669434 (ebook).*

*Knowledge Production in the Arab World* provides a wealth of vital and useful insights on the dynamics of research in the Arab region. This meticulously well-researched volume is an inside look at what goes on behind the doors of Arab universities, research centers, and policy-makers' saloons to find "exits" or possible ways out of the current research impasse. The book, authored by Sari Hanafi, a professor of sociology at AUB (American University of Beirut), and Rigas Arvanitis, a sociologist at IRD (Institut de Recherche pour le Développement), examines the factors that render research in the Arab world an irrelevant and ineffective experience, a difficult mission, or 'an/the impossible promise' at national, regional, and global levels. In contrast to the optimistic views—funded by some Arab governments—that promote globalized models of the knowledge economy as the simple solution to the Arab knowledge production crisis, the authors believe this is "nothing but a rhetorical tool" to obscure reality. A careful reading reveals that the objective of this impressive project is not to locate failures or celebrate successes but to "pursue the retrospective in search of the prospective".

To achieve the book's promise, the authors, both of whom have longstanding experience in undertaking research in this

field, review their sources, evaluate the reliability and validity of the research methodologies and methods available (in-depth interviews, online survey-questionnaire, census, desk review, case study), and provide appropriate criteria for their interrogations and choices. Considering its appendices, bibliography, and index, this book would be helpful for undergraduate and postgraduate students, academics, or research agencies interested in developing a sophisticated study on research in developing countries, educational sociology, policy studies, and development studies.

The authors' arguments and style(s) of writing are unpretentiously clear, and the structure and organization of the book is polished. The book is divided into two parts: The first comprises four chapters (with compelling conclusions in each of their sub-sections) on the architecture and typology of Arab research systems, the growth of research publications' (considering issues of diversified specializations, citations and ranking, and local-regional-international scientific partnership), and the complementary interrelations between Arab society, political-economic policies, universities, and research. The second part focuses on the characteristics of Arab social research, the marginalization of the Arabic language, and refer-

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ences among researchers in sociology, imperialism of academics and experts, and academic policies of disengagement from the public debate (taking Lebanon as an example).

Finally, the authors' thorough and perceptive analysis in this well-documented, coherent, and functional piece of scholarship offers an engaging vision of the future—to transcending the 'impossible'.