

## Maghrebbarometer: a way to research development in the Maghreb Arab region

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### **Résumé de l'article :**

Suite à la mondialisation et aux changements socioéconomiques et politiques dans le monde entier, nous trouvons que le Maghreb Arab a été plus attaché et concerné par ces mouvements concernant le développement démocratique, l'émancipation de la femme et une adhésion politique de la population. Ces changements peuvent affecter le destin du développement de la société démocratique et le développement de la qualité de vie de la population dans cette région du monde.

Pour bien cerner ces changements et avoir plus connaissance sur la société maghrébine, nous trouvons le développement d'une politique de recherche très utile. Cette politique de recherche doit être adopter par les centres et les institutions de recherches dans les pays du Maghreb. Cela est possible par la réalisation et des enquêtes de terrain tout en utilisant des méthodes et des techniques moderne afin de collecter les données et les analyser, et l'établissement d'une nouvelle tradition d'enquête dans la région à travers une recherche continuée annuellement.

Tant qu'il y a d'autres expérience de recherche dans le monde tels que Eurobaromètre ou Latino baromètre, il est très utile de penser d'une création d'une institution de recherche portant le nom : Magrebboromètre.

### **Abstract:**

Within the development of globalization and the advance of social, economic and political changes in the entire world, we find that the Maghreb Arab has been more linked to these waves in matters of democratic development, women empowerment and political adhesion of the majority of the population. Then, we find it very awful to lead these fruitful conditions without any analysis by social scientists. These changes may affect the destiny of the development of a democratic society and a development of the quality of life of the population of this part of the world.

The knowledge of these societies needs the development of a research policy to be adopted by different research institutions in the Maghreb Arab countries. This can be achieved by practising field research with the use of modern tools of collecting and analysing the data, and the establishment of a new research tradition in the area by a yearly continuous research.

Then as long as there are institutions called eurobarometer or latinobarometer, lets think about the creation and the development our research institution that can be called Maghrebbarometer.

## ***Introduction:***

Human development has been the main subject that has interested many social scientists, economists and politicians. This interest has led to the development of different methodological tools of treatment and analyses of socio-economic and political indicators. The application of these methods and techniques of surveys has been different from one country to another as long as it may face many difficulties in matters of political constraints especially in surveys and polls of public opinions concerning people's attitudes towards democracy and governance.

Globalisation, the civilising process, and communication has affected many authoritarian systems to change their ways of proceeding with the governance of a population that has been developed and get certain political culture with an amount of educational level that has led them to be active citizens rather than passive subalterns.

Thus political deciders are in need for a data bank of the aspiration and the representations of their people. The same need is necessary for researchers to develop their analyses of the human development. In any part of the word we have noticed the appearance of social surveys and barometers. These latter

may be one of the most accurate tools in these last decades that can investigate large samples of people and get a huge amount of information in a short time.

## ***Researching Maghreb Arab society:***

The Maghreb Arab constitutes a socio-demographic, cultural and political entity, which experienced a same-shared history. This history has affected the Sociological characteristic of the population at the same time the economic situation has been more or less similar in the region. Such factors represent the main causes for the development of a social and geographical entity with the same sociological, economical, and political problems.

Youth and the problem of unemployment, immigration, gender relations, religiosity, democracy, poverty, satisfaction with life in this region, ...etc are the main subjects that need to be treated by investigating large samples of the society in different part of this region.

As sociologists, economists, politicians, citizens of this region, we notice that our societies are lacking in social studies. It is awful to waste time without take any attention to this flourishing



population that has a rich knowledge of the dynamic of their societies. These people have been active, they have got an amount of education and they have been present on the political spheres as long as we observe a democratic wave and a development of active Islamic parties in the region.

The development of research in the region may be encouraged by the elaboration of a cooperated policy of social surveys that will be adopted by different academic institution and research center in the region.

### ***Reasons for Social Surveys:***

Returning to the history of social surveys, we may confirm that all the famous surveys done by pioneer sociologist aimed to give an image of the people who experienced bad life. Conditions with the development of industrialism and capitalism in Europe. Surveys conducted by, L.R.Villermé (1840)<sup>1</sup>; Charles Booth (1892)<sup>2</sup>, Le Play (1855)<sup>3</sup>, represent the main support for the development of the field work in sociology. We are not sensed to present a history of the social survey but we aim to emphasis the idea that there are certain partisans between the social scientists and their society, and these social scientists are the intermediate between the state and the society.

This role led the social scientists to think about methods that can quantify and study social problems. The aim was to apply certain objectivity in the analysis of these social problems. The use of numbers in social sciences represents a revolution in these sciences it has led the development of new statistical tools of analysis and interpretation.

The development of the questionnaire and its using in quantitative studies has its effect in different spheres of social realities. It has participated in the development of data banks in different sectors from the local level to the international one. Nations has created their demographic and societal information and has developed certain official statistics that contributed on the creation of demographic accounting system and educational accounting system etc.

The official statistics may play only one part in the study of the society, the other part may be reached by doing polls though field work using the questionnaire as a technique of collecting data concerning people and their opinions on different aspects of their lives. These data are social indicators that have a large role in giving the real image Of the society.

« Social indicators are nothing else than social statistics which however differ from social indicators are nothing else than social statistics which however differ from normal statistics by several characteristics: they should measure outputs and not inputs, they should refer to individual welfare and not to bureaucratic activities, they should inform about change”<sup>4</sup>

Thus, it is necessary to defend the idea that our societies must be investigated by large social surveys in order to give a chance for social scientist to interpret the socio-economic and political weakness and for political deciders to present their remedies.

### ***Methodological approaches:***

As we have noticed earlier, the Maghreb Arab represents a main entity which faces almost the same problems. It is nowadays a necessity to think about methods to overcome the lack of data as long as we notice that there is a very weak empirical study of Maghreb societies. Historical factors have affected the development of large social surveys that might use polls of large samples in the region. Scholars under the colonisation period preferred Ethnological and anthropological studies.

Even after independence we notice a very weak development of

social sciences that encourage scholars to investigate large samples in order to collect data. Political deciders did not pay any attention to results of studies done by scholars at universities and research centres. This perception is apparent when we check the amount of money reserved to universities and scholars to Enhance research and surveys.

However, we notice certain change in politicians' attitudes toward research and the need for the participation of the research institution in the socio-economic development.

The new environment and the earned experience by Maghreb universities and research centers have the possibility to give rise a new will for the development of social surveys in this part of the world. Studying the social reality of Maghreb people, by elaborating a serial social survey, becomes more possible than ever.

Approaching social problems and getting data concerning people's aspirations, attitudes and hopes are very necessary in the development of societies. “In spite of its weakness, subjective indicators are indispensable in social policy.... objective indicators alone do not provide sufficient information”<sup>5</sup>.



Thus, in order to get subjective indicators, we think that statistical studies have the capability to collect sufficient data that explain problematic of social scientists. We (as *Maghrebins* scholars), have the chance to reach certain ability to use and learn how we practise the SPSS programme in the social survey, due to the collaboration of the Michigan university in Ann Arbor.

Here we have to notice that the basement of studying public opinions in the Maghreb Arab, returns to the social surveys done by Maghreb scholars under the supervision of the Professor Tessler<sup>6</sup> and the AIMS institution in 1996. We consider such surveys as barometers that should be followed by *Maghrebins* scholars.

Studying different sociological, economic Or political subjects cannot be limited to small survey in a small geographic society, but it is always interesting to have data bank resulted from different barometers in order to make comparison and deduce more accurate and scientific results. For instance, Bernard Christoph et al. (2003), notice that the general life satisfaction item was not available in surveys fielded round this time and therefore other surveys were used (in 1996 the Eurobarometer 44.2\_bis study, fielded in February, has been used)<sup>7</sup>

### ***Towards a Maghrebbarometer:***

Addition to our role as social and political researcher, having certain methodological knowledge of studying public opinions. It is necessary for research institution to develop their ability to work and collaborate in matters of research and to develop a data bank in order to support the idea of a creation of a Maghrebbarometer. Other barometer models of the world such as: Eurobarometer, Latinobarometer or Afrobarometer can endorse this Maghrebbarometer. This latter may initiate political deciders to think and investigate the reality and the hope of their people. "Assessing policy success requires information about goal attainment, such as reduction of poverty or improvement of housing conditions, and information about public support. This demands both subjective measurement and assessment of attitudinal matters"<sup>8</sup> The data bank, at the same time, represents the support for political scientists and sociologists and the other scientists interested in the particularity of the Maghreb people.

To have a more idea about the main barometers that may inspire our plan of Elaborating the Maghrebbarometer, we present a description of certain barometers<sup>9</sup>.

**1. Latinobarometro** has conducted similar opinion surveys each year since 1995, so the poll is good at capturing shifts in opinion. Latinobarometro is a non-profit organisation based in Santiago, Chile, which has carried out an annual survey of opinions, attitudes and values in Latin America since 1995. The poll was taken by local opinion-research companies in 17 Latin American countries, and involved 18.135 interviews, which were conducted in April and May 2000<sup>10</sup>. The objective of the Latinobarometer is taking some time to get to know people's opinions and the attitudes in the region, about politics, the economy and regional integration. The latinobrometer aims at becoming a useful instrument for public and private decision-makers in their analysis prior to decision taking. The field in each country has been carried out by some of the most prestigious institutes and companies, with significant expertise in this field. The methodology used was Endorsed by the major international experts on this subject and received the technical support of the Eurobarometer, which has been regularly carried out by the European Union to understand the opinion of its people since the seventies.

**2. The Afrobarometer** series was developed by select Africanist scholars with funds from variety of

sources: The National Science Foundation, The United States Agency for International Development, Michigan State University... The series represents a large-scale, cross national survey Research.... they furnish research data on democracy, governance, livelihood, macroeconomics and markets, social capital, political regimes and transition, political participation, conflict and crime. Each Afrobarometer survey collects data about individual attitudes and behaviour, innovative indicators especially relevant to developing societies. The series are partly modelled on Eurobarometer studies.

### ***Survey Topics of Maghrebbarometer***

The Maghrebbarometer may represent the main survey institution that can be carrying out in the field of the main three countries. It can refer to the opinion of Maghrebin people about economic integration, international co-operation agreements and regional integration, the political and institutional development, and the state of democracy, and the general economic evolution of the of the Maghreb Arab.

As long as we believe that Maghrebbarometer should endorsed by other barometers. We do not imagine different topics might

appear in our surveys. In our point of view the main topic that can be treated in most barometers, and we think that it is nowadays necessary for or society is democracy and the economic reform. It is obvious that we can not reach democracy without checking public opinions about political leaders, parties, governance and the weight of public support of certain sorts or ways of leadership and governing in a society. Polls in the Maghreb society may test the efficiency of practising democracy, and the direction of political culture. This barometer helps political leaders and social scientists to compare their Democracy to other democracies of the world.

Economic reforms are other topics that should be treated by Maghrebbarometer. People are subjected to the economic reform. They can be influenced by any economic plan traced by state that

lead either to the deepening of poverty or the improving of the standard of living of the population. The success of any development plan needs the support and the baking of the population. Then we suppose that we are in need to develop Public opinions research to get additional information. "Survey data are particularly needed for issues that are not on the political agenda and for groups that are ill represented"<sup>11</sup>.

Developing a culture of social surveys and public opinions research in the Maghreb has been a real need. People can not participate in the development of their quality of life without integrating and asking for polls and public opinion that research their worries, aspirations and satisfactions.



- 1- L.R. Villermé, Tableau de l'état physique et moral des ouvriers employés dans les manufactures du coton ; de laine et de soie , Paris ,1840
- 2- Charles Booth, Life and Labor of the people of London, 1892.
- 3- F. Le Play, La méthode sociale, 1879..
- 4- Wolfgang Zapf, Social reporting in the 1970s and 1990s, WZB: Research Unit Social Structure and Social Reporting, February 1999.
- 5- Ruut Veenhoven, "Why social policy needs subjective indicators" Paper presented at the 3<sup>rd</sup> conference of the international society for quality of life studies, Girona, Spain, 2001
- 6-Among the result of this survey cf. Mark Tessler, "Islam and Democracy in the Middle East :The impact of religious orientations on attitudes towards democracy in Four Arab countries », Comparative politics, 34,3,(April) 2002.
- 7- Bernard Chritoph and Heinz-Herbert Noll, « Subjective Well being in the European Union during the 1990ies », Centre for Survey Research and Methodology, Mannheim (Germany), 2003.
- 8- Ruut Veenhoven, op. Cit.
- 9- This description is based on Internet research of the concept of barometers.
- 10- "The Latinobarometro poll, An Alarm call for Latin America's democrats", The Economist print edition, July 26<sup>th</sup> 2001.
- 11- Ruut Veenhoven, op.cit.