

Stanford SOCIAL INNOVATION REVIEW

10th Anniversary Essays
The Empowerment of Arab Women
By Soraya Salti

Stanford Social Innovation Review
Spring 2013

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things to come, the offices of Mass Challenge, one of the world's largest business plan contests.

Some incubators and contests will reach inner cities, motivating left-out populations to remain in school and gain skills to “do cool stuff.” But a range of other human capital innovations can build on recent successes to accelerate progress. Apprenticeships are an underused mechanism for ensuring job-ready skills; apprentices are employed in only a handful of the industries eligible, according to the US Department of Labor. Social enterprises have emerged to fill the void—such as Year Up, which prepares selected youths from disadvantaged backgrounds for good jobs. With the national spotlight on this challenge, such innovations will likely scale up in the next decade, with community-based organizations, new social ventures, and traditional educational organizations creating collaborations with employers.

Educational bridges will be built to connect school to work and to make working an integral part of schooling. They will increase the relevance of education to at-risk youth populations and motivate staying in school; they will also ensure job-ready “middle skills,” those involving more than high school but less than four years of college. Some examples: a six-year high school pilot in New York City, Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-Tech), opened in 2011; the community college system, which offers college-level classes to the students and an associate's degree on completion; and IBM, which supplies mentors, field experiences, and the promise of a job interview upon graduation. (I have been an IBM senior advisor.) This model is spreading quickly. It should become an integral part of urban school systems in the next decade, replacing failed high schools with a skill-building alternative.

The military has long been an effective job-training mechanism providing opportunity for upward mobility. Veterans services were long left to the federal government, but there are signs that social entrepreneurs want to tackle the problem of matching veterans with civilian job opportunities. This trend is likely to grow, as social ventures apply technology to make matches and provide online mentoring.

In the next decade, civilian national service has the potential to take its place beside military service as a universal training ground for young people and a bridge between education and careers. In the United States, civilian national service is the province of social enterprises that can receive (limited) federal dollars but also enjoy private sector support and, in some cases, funding from the entities being served. For example, City Year, a model for President Clinton's AmeriCorps program, has focused in recent years on deploying corps members to alleviate the US high school dropout problem, adding literary and math training for corps members and turning them into “near-peer” paraprofessionals. (I serve on the City Year national board.) National service can thus create jobs directly by employing young people to address national needs; it also works on human capital formation for future jobs.

One mega-trend could be the most important of all. A future arena for innovation is in quality-of-life services: health care, education, and improving the environment. The application of new

technologies—for example, home health monitoring, smart water meters, and digital classrooms—will produce new service models that will shake up established organizations, but also will create demand for a range of new professional and paraprofessional roles that will provide job opportunities for middle-skill jobs.

Investments in entrepreneurship and human capital through innovative institutional models can broaden the pool of jobs as well as the number of people ready to fill them. That would expand opportunity and restore more inclusive economic progress.

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THE EMPOWERMENT OF ARAB WOMEN

BY SORAYA SALTI

Over the past two decades, there has been an important yet gradual development in the Arab World. It doesn't grab the headlines, like the conflicts and revolutions we often witness, and it's hard to perceive without looking closely. The development I'm speaking of is the slow but continuing empowerment of Arab women. Although we're still climbing a



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—SORAYA SALT, Junior Achievement Worldwide

hill laden with stumbling blocks, we're inching closer to the top.

Despite a widespread narrative of the disenfranchisement of women in our region, I would like to point to a few examples that make me optimistic and proud. A 2011 study by Booz & Company asked a group of young Arab women: “What should be the role of young girls/women in society?” Seventy-one percent of respondents said it was to seek employment for financial support and financial independence, whereas only 22 percent saw their role as housewives and mothers. According to the World Economic Forum's 2012 Gender Gap Index, women in Jordan, Algeria, Egypt,

Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and Morocco were on par with, or outperformed, their male counterparts in literacy and educational enrollment rates.

Naysayers may assert that educational trends and high aspirations are only as useful as society permits. If Arab women face a labor market unwilling to hire them, they have hit a wall, even before leaving university.

But there's a complementary trend that also makes me hopeful. The Arab Spring gave our young people an opportunity to display their online skills, as they used the Internet as a primary vehicle to share ideas and mobilize. Revolutions throughout the region could not have taken place with such speed and strength, without the organizing capabilities of young people using social media. Even basic technologies, such as mobile phones, leveled the playing field between governments and their people and allowed men and women alike to contribute. Although more males than females are using Facebook and Twitter, females were at the front line of the Arab Spring in both the digital and physical spaces.

Rising educational levels and increased Internet access will inevitably result in more female entrepreneurs in our region. More Arab businesswomen are gaining regional and global recognition. We also see an entrepreneurial spirit spreading among young women and girls. In fact, at the recent INJAZ Young Entrepreneurs Regional Competition in Doha, a young Yemeni student

enterprise, Creative Generation, led by a team of 15- and 16-year-old Yemeni high school girls, took home the first prize for Company of the Year. Their business was more sophisticated than one might expect from high school students. The company designed solar-powered products to help offset Yemen's electricity deficiencies. The teenagers learned how to construct these devices by hand, watching YouTube videos. A panel of judges, consisting of top Arab business leaders, awarded the teenagers the top prize after a rigorous question-and-answer session, and the girls received a hero's welcome upon returning home.

The INJAZ experience of turning youth into entrepreneurs has shown us how quickly young females in the most marginalized parts of our region can rise to the occasion when doors are opened for them to become creative thinkers. Female entrepreneurs have started an event management company for West Bank youth, who are constrained by endless checkpoints and starved for entertainment; while Omani girls created an e-book production company to help younger people develop an interest in reading; and, in the case of the Yemeni students, they have provided solar energy to run a fan in the sweltering heat. The students now aim to take their invention across their erratically electrified country.

These are just snapshots of a much larger narrative that's usually ignored when we are talking about the Middle East. Of course, these examples and data cannot be used to ignore lingering challenges, but we can mobilize around them—to carve out

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a permanent and prominent role for Arab women in our schools, economies, and societies.

Soraya Salti is senior vice president of Middle East/North Africa for Junior Achievement Worldwide, INJAZ Al-Arab. She won the 2006 Schwab Social Entrepreneur award for Jordan, and was the first Arab woman to win the Skoll Award for Social Entrepreneurship.



THE TROUBLE WITH WINNING

BY ROGER MARTIN

Much has changed in the ten years since the launch of the *Stanford Social Innovation Review* (SSIR), shifts I've witnessed as a board member at the Skoll Foundation. The Skoll Foundation was founded a few years before SSIR, and in its early days, one of our main jobs was to convince the world that this strange new thing called "social entrepreneurship" was an important force for good on the planet. We not only funded social entrepreneurs, we explicitly celebrated them to the world and connected them with one another. The network was significant; it allowed social entrepreneurs to learn from each other and provided encouragement that they weren't all alone in the world. I suspect that SSIR felt a little like this ten years ago: it had to make the case for social innovation as an identifiable, meritorious thing and to show its audience that there were others out there like them.

It is fair to say that times have changed. Social innovation is now super-cool. Social enterprises are chronicled on television, in print, and at conferences. Net Impact chapters are now ubiquitous at business schools. The most prominent social entrepreneurs—people like Muhammad Yunus, Wendy Kopp, and Paul Farmer—have become rock stars in much the same way prominent CEOs—like Jack Welch, Bill Gates, and Larry Ellison—did in the 1990s.

Social innovation has gone from the fringes to center stage. In important ways, it has won. But winning isn't an unalloyed good. It brings challenges that must be recognized and overcome if the movement is to continue to prosper. There are challenges on many fronts, but I will focus on two: the two E's, expectations and entropy.

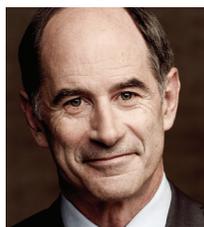
When anything exceeds forecasts, expectations skyrocket. This reaction is most obvious in companies' stock prices. When a company does exceedingly well, its stock price spikes up, raising expectations for the company to do better still in the future (think of the Facebook IPO). To meet surreal expectations, company leaders are often tempted to engage in risky, counter-productive initiatives, which damage or destroy the company over the long run.

Ten years ago, for the most part, the world didn't know what social entrepreneurs were or what they did. Low expectations were the problem. That battle has been fought and won. We should stop fighting that battle and turn to a new one: runaway expectations.

Increasing numbers of people believe that social entrepreneurs can solve the world's problems. No one can solve all the world's problems. Social innovators can work together with governments, businesses, and NGOs to tackle global problems and make progress in solving them. This should be the message of all those who support and celebrate social innovation. We must be clear and forthright about what social innovation can and cannot do.

Entropy is the second challenge. Winning draws resources to an enterprise. More resources are helpful and enable the enterprise to do more. But growth brings problems too. Again, the corporate world is illustrative. Winning corporations grow large. They accrue lots of resources and develop a mindset that sees winning as inevitable. Before long, they use their abundant resources to expand into domains far away from the core business that made them great—think of IBM in the 1980s. Its energy was diffused, averaged down, and dissipated. When this happens, a company's culture begins to shift.

At the outset, pre-success, a company tends to attract talent that is utterly committed to the vision and willing to fight hard to make it happen. When a company has become obviously success-



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—ROGER MARTIN, University of Toronto

ful, it attracts workers who want to work for a successful company. These people expect that the success will simply continue. Instead of seeing themselves as responsible for contributing to the future success of the company, they hold the company responsible for generating further success. To avoid entropy, we must be mindful of the way in which we deploy our new resources and of the shifts in our culture and corporate mindset.

Social innovation isn't everything and it can't do everything. It isn't for everyone either, nor should it be. In our winning phase, it is important to specify what we can accomplish, so we can shape and meet expectations. In addition, it is important for social innovators to study success models in particular domains or through particular means, so that social innovation can remain sufficiently focused to avoid the downside of entropy.

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