

## **Africa Knows! Conference 2020-2021**

### **Panel D16a: “Innovations, new paradigms and knowledge development in North Africa”**

**By: Nouria Ouibrahim (LinkedInAfrica)  
Kendra Parry (Leiden Univesity)**



## Content

<b>1. General Information</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>2. Summary of the Abstract of panel</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>3. Summary of Papers</b> .....	<b>4</b>
3.1 Inclusive sustainable development in Africa: the knowledge-based economy at the heart.....	4
of the new economic paradigm by Mustapha Mekideche .....	4
3.2. Case studies of successful skills mobility partnerships from Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt.....	4
by Tanja Dedovic .....	4
3.3. Knowledge development for justice and state-building: a case from Libya by Suliman .....	4
Ibrahim and Jan Michel Otto.....	4
3.4. Humanities and public debate in Morocco by Léon Buskens (NIMAR).....	5
3.5. Human capital and sustainable development in Africa: the levers and programs to .....	5
target in Geosciences within the framework of Regional Integration by Naima Homoumi.....	5
3.6. The mismatch between education and employability in the agriculture sector in Algeria .....	5
by Hafida Zeddour Mohamed Brahim.....	5
3.7. Which new economic paradigm in Africa? The case of Tunisia by Wafa Makhoulf .....	6
3.8. African Strategy of financing knowledge and research, Stephane Monney Mouandjo.....	6
<b>4. The Discussion – summary</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>5. References</b> .....	<b>11</b>

## 1. General Information

Date and Time of the panel: 20 January, 2021 at 15:00 (UTC+1)

Convenors: Nouria Ouibrahim (LinkedInAfrica), Ton Dietz (ASC Leiden) and Marieke van Winden (conference organiser) (African Studies Centre Leiden).

Authors: *Mustapha Mekideche* (Economist, Independent consultant and former chairman of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)); *Tanja Dedovic* (Regional Thematic Specialist on labor Mobility and Human Development at IOM in Cairo), *Jan Michiel Otto* (Leiden University), *Suliman Ibrahim* (University of Benghazi), *Léon Buskens* (NIMAR), *Naima Homoumi* (Faculty of Sciences Mohammed V university Rabat), *Hafida Zeddour and Mohamed Brahim* (Tlemcen University), *Wafa Makhoulf* (CEED Tunisia), *Stephane Monney Mouandjo* (Director CAFRAD).

## 2. Summary of the Abstract of panel

This panel presents North Africa as an integral part of Africa, reminding one of its important geopolitical position as a bridge between Sub-Sahara Africa, Europe and the Middle East. Yet it is brought to the attention that it is an integral part of Africa, which is often forgotten! Even though this region is the closest of Africa to Europe, the panel “**Innovation, new paradigms and knowledge development in North Africa**” provides a unique opportunity for the presenters and the participants to put North Africa forward, and address the asymmetrical approach to knowledge between the two, as well as highlighting education as being a pillar of Africa’s economic development and playing an essential role in reconfiguring the economic paradigm. The growth of the institutionalization of knowledge of North Africa will be showcased as a factor of success towards its economic and social development, and will be explored in its relation to Europe. The panel will carefully consider issues including but not limited to environment, security, and equality, as well as the interaction between African and last but not least the role of the African Union (AU).

**Keywords**: *North Africa, Europe, economic & social development, AU*

### **3. Summary of Papers**

#### **3.1 Inclusive sustainable development in Africa: the knowledge-based economy at the heart of the new economic paradigm by Mustapha Mekideche**

Achieving an inclusive and sustainable development on the African continent means there will be added wealth and the creation of jobs, bringing a positive impact on the intra-African trade. In order to achieve this strategy of industrialization and reach a sustainable economy, there must be a focus on knowledge ranging from topics of modern economy to service industry as well as overcoming the issues posed by colonial contract, which will in turn create local wealth and spur jobs, thus reducing poverty. The paper examines the challenges presented to Africans during this process, by focusing on institutions and giving the example of the Algerian new growth paradigm, showcasing how knowledge-based economy is its pivot shifting beyond Algeria to Africa.

#### **3.2. Case studies of successful skills mobility partnerships from Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt by Tanja Dedovic**

There is a need for a global approach to skilled migration. It is necessary that there is a shift away from the phenomenon of skilled migration that provides a one-sided benefit to the labour markets and employers in the countries of destinations, leaving the origin countries to deal with the costs of losing employers otherwise useful for their local labour market. Examples of such a growing global approach of Skills Mobility Partnerships (SMPs), which centres on the skills formation and development of the workforce, are reflected within the SDGs, but are in need to include employers and trade unions in the decision-making process. The paper presents case studies of successful SMPs from Tunisia, Morocco, and Egypt illustrating the benefits and possibilities for true partnerships (of states and migrant workers).

#### **3.3. Knowledge development for justice and state-building: a case from Libya by Suliman Ibrahim and Jan Michel Otto**

Libya's authorities were set to reshape the country to a just and democratic state. The need for knowledge development was a recurring theme brought by international partners' advice. Rising violent conflicts prevented the project from developing further, and the focus was shifted on to making the political divide of the country more stable. Still international actors in the field of academia have offered their expertise along with Libyan experts, and are taking on analysing problems of injustice and failing governance. This research, however, is still in need of the input from different disciplines and of Libyan stakeholders to successfully address

its focus on decentralisation, and eventually declare a national government, with domestic knowledge institutions and the international community.

#### **3.4. Humanities and public debate in Morocco by Léon Buskens (NIMAR)**

Morocco has a long history of academic education and research, a pivotal sector after Morocco regained independence, with its success reflected in its recognized scholars. The educational system has been partly restructured based on French and Spanish models, an approach of modernisation with the aims of reviving Moroccan tradition. An important pillar was based on social justice and the keeping of French cultural and linguistic model, as well as being in favour of Arabisation. Researchers in the humanities paved the way for a more liberal civil society and academic life. Overall, the paper pays attention to the genesis of humanities and the growth of its scholars to achieve the decolonisation of minds and of the way of thinking.

#### **3.5. Human capital and sustainable development in Africa: the levers and programs to target in Geosciences within the framework of Regional Integration by Naima Homoumi**

The geosciences of Africa give way to a region prosperous in its blue economy and green economy, paired with its human wealth. However, it is at the author's discretion to note that the opportunities that come with such a geographical setting, such as the abundance of natural resources, also poses limitations, such as adding to its susceptibility to natural risks and disasters. This paper presents the Geosciences as a leading alternative as to how the region can prosper and achieve the integration of young labourers to the market. However, in order to achieve this, the country must strengthen its teachings and availability of these at universities.

#### **3.6. The mismatch between education and employability in the agriculture sector in Algeria by Hafida Zeddour Mohamed Brahim**

Since its independence, Algeria has introduced numerous reforms related to the agricultural sector with the goal of contributing to sustainable development and achieving food security and spurring the economy. The further steps needed in order to achieve this, lie at the hands of traineeship and research. This paper particularly focuses on the need for employability of the young community for the sector. With this in mind, the reader will be left to answer questions on the demand of education, the suffix of agricultural teaching methods, and the solutions.

### **3.7. Which new economic paradigm in Africa? The case of Tunisia by Wafa Makhoulf**

Tunisia's innovation has allowed for economic and social success in the light of its post-revolution phase, after the 2011 revolution that led the country to terrorism, unemployment and poverty. The state took on the role of spurring innovation through numerous measures including the Start-up Act, leading up to the unleashing of its entrepreneurial state. Now, the country is listed as one of the most active in the African region. However, in order to achieve quality digital transition, the country has turned to its collaborator Morocco, to help fulfil its needs of successfully developing skills traineeship for its engineers, and addressing the issue behind FinTech in Africa.

### **3.8. African Strategy of financing knowledge and research, Stephane Monney Mouandjo**

The opportunity for development in Africa, and the opportunity to facilitate this process has been of great attraction to people and institutions, who are shifting their strategy and focusing their material and human resources on Africa. However, along with the benefits, this international interest poses limitations, such as how actors outside of Africa are now taking decisions of what needs to be done on site. Fortunately, some organizations, such as ECOWAS are aware of this situation and are centring its focus on giving Africa a competitive space using knowledge finance to strengthen its capacities. It is particularly thanks to young innovators that funding through cooperation has expanded.

## **4. The Discussion – summary**

The panel has addressed and highlighted the asymmetric approach between North Africa and Europe, as well as the role of knowledge in the economic paradigm. The discussions were grouped in two main themes, namely: “The new economic paradigm” and the Perception on recent development & future prospects in terms of knowledge in order to contribute to the development of the region”. In this context of COVID, the 1<sup>st</sup> part of the panel started with the projection of a video of the African Development Bank (AfdB) entitled “North Africa Economic Outlook 2020”. A video that highlighted the economic impact of COVID, particularly leading to an economic recession in most of North Africa. Sparkling the discussion between the negative impacts and the positive aspects of the pandemic. The acceleration of online payment possibilities in Tunisia is a good example of the positive impact of the crisis. “ A crisis is also an opportunity”!

Still focusing on stimulating the economy, the discussion addressed the challenges faced by African nations to achieve a new growth regime leading to the emergence of Africa. Given that one of the biggest assets of Africa is its youth growth can be achieved by making employment in rural areas more attractive and by putting a strong focus on education. Furthermore North Africa's diaspora in the rest of the world and its entrepreneurs will make a serious difference in accelerating this growth. Another factor with a major impact is the emergence of an industry that enables the local transformation of its raw materials. If achieved this will inevitably lead to progression in Africa in general and specifically in North Africa.

*“The emergence of Africa will necessarily go through its industrialization. The vector will be its youth on the continent, its diaspora in the rest of the world and its entrepreneurs.”*

The introduction of the skills mobility partnerships (SMPs) global approach which centres around the education and the development of the local workforce in advanced countries sparked a debate about the issues of visa and the lack of free movement of people. However, given the fact that SMPs constitute a bilateral or multilateral agreement between countries, these should also add provisions and regulations for travel documents. The skills dimension of migration governance has evolved from one-sided migration schemes for skilled workers at all levels to skills partnerships more closely linked to the labour market needs of participating countries and involving all stakeholders. This raised another issue of mobilizing diaspora skills for supporting and playing an active role in co-teaching in Africa, and in curriculum development. When developing such programs, wouldn't it be much better to give an active role to these skilled diaspora that are already there and are willing to act?

*“In North Africa, SMP's, as the new paradigm of knowledge development, can be a good practice of migration management and, more important, a development model to promote cooperation with an inclusive approach to skills mobility.”*

Another example from Libya was presented on how the international assistance relates to the domestic production of knowledge, and whether there would be ways to make this international cooperation a more stable, productive and relevant one. This experience shows that a cooperation between the triangle of national government, domestic knowledge institutions and the international community is indeed necessary, effective and also feasible!

Experience shows that a considerable number of international assistance projects have been largely ineffective because of a lack of effective cooperation between the providers of these programs, the national government and the involved national knowledge institution.

Other issues included intellectual versus public debate, and finally seeing it in terms of capacity building. Humanities researchers have played an important role in the creation of civil society through cultural criticism, as was in particular shown by the example of Morocco, where a large community of academics contribute to public debates, sometimes in tense circumstances. Through research and teaching, these researchers educate new generations of citizens, contribute to national and international universities and to public debates that are part of an emerging civil society.

The discussion turned to another issue addressing the question of how North Africa could be more linked to the rest of Africa given the example of the increased number of sub-Saharan students coming to North Africa. The case of Algeria shows that sub-Saharan students continue to come to pursue vocational training, taking into account a tradition of past generations. This exchange can create a strong knowledge bond for the future generation and can bridge the gap. Indeed the intra-African collaboration remains until today quite modest. Nevertheless, the case of Tunisian-Moroccan cooperation on a FinTech program shows the importance of the contribution of work in coordination and its effectiveness in terms of results. In addition, the knowledge- and technology-based economy must be supported by the public authorities, in partnership with the university system and research and with the availability of the necessary and adequate skills to meet the needs of businesses.

All the problems raised during these discussions can only be solved by establishing an efficient education system with a strong scientific research backbone. It is no secret that the most developed countries are those that have invested in education and research, which should also work for Africa.

The African regional integration is intended to act as a guarantee for sustainable development in Africa. This can be achieved by the implementation in the fields of training and scientific research, programs and mechanisms to capitalize on the know-how and resources of African states within the framework of the guiding principles and strategic objectives of the AU

Education Strategy 2016-2025. It is only through the investment in human capital that Africa will be able to develop and prosper.

*“The Knowledge-based economy is placed at the heart of the new economic paradigm for Africa, bearing the hopes of more than a billion Africans. It’s at hand. “Africa is Back”!*

Finally, the discussion is concluded by highlighting the many issues that show the work that still needs to be done including: the underfunded universities and the issue of tuition fees (free of charge vs. tuition fees); how to finance the institution and thus research? This problem is encountered within different discipline includes vocational training and in particular for sectors such as agriculture. Knowing that this sector is an essential subsistence sector for Africa, bringing agricultural education in line with the needs of the labour market should be of major concern to decision makers. Special attention should be given by governments to spur competitiveness in the region. In addition the governments need to address issues within the educational system (such as private vs public schools) and think of ways of strengthening the link within the AU and creating bridges between African universities as a solution.

The SMP program presented at this panel would allow African countries to attract investment from major destination countries in their TVET and higher education systems, which they otherwise could not do. Through the SMP, African countries would benefit from a better-trained workforce by sharing the costs of these investments with destination countries that are also interested in investing in the skills they need. This could be an asset to be exploited to finance the strategic sectors of the North African region.

*“The African research funding strategy is plural and the challenge today is to define a common integrated strategy. A big challenge for Africa!*

Based on the discussion during this panel, a number of conclusions/propositions were formulated in order to promote the south-south cooperation and strengthening of the educational system. These include:

- the creation of bridges between African universities will help to promote and mainstream experience capitalization and to set up the principles of living together and tolerance. For this it’s recommended to set up win-win cooperation agreements;

- In the current education system, the principles of supervision and teaching methods favour information over training. So it's necessary to avoid such system and to use a pedagogical approach which targets the development of work capacities, self-learning, scientific curiosity, motivation, reflection, spirit of synthesis, spirit of initiative, creativity, team spirit citizenship, and entrepreneurship.

## 5. References

- Brahim, H.Z.M. (2021). *The mismatch between education and employability in the agiculture sector in Algeria*. Retrieved from: <https://www.africaknows.eu/panels/#9412>
- Buskens, L. (2021). *Humanities and public debate in Morocco*. Retrieved from: <https://www.africaknows.eu/panels/#9412>
- Dedovic, T. (2021). *Case studies of successful skills mobility partnerships from Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt*. Retrieved from: <https://www.africaknows.eu/panels/#9412>
- Hamoumi, N. (2021). *Human capital and sustainable development in Africa: the levers and programs to target in Geosciences within the framework of Regional Integration*. Retrieved from: <https://www.africaknows.eu/panels/#9412>
- Ibrahim, S. And Otto J.M. (2021). *Knowledge development for justice and state-building: a case from Libya*. Retrieved from: <https://www.africaknows.eu/panels/#9412>
- Makhlouf, W. (2021). *Which new economic paradigm in Africa? The case of Tunisia*. Retrieved from: <https://www.africaknows.eu/panels/#9412>
- Mekideche, M. (2021). *Inclusive sustainable development in Africa: the knowledge-based economy at the heart of the new economic paradigm*. Retrieved from: <https://www.africaknows.eu/panels/#9412>
- Mouandjo, S.M. (2021). *African Strategy of financing knowledge and research*. Retrieved from: <https://www.africaknows.eu/panels/#9412>