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The 'Jordan 2020' Scenarios Project

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Authors: Majeda Assaf (Author)
Sami Mahroum (Editor) Sami.Mahroum@arcs.ac.at
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Motivation

The project aimed at formulating all plausible future scenarios for Jordan in the year 2020 and enabling decision makers to draw realistic policies and strategic decisions directly relevant to the said scenarios. It also aimed at stimulating national dialogue on future-related policies, allowing stakeholders to participate in shaping their future, rather than merely being affected by it.

Bridging the Development Gap

Subsequent Human Development Reports, for example by the United Nations Development Program, UNDP, and Jordan's Ministry of Planning, on Jordan have highlighted a number of persistent facts about the country. Jordan is considered one of the two Arab countries whose ranking in the Human Development Index is valued at higher than its ranking as regards to its per capita income. This indicated that Jordan has invested its scarce resources in a relatively effective manner, translating them into assets in human and social development. These reports also show that Jordan achieved the highest ranking among medium income countries in the Human Development Index. On the negative side however, the index indicated that Jordan's progress in education and health was not accompanied by an increase in income levels and that the

level of women's participation in economic activities was still very low.

Against this background, and in response to the instructions of HRH Prince El-Hassan Bin Talal, Chairman of the HCST - Higher Council for Science and Technology, the HCST took the initiative in dedicating what futuristic studies can offer to enable decision makers to draw realistic policies built on profound scientific studies through Jordan 2020 Scenarios, towards the shaping of alternative future visions to confront the challenges to come.

The first launching seminar chaired by HRH, chairman of HCST, and convened in August 2000, formed the real beginning of the Jordan 2020 Scenarios Project under the patronage of the Higher Council for Science and Technology.

A Two-Stage Approach

A **consultative steering committee** supervised the first phase of the project. Five committees (Natural resources, Human

resources, Economics, Society, and culture.) were also formed for the different dimensions, made up of experts in the field. The committees entrusted experts/an expert with the preparation of a reference paper for the different scenarios in each of the dimensions mentioned. Around 70 experts were in



the due process. The papers were reviewed and discussed during the course of the **seminar** launching each dimension and were resolved upon to move ahead in formulating different **scenarios** for Jordan. Besides decision-makers and representatives of public and private sector institutions and experts, representatives of all sectors of Jordanian society attended the seminars.

Since the starting point for the scenario formulation is to understand the society dynamics, the project started out by defining the forces that propel change at the domestic level, and those that control the procession of our world, present and future, at the international level. Seminar participants identified their views on the effect each of these driving forces had on the others on special forms that were distributed for this purpose (no effect, weak effect, moderate effect, powerful effect).

The cross impact of the effect of these potential driving forces was interpreted according to the responses of the participants

utilizing **the cross impact analysis matrix** and the results were shown through calculating the total impact of each force.

As for stage two of the project (formulation of **three plausible future scenarios**), the formulation of the three scenarios in their final form has been made final after a **series of seminars and brain-storming meetings** in which a number of professional experts, "men and women of thought", decision makers, and representatives of civil society participated in addition to the members of the various scenario committees.

The scenario formulation was based on a wide set of sectoral study reports on various subjects to enable the formulators to acquaint themselves with some of the aspects of these subjects, and to shed some light on issues of certain importance to deal with them from a specialized view point. After that, the scenario was formulated in draft form, reviewed and amended by the Steering Committee in light of internal debate with the respective scenario committee, and then presented and debated in a seminar of the type described above before it was put in its final form.

3 Scenarios for Jordan in 2020

'Jordan 2020 Scenarios' yielded a general framework for three possible distinct scenarios for Jordan. These were:

- **The Referential Scenario,**
- **The Evolving Scenario,** and
- **The Innovative Scenario.**

The Referential Scenario draws a picture of Jordan in 2020 based on '**business as usual**' principle. The Innovative Scenario, on the other end of the scenarios' spectrum, draws a different picture for Jordan in 2020 on the grounds that **innovative reforms** take place. The Evolving Scenario, somewhere in between the two, draws a picture of Jordan in 2020 if the recommended **sectoral policies** and current thought of **creative ideas** take place.

The 'Referential Scenario'

Perhaps the more important findings in the three scenarios are that **the Referential Scenario** shows, in the political scene, a weakness in the democracy rooting process, a regression in the quality of Parliamentary representatives, and a marginalization of the role of political parties. It further shows a strengthening of the phenomenon of political saloons, tribal and regional societies, and a weakening in the role of civil society organizations. **The scenario shows that encouraging women to participate in the political life has yielded good fruits** by which women were able, in reasonable proportions, to win elections to Parliament despite the obstacles that the election law put in their way.

With regards to Jordan's role in the region, the scenario tells of ordinary Jordanian Arab relations and that **the style of**

interaction with the Arab States is not conducive to establish strategic ties with them.

On the economic front, the Referential Scenario shows that **economic growth remains modest**, that the per capita share of the Gross Domestic Product, GDP, did not double in twenty years, and shows modesty in the production of goods and services, a recession in agricultural production, and a modest growth in tourism. Additionally, it shows that Jordan's indebtedness increases to about 10 billion dollars. Industrial growth advances slowly and so do the workers in this sector. Privatization continues with success but its funds are not utilized in accordance with a clear strategic program.

With regard to natural resources, the scenario points to the lack of long term national strategies to face the **problem of water shortage**, and the continuity of reliance on **oil imported from Iraq** as a source of energy.

On the social front, **unemployment persists, and migrant labor, crime and drugs remain as unsolved problems.**

On the education front, the Referential Scenario shows a recession because of the **slowdown in the domestic education economics**; the teachers' situation remains the same, and, despite the expansion in schools and universities, education reflects quantity rather than quality, a factor that feeds unemployment among the graduates. The scenario shows that Jordan has succeeded in the introduction and the **expansion of computers in the education system**, but the problem of scientific research remains unchanged and so also does the problem of cultural transformations.

The 'Innovative Scenario'

The **Innovative Scenario** shows a return of **Parliamentary life**, and the emergence of a role for the **political parties** on the national arena with an expanding role in building thought. It also shows the establishment of **civil society organizations** that cooperate to start a **dialogue between the Arabs on one side and the Europeans and Americans** on the other. The scenario tells of the raising of the ceiling of freedom and of an **expanding role for women in political life**.

With regards to economic development, this scenario shows the government continuing on the road of **privatization of major industries**, especially the **Potash and the Phosphate industries**, and the expansion of production of **the Arab Potash Company**. It shows more of management contracts that the government enters into with foreign firms to **manage the water and wastewater systems**, and tells of programs to develop **agricultural programs** and agricultural marketing of Jordan Valley products. It notes the **expansion of export markets, increase in foreign investment** especially in the **Aqaba Special Economic Zone**, and the **reduction of income tax**.

Regarding the natural resources, exploration for oil and natural gas continues, and a concession is granted for the exploitation of oil shale. Government invests in programs to develop the Badia, and becomes active in the **protection of natural resources** and their development. It conducts **exploration for freshwater** in the sandstone layer in certain areas and initiates a project to supply Amman with water from these sources. The government adopts a strategy to **treat municipal wastewater** and its reuse in agriculture.

The Innovative Scenario shows the beginning of development of **higher education** and the steering of it towards **financial independence, privatization of university education and the conversion of state universities to non-profit universities**. Additionally, there is increased attention paid to culture and an emphasis placed on science and technology and the role of scientific research in development. Decentralized education systems are adopted, and training using the internet becomes in vogue, a factor that nourishes innovation and excellence.

The 'Evolving Scenario'

The Evolving Scenario shows the **return of Parliamentary life** with participation from **opposition Islamist and Pan Arab parties, the annulment of personal privileges** that were given to deputies during the fourteenth Parliament, and the cancellation of the one person-one vote law.

The Way Forward

In an effort to institutionalize policy dialogue the Higher Council for Science and Technology took the initiative to establish a specialized centre affiliated to the Council. "The

Economically, the scenario shows the preoccupation of government to improve the **investment climate in the exploitation of the mineral resources of Jordan, the sale by government of half of its shares in the phosphate and potash companies** to two strategic partners, the beginning of improvement in **foreign investment** and indicates that the privatization process has reached its zenith. The scenario shows the success the **Aqaba Special Economic Zone** achieved justifying the thinking to establish similar zones elsewhere, and the **reduction in unemployment rates**. It tells of the **establishment of a joint council for economic cooperation** between them, and of the deregulation of the exchange of all commodities traded between them, the annulment of all negative lists, the deregulation of the movement of labor between them exempting the workers from the requirements of visas and residence permits.

Concerning the natural resources, the government engages itself, in the process of **improving the investment climate in mineral resources, in reforming the legal framework that regulates the exploitation of natural resources**, and amends the laws pertinent to some establishments concerned with natural resources. The scenario shows an **alliance developing between the Phosphate and Potash companies** and the establishment of **advanced chemical industries**.

On the social front, the scenario shows continuity of **unemployment, the widening of the poverty circles, juvenile delinquency, and crime**, but shows support for organizations of civil society and the enactment of **the child protection law**.

In the education sector, this scenario sees the **connection of major schools with the national communications network, and teaching computers** as a basic course in the secondary education cycle. The government starts to reform and **modernize the university education system**, and freedom is given to the establishment of private universities. **Government subsidy to state universities is lifted**, and, in its stead, a fund for the support of needy university students is established. A **Ministry of Human Resources is constituted**, and the programs of the Vocational Training Corporation are privatized.

The wide participation by all segments of society, considered an important pillar of this project, gave it a special attractive color; the feed back from every seminar was an important tributary that contributed to the enrichment of this project and to the enhancement of its chances of success.

Jordan Centre for Public Policy Research and Dialogue" was established in 2004.

The Objective of the centre is to enhance the participation of civic society in matters of public nature through conducting scientific analysis on issues and policies of concern.

The demand on the project documents by government institutions, universities, research centers, and individuals was high. HCST staff was also invited by all concerned institutions

to give lectures on the scenarios and their outcomes. The College of Defense included the scenarios in its curriculum.

Sources and References

- The '**Jordan Human Development Report 2000**' by the United Nations Development Programme, UNDP and the Ministry of Planning, Jordan.

- Dr. Khaled El Shraydeh, Director of the Higher Council for Science and Technology.

About the EFMN: Policy Professionals dealing with RTD, Innovation and Economic Development increasingly recognize a need to base decisions on broadly based participative processes of deliberation and consultation with stakeholders. One of the most important tools they apply is FORESIGHT. The EFMN or European Foresight Monitoring Network supports policy professionals by monitoring and analyzing Foresight activities in the European Union, its neighbours and the world. The EFMN helps those involved in policy development to stay up to date on current practice in Foresight. It helps them to tap into a network of know-how and experience on issues related to the day to day design, management and execution of Foresight and Foresight related processes.