

AUC Press: What book(s) are you currently reading?

I just finished a biography in French of Czar Nicholas II—an amazing period in Russian history—and I am reading *Heureu Comme Dieu en France* by Marc Dugain, a novel about the French Resistance, plus Alaa Al Aswany's *Nadi al-sayyarat* (The Automobile Club) in English translation. (I had started it in Arabic, but I am too slow a reader!)

AUC Press: What is it about your field of expertise that really fascinates you?

Cities in developing countries, especially their spatial expansion and metamorphoses, and the oftentimes ridiculous juxtaposition between the filthy rich, the 'middle classes,' and everyone else.

AUC Press: How much time goes into research before you sit down to write a book?

I first do a lot of reading on the subject, and then once I have an outline I do a round of research for each chapter or subject. Then I begin writing, and I usually find I need to do more fine-grained research to support my arguments. My own past experiences and related material are also sources of information.

AUC Press: What were some of the biggest challenges you faced while writing your books?

Trying to get useful facts about a subject and a balanced range of opinions. The internet is a very useful tool, but one needs to be very careful about selecting what pops up on Google.

AUC Press: If you were writing your autobiography, what would the title be?

I haven't thought of one, simply because I hardly think anyone would want to read the story of my life.

AUC Press: What advice would you give to somebody starting in your field?

Really, I can't think of useful advice.

AUC Press: What book would you have liked to have written and why?

I'm still producing books, so I hope to have time to eventually write pretty much all that pleases me. But then, more subjects always come up.