

Palestinian Sociology: Divergent Practices and Approaches

Abaher El Sakka

Introduction

This article aims to examine the practices and perceptions of Palestinian sociologists in an attempt to historicize the social sciences in Palestine and to clarify divergent visions and positions both normatively and epistemologically. For methodological reasons, this article is devoted to knowledge production in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) of 1967 (the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Jerusalem), and does not cover the Palestinian diaspora. The evidence shows that there are differences in perceptions and approaches among members of the Palestinian scientific community regarding conceptual issues, a fact that reflects the diversity of cognitive tendencies and visions on one hand, and the effect of globalized international scientific groups on the other. In addition, there is a clear desire on the part of the Palestinian scientific community to be engaged with the global academy. The last part of the paper explores the question of epistemic commitment versus social commitment.

There are a number of reasons for this, among which are:

- First, the centralization of knowledge production, and its legitimacy in the Global North, with the associated funding policies related to the fields of knowledge sanctioned by the North American and European center, and its effect on research funding abroad. This has generated a societal debate on funding concerning its terms and constraints.
- Second, the impact of post-colonial and subaltern studies and the 'authenticity' discourse on the need to produce local knowledge with the aim of escaping from the grip of Eurocentrism.
- Third, the role of sociological knowledge production in a colonized society that entails the imagined roles of sociologists between the epistemology of commitment to the colonized society, and a 'universalist' scholarly discourse that equalizes and remolds knowledge to become similar, regardless of multiple and different contexts.

The above-mentioned issues reflect the debates in Palestine concerning language utilization, questions of authenticity and modernity, the local and the universal, and the terms of knowledge production and different approaches among Marxists, modernists, postmodernists and Islamists.

This paper will also examine the different approaches adopted by four distinct epistemic communities and approaches. Needless to say, this does not entail an emergence of epistemic trends as much as mapping out new approaches that rethink social sciences already present in the Arab countries and Global South for more than three decades. These are:

- a. Defenders of knowledge production derived from the Arab–Islamic cultural heritage
- b. Advocates for the legacy of the Third World and the Global South and its appropriateness to knowledge production in Palestine
- c. Intellectual tendencies that consider that the knowledge produced by Palestinians should pass through and be legitimated by knowledge producers in dominant countries, to ensure passage for Palestinian sociologists to achieve cognitive visibility at the level of international scientific groups so as to overcome localism and isolation
- d. Tendencies that defend culturalist–folkloric approaches
- e. Post-colonial trends, subaltern studies.

Context

Since the beginnings of the nineteenth century, education while under occupation has been of a supreme importance for the Palestinians. It has been perceived as a vehicle for development and progress, and as a tool to create and subvert socio-economical hierarchies and social change (Abu-Lughod, 1973: 94).

Higher education has been perceived as, and has actually been, an avenue of social mobility for sons and daughters of peasants, refugees, and the urban middle and lower classes in Palestinian society. In this sense, graduates of local universities constitute a significant segment of the growing middle strata in Palestinian society, especially in the period after the establishment of the Palestinian Authority and the expansion of employment opportunities in the growing public and private sectors. (Taraki, 1980: 18)

However, as early as the 1970s, there has been a plethora of writings on the epistemological gap between the Palestinians and the Israelis (Zahlan, 1972: 17–36). Asserting the fact that Palestinians are among the most educated people within the Arab world, several studies show that education

represented a 'compensation loop' for the loss of their socio-economic base in which land played a central role. The most recent statistics by the Ministry of Higher Education for the year 2016–2017 show that there are around 49 institutions of higher education as follows: 14 regular universities; 1 open university (Al-Quds Open University); 16 community colleges; and 18 professional community colleges. Geographically, these institutions are distributed as follows: 33 institutions in the West Bank and 15 in the Gaza Strip. Administratively, 12 institutions are fully governmental; 16 are independent financially and administratively, yet abide by governmental regulations; and 17 are public universities such as Birzeit University in Ramallah, Al-Najah National University in Nablus, and Bethlehem University in Bethlehem.

All of these institutions, public and private, formerly were financially dependent on funds provided by the PLO, until the Palestinian Authority took over in 1994. Currently, most of these institutions suffer financial crises due to the weak finances of the Palestinian Authority itself, the difficulties in collecting students' tuition fees, as well as the constraints imposed by the political and 'security' restrictions regarding raising funds and soliciting resources at the local, regional, and international levels. This chronic crisis has been causing internal upheavals among university students and faculty. These have rarely been addressed in a radical manner, due to the financial dependence on loans obtained from either local or regional parties, be it from the public or private sectors. It is worth noting that the average monthly salary for a full-time professor (regardless of rank) is 2000–3000 USD, while the average tuition fees per year for an undergraduate student (regardless of their major) is 1000 USD, and 1500 USD for graduate students. As for the gender ratio, statistics show that the total number of Palestinian students in higher education institutions is 210,888 students, among whom 133,000 (62%) are enrolled in public institutions, 26% in open universities, and 12% in professional community colleges. Excluding the majors of law and engineering, females usually outnumber males in the student body. The statistics of female faculty, however, show a different reality, for only 1858 of 8146 are females. Higher education students represent about 4% of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, excluding those who study abroad, Palestinians in the diasporas, Palestinians in Jerusalem, and Palestinians of the occupied Palestine of 1948 (Israel). While most of the Palestinian higher education institutions have BA and MA programs in humanities, social and applied sciences, just a few have embarked on PhD programs in the last few years.

Regarding the academic training and background of the faculty, it is worth noting that while some were educated in Palestinian and Arab universities, others graduated from Anglophone and Francophone universities.

Socials Sciences in Palestine

Unlike the situation in other Arab countries, the social sciences in Palestine did not emerge in colonial institutions, but rather emerged with an aspiration to be anti-colonial. This is quite different from the cases of Egypt, Morocco and Algeria, in that Palestinian universities and research institutions were not led by Western schools of thought and epistemic trends that are colonially oriented (i.e. aiming at producing social, anthropological and ethnographic research on the indigenous people). In post-independence Arab countries, universities and research institutions were created and then nationalized, or at the best were complemented by alternative knowledge.

The social sciences in Palestinian universities are newer than those in other Arab countries. They were created after the Israeli war in 1967, making this area the Occupied Palestinian Territories of 1967 (OPT). This situation has pushed the social sciences to produce, or at least claim to produce, anti-colonial knowledge, that is, a knowledge that is institutionally independent from that of the colonial Israeli circles. Among the aims of such a knowledge has been documenting Palestinian societal issues, and researching them outside the colonial cloak, thus negating and resisting colonialism. While we are most certain that such a knowledge was indigenous par excellence, it was not quite original in the sense of being independent from the Eurocentric matrix of theories, methods and tools. Given this, Palestinian knowledge is similar to its peers in the Arab countries and Global South in its 'obsession' with producing knowledge that is in harmony with and relevant to local concerns.

It is clear, then, that Palestinian knowledge fulfills what Khatibi (1975: 13–26) declared as the mission and the obsession of sociology in the Moroccan context: 'to deconstruct concepts that emerged in the theorizations and discourses of those who studied the Arab region coming from a Western background; and to criticize sociological knowledge and discourse on the Arab region that are produced by the Arabs themselves.'

Since the social sciences in Palestine, as with their peers in the Arab countries, are preoccupied with the triple concern – authenticity, originality, and indigeneity – in addition to the legitimacy of the production process itself in relation to the Arab–Islamic tradition, these sciences are

still imprisoned within questions of ‘liberation’, ‘emancipation’ and ‘alternativity’. These debates are best described by Anouar Abdel-Malek (1972: 42): ‘how could we strike a balance between the epistemic matrix and researched reality?’ How are we to be liberated? From whom? And what is the relationship between the epistemic liberation and the national one? For the Palestinians, this meant asking how to make the social sciences appropriate to their colonial context; how to produce knowledge that can create social mechanisms that are capable of preserving the Palestinian heritage of the dispossessed society; how to utilize oral history to narrate the Palestinian history of the post-Nakba period; and finally, how to protect the Palestinian national identity through building collective institutions that are capable of achieving the mission of steadfastness, resilience, and overcoming colonial occupation.

Since its early phase, the Palestinian social science community imagined itself as one of resistance, which would bring about liberating discourse as a means to heal the people after military defeat. This, for example, recalls the French attempt to overcome defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1871 by establishing The Paris Institute of Political Studies in 1872.

The Nature of Knowledge Controversy

If we want to map out the varied approaches across those who work in the social sciences in Palestine, they could be classified into five categories:

1. Those who defend the knowledge production that originates from an Arab–Islamic cultural heritage
2. Those who advocate for the knowledge that is produced within the Global South, arguing for its relevance to the Palestinian context
3. Those who advocate the notion of universal knowledge that is predominately produced by hegemonic countries, aiming at claiming some agency, position and recognition within the academic circles in the West to overcome the conditions of neglect and marginalization
4. Those who privilege local knowledge, premised on the originality of folklore, dialects, and pop culture
5. Those who try to simulate post-colonial studies, subaltern studies and the like in an attempt to ‘find’ an alternative knowledge.

Of course, all those are divided into three streams professionally:

1. Those in the teaching profession (Hammami and Tamari, 1997: 275–279) who are totally immersed in pedagogical issues in poorly infrastructured universities

2. Those who are fully fledged researchers who are in the 'business' of research consultancy and limited social interventions that are targeted towards schools, consultancy institutions, and less so in research centers
3. Those who combine teaching and researching with whatever resources are available. Still, the three streams are constrained by the almost complete absence of qualified research institutions, and the scarcity of sufficient research budgets in the universities.

It is true that the five approaches are different in terms of their politics; however, they all share the belief that the most significant crisis resides in questioning the methodologies through which indigenous knowledge could study Palestinian social issues, and the tools that should be used. What should be done with the outcome of this knowledge? What is the political responsibility of the researcher in a colonized context? How does one strike a balance between the epistemic matrix and researched reality? How can we break free from the hegemonic Eurocentric knowledge? How are we to achieve liberation from our 'own' heavy tradition and our conventional institutions? How can the Kholdounian sociology be linked with the western one? In addition to all this, there are still methodological controversies regarding 'localizing' and 'nationalizing' sciences to suit indigenous concerns, with a great deal of concern about the language used, be it Arabic, English, French, etc. This, of course, has to do with our concern mentioned above regarding international recognition.

The status of social knowledge still suffers a sort of 'social inferiority' in Palestine (as in other countries), given the dominance of natural and applied sciences on the academic scene. However, this 'inferiority' becomes more lethal when it comes to the academic hierarchy in Palestinian universities, in particular when it comes to the process of promoting and tenuring professors. In such cases, social scientists stand little to no chance in the face of the 'giants' of natural and applied sciences who usually occupy, literally, the highest ranks and positions in the universities. Given this, another lethal side-effect of the fragile status of the social sciences is that they are conceived of as an 'intellectual luxury' that does not, normally, solve or fit the needs of the 'market' and the 'society' in a context in which almost every sort of knowledge is commodified.

While these 'beliefs' are transmitted from the academic circles to pedestrian milieus, the social sciences suffer further inferiority and irrelevance. Still, social scientists who are 'not local', that is, 'foreign experts', are received and perceived in a more respectful manner, and their knowledge is valued as such in the Palestinian society. The culmination

of these dangers is, of course, political intervention where researchers are required to show great concern when it comes to ‘sensitive’ matters that may provoke society. In this context, Palestine is no exception. Social scientists may be targeted by politicians, as in Japan, where the Minister of Education shut down 26 departments of social sciences in Japanese universities in 2015. Also, the right-wing French prime minister carried out an unprecedented attack on one of the sociological principles, that is ‘to explain is to be apologetic’, which triggered a huge controversy afterwards in France (Lahire, 2016).¹

The Anti-colonial Struggle and the Epistemic Commitment

Since its conception, the Palestinian social science community viewed itself as a crucial part of the Palestinian national movement, on the levels of both intellectualism and action. As a result, the members of this community (as well as their students) were targeted by the Israeli occupation forces by house arrest, imprisonment, exile, denial of entry to Palestine, and assassinations. As for the universities themselves, they were targeted by raids, harassment, and long periods of total closure that lasted for four years in the case of Birzeit University. In response, the universities became centers of resistance; venues to produce knowledge, foster national identity, and contribute to the national movement. Thus, academics imagined themselves to be ‘organic intellectuals’ in the Gramscian sense. The violent clashes triggered by the Israeli occupation forces led to the destruction of the infrastructure, the interruption of the education process, and the death of students and professors throughout the struggle from as early as 1967. Considering these breaches of academic freedom and violations against the academic institutions and academics themselves, it is unsurprising that the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement was conceived at Birzeit University as early as 2004. Since the commencement of the current academic year (2017–2018), scores of foreign passport holders, many of Palestinian origin but without residence documents, living and working in the occupied Palestinian territory have been denied entry into the country, or have had their visa renewal applications refused by the Israeli authorities. At Birzeit University alone, requests for visa renewals for 15 foreign-passport-holding faculty members have been refused or significantly delayed, so many professors have been forced to leave the country.²

Internally, however, the campuses of Palestinian universities witnessed intellectual and political battles between the diverse players from across

the intellectual and political spectra of Palestine. These battles were real in certain cases, where violent clashes occurred between the 'Islamists' and the 'nationalists' at Birzeit University of Ramallah, Al-Najah University of Nablus, and Al-Azhar University of Gaza. This violence has been escalating since the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in 1994, with the security apparatus of the authority playing a 'nasty' role in these battles – that is students, professors, and administrators were targeted by political imprisonment based on their political affiliation and activism. However, there is another face to this involvement of the national authority in post-colonial Palestinian higher education: many academics and students 'joined the forces' of the newly established Palestinian Authority, in ministries, institutions, and even in the security apparatus. Hence, academics in this context used, misused, and even abused knowledge as a mechanism of power in the hands of the authority, in the Foucauldian sense (Foucault, 1976).

Dynamic Epistemic Themes within Ever-changing Context

If we investigate the epistemic themes dealt with by Palestinian social sciences according to changing contexts, we find out that they include: collective memory; narrative of the Nakba of 1948; the Palestinian diaspora; traditional structures; class struggles; the obsession with the duality of struggle between the national and the communal; the Marxist paradigms of subordination and class; peasant society, modernity and colonialism; self-dependency, and socio-economic changes. Many sociologists are sensitive to dependency, social classes and colonial exploitation (Tamari, 1980), and certain ones are obsessed with quantitative studies, such as Hammami and Tamari (1997: 275–279), while others focus on poverty studies (Hanafi, 2009: 6). In addition, the most visited topics are identity issues in their relationship with cultural heritage, land, oral history, and ethnographies, as well as the intellectual debates between Islam, Marxism, and other theoretical trends. In the post-Oslo era (1993 until present) the social research discourse has changed based on the political shifts in the national discourse and the international discourse fostered through the NGO industry in Palestine. Here, the concepts of democratic transition, election, funding, development, conflict resolution, institutional engineering, transparency, corruption, governmentality and good governance, women and youth empowerment, political economy of almost everything, and of course the construction of 'state bodies', become the centric

themes (Romani, 2012). These topics have undergone transformations in the donor agenda through three processes (Hanafi and Tabar, 2005). This transformation in topic dictated a new grammar and agendas within social research that are based on the demands of the 'foreign funders'. The Palestinian sociological agenda has privileged the paradigm of identity and analysis based on a nation-state framework.

Many debates, therefore, in the Palestinian territory end up being parochial, with old debates being reformulated in terms of exceptionalism, specificity and particularism of its society. Nationalist concerns allow social science agendas and methods to reconstruct a mythology of uniqueness. (Hanafi, 1999)

In a different vein, some scholars are preoccupied with fighting against exceptionalism, yet they acknowledge a certain kind of Palestinian uniqueness (Oudetallah, 2012). The same applies to other debates on the state of exception in the context of studying martyrdom, (such as Al-Nashif, 2011: 93–95). Oudetallah describes this relationship between social sciences and colonialism as 'Palestinian social knowledge as colonial knowledge'. These arguments resonate with Fasheh's notion of 'colonizing mind' (Fasheh, 1996).

As a result, postgraduate education became a machine that produces and reproduces a new intellectual community to administer and work with the new apparatus of the 'authority' that is more than an autonomy and less than a state. Here, English language, and the 'skills of the twenty-first century' became increasingly dominant, and free-market politics invaded Palestinian research centers and universities. In this case, debates over language are mentioned by Bamyeh in the same context also in Arab universities (Bamyeh, 2015: 7).

Such a reality contributed to the creation of new epistemic 'passions' for new academics affiliated with new research centers that import new theoretical and applied frameworks. Hence, the relationship between the 'new subjects' became gradually problematic within a highly competitive milieu that produced all sorts of alienation with the society, academic canons, and epistemic biases. This, of course, has also been present in the job market, and in knowledge production.

Khaled Oudetallah, for example, believes that the local departments of sociology and anthropology build their textbooks (theories and methods) on founding dichotomies in colonial modernity, namely the dichotomies of: modernity/tradition, myth/science, progress/reactionism, community/society,

subjectivity/bias, global/local, being guilt ridden/being ashamed, and public/intimate. These dichotomies, according to Oudetallah, seem to have been employed without questioning or qualifying in any critical sense that would enable a reasonable critique on their colonial foundations that served as a colonial matrix of domination (Oudetallah, 2012). Others, however, believe that the dramatic changes on the ground undermine such a desired criticism in regard to the methodological aspects that have to do with fieldwork (El Malki, 2011: 163).

In addition, there has been a dominant trend of folklore studies that found much currency as early as the 1970s, which pushed some scholars away from using mainstream journals hosting folklore research in the realm of Palestinian social sciences (Yehia, 2013: 72). Moreover, Tamari asserts that there is a gap between the ‘banality’ of popular imagination on the one hand, and the topics, grammar and jargon of the Palestinian informed academics, on the other hand (Yehia, 2013: 73). One more complexity in this context is the overlap between political and academic agendas that gave fertile soil to malicious accusations against scholars who are often deemed to be ‘agents’ of foreign players, and hence conduct their research in a ‘hostile milieu’, to use El Malki’s terminology (El Malki, 2011: 161–162). The accumulation of all these factors contributed to a growing tendency towards quantitative research that seems more ‘politically correct’, whatever that means. The Palestinian sociological agenda has privileged the paradigm of identity and analysis based on a nation-state framework. Many debates, therefore, in the Palestinian territory end up being parochial, with old debates being reformulated in terms of exceptionalism, specificity and particularism of its society. Nationalist concerns allow social science agendas and methods to reconstruct a mythology of uniqueness (Hanafi, 1999).

Social Commitment: Rules of Dis/Engagement

In the light of the above discussion, Palestinian knowledge production became Orientalized and colonized, with colonized researchers and native informants in all fields. The core of the struggle between the national movement and Israel was almost entirely marginalized. Knowledge production has not only been tamed and silenced by the transforming agendas, but it also became standardized to fit the requirements of publication and recognition from the leading institutions and venues in the Western world. These transformations, I argue, deformed the indigenous production of

knowledge to fit the political agendas of the Palestinian Authority and the ‘corrupted’ civil society. Israeli colonialism since 1948, and the core issues of the Palestinian cause, have been reduced to ‘the suffering of the Palestinians under the illegal Israeli occupation’. This reality, of course, led to a mass production of the notions of ‘exceptionalism’ of the Palestinian reality that defies in most cases the mere possibility of comparison with other colonial conditions throughout the world.

In the aftermath of the unprecedented turmoil which erupted in Arab countries in 2011, intimidated diagnoses by intimidated academics in the Palestinian academic circles, involving conceptual and methodological tools regarding Arab societies, also occurred, sparking a multi-layered controversy. These ‘calls’ by Palestinian social scientists, critics, and historians enabled some thoughtful accounts regarding the ‘compatibility’ of the conventional Marxist framings with Arab milieus (El Sakka, 2014; El Sakka et al., 2015).

Within such a milieu in which the political field has the upper hand over the academic field, there has been a recent tendency by some academics to employ political terminology, grammar, and even rhetoric, to diagnose the Palestinian condition and the Israeli settler colonial regime in a gentle manner that differs drastically from the way it was described in the formative years of the struggle against the Zionist movement and the settler colonial state of Israel. Until the late 1950s, the European colonial regimes (i.e. Britain, France, and Italy) were described as colonial rules. However, the current use of ‘occupation’ became dominant in Palestine at the advance of the Oslo Accords of 1993 and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in 1994. While the Arab states gained their relative independence from the colonial powers (and started their nation-building process following the footsteps of their former colonizers after the Second World War), Palestine, still under the brutal Zionist settler colonial regime, started importing the ‘independence’ discourse, which is obviously premature, as there is no independence whatsoever in any part of historic Palestine. It is worth noting that in this highly politicized terrain, in which one risks falling into the traps of the so-called ‘colonized knowledge’, Palestinian scholars have to fight for their academic and intellectual integrity and legitimacy on several levels. First, Palestinian scholars have to maintain their ‘epistemic novelty’, so to speak, acquired by their ‘indigeneity’, a term coined by Rana Barakat (2017), in the face of a number of ‘Palestine scholars’ who often have different agendas, be they Westernized, Orientalized, or even colonized. It is quite ironic that ‘Palestine scholars’

seem to be more 'privileged' when it comes to 'trustworthiness' by locals, given the 'sensitive nature' of certain topics that seem to be 'classified' for Palestinian scholars: funding, access to research materials, and freedom of movement. Second, Palestinian scholars seem to be obligated to ever 'reveal' the intentions of their research, and to 'prove' themselves scientific and objective, whatever that means. Third, Palestinian scholars are not immune to political targeting and harassment even in their 'national academic institutions', for there have been several cases of breach of academic freedom on political, religious, and often social bases. Such harassment seems to have affected the 'boundaries' that social scientists cross in posing their critical questions even in the most 'academic' and 'scientific' modes, given the rise of religious discourse.

In spite of the abovementioned struggle by Palestinian scholars, the post-colonial terminology (that is, state building, the rule of law, etc.) started permeating the Palestinian discourse without any historical evidence that the Israeli 'occupation', not to mention the Zionist 'colonialism', had come to an end. Facing this linguistic contortion in describing the political reality of Palestine, nascent trials in the fields of humanities and social sciences are at work currently in Palestine. Several scholars, academics and intellectuals are engaged today in re-diagnosing the Palestinian condition using new and more 'indigenous' grammar that calls for a redefining of the national condition 'from below', giving voice to the Palestinians whose agendas are not informed by the West or its local 'mediators'. In the enhanced diagnosis, albeit still intimidated by the dominant actors, new vocabulary, themes, and theoretical constructs (i.e. apartheid, indigeneity, subalternism, settler colonialism, sociocide, spaciocide, politicicide, etc.) started to emerge in studies of Palestine and Palestinian society.

Among these 'trials' one should point out the effort of Al-Shaikh in providing insightful, albeit harsh, criticism on the politics, practice, and textbooks in the post-Oslo Palestinian educational system, be it in schools or universities. The core of his critique is inspired by his belief that education that does not contribute to liberation and fighting colonial injustice in Palestine is no education – that is, intellectualism in social sciences should inspire and be inspired by intellectual action. His theorizations are married to devising university free-elective courses, and revision of mandatory ones in general education that would bridge the gap caused by the post-Oslo school education (Al-Shaikh, 2008, 2017). Moreover, Shihade contributes to this argument in a rather complementary manner by advocating

the relatively 'new' calls upon 'epistemic disobedience' that indigenous scholars should firmly practice by employing Arab sources in theory, be it by Palestinians or others. Reading Ibn Khaldoun is a prominent example Shihade suggests as a starting point (Shihade, 2017: 79–93).

The Impact of Globalization

Following the footsteps of their trans-national and international peers, Palestinian universities are taking to heart the ranking indicators of the world universities (US News and World Report, Shanghai-Ranking Academic, Ranking of World Universities, etc.). In Palestine, the higher education institutes' administrations eagerly await the annual results of the various university ranking organizations. They then publish these results, and even follow up with press releases and public relations campaigns, where they compare themselves favorably with their peers. They even go further by upgrading their websites, employment policies, research agendas, and funding to meet the 'international' requirements of a 'high-ranking university'. Unfortunately, as many as these 'ranking engines' are controversial in their home countries when it comes to humanities and social sciences, the Palestinian universities suffer the consequences of this trap at the expense of producing indigenous knowledge. There is no doubt that such a new desire to become among the good universities has imposed yet more new research agendas and knowledge production obstacles with new standards on the already struggling academic communities due to the political conditions in Palestine.

This includes the intervention of the private sector, the Ministry of Education, and other parties, each with their own agenda, in the inputs and outputs of the academic programs. In the final outcome, this 'global lure' has caused great harm not only to knowledge and knowledge production, but to the diagnosis of the Palestinian situation, which has become understood as anything but a case of settler-colonialism.

As a result, there has been an inflation not only in the number of new academic institutions, but also in the number of academic programs and students. At the same time, there has been a shrinkage in the so-called employment market, especially for the graduates of humanities and social sciences. Moreover, the academic programs have become increasingly shaped by international standards dictated by the World Bank. This has affected knowledge production and its relationship with the needs of Palestinian society.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper asserts that there is heated controversy throughout social research circles regarding the nature and the role of knowledge production within the settler-colonial context in Palestine. This assertion does not claim that this controversy bred full-fledged epistemic trends; there are indeed variations related to identity of scholars and their perception of their social roles. The same applies, of course, to the role of Palestinian universities, and their international stature, given all the said complexities. In spite of the fact that the great majority of Palestinian social scientists are stuck in this horrible machine of ‘taming’ a lethal colonial condition, post-colonial reality in Palestine is a clear case of the Deluzian notion of ‘nomadism’. The movement described earlier by ‘disobedient’ scholars seems to be not towards liberation and freedom, but rather towards securing a place in which one could obtain recognition, and claim a ‘place’ under an occupied sun.

Notes

1 On 25 November 2015, Manuel Valse, the former French Prime Minister, commented on the bombers at the French National Parliament: ‘I am fed up with those who seek cultural and sociological explanations of what happened.’ Afterwards, much ink has spelt against his statement.

2 www.birzeit.edu/en/news/birzeit-university-condemns-breach-academic-freedom-after-academics-forced-leave-palestine

References

- Abdel-Malek, A. 1972. L’avenir de la théorie sociale. In A. Abdel-Malek, *Les dialectiques sociaux*. Paris: Seuil, pp. 41–59.
- Abu Lughod, I. 1973. Educating a community in exile: The Palestinian experience. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 2(3): 94–111.
- Al-Nashif, E. 2011. The silence of phenomena: Approximating the question of method. In R. Heacock and E. Conte (eds), *Critical Research in the Social Sciences: A Transdisciplinary East-West Handbook*. Birzeit University, pp. 75–100 (in Arabic).
- Al-Shaikh, A-R. (ed.). 2008. *Palestinian Curriculum: Issues of Identity and Citizenship*. Ramallah: MUWATIN – The Palestinian Institute for the Study of Democracy (in Arabic).
- Al-Shaikh, A-R. 2017. Palestine: The identity and the cause – the university and rebuilding of the Palestinian national narrative. In K. Shahin, *Re-Building the Palestinian National Project*. Ramallah: MASARAT – The Palestinian Center for Research and Strategic Studies, pp.157–174 (in Arabic).

- Bamyeh, M. 2015. *Social Sciences in the Arab World: Forms of Presence*, first Report by the Arab Social Science Monitor. Available at: www.theacss.org/uploads/English-ASSR-2016.pdf (accessed 22 October 2018).
- Barakat, R. 2017. Writing/righting Palestine studies: Settler colonialism, indigenous sovereignty and resisting the ghost(s) of history. *Settler Colonial Studies*, 8(3): 349–363. Available at: www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/2201473X.2017.1300048 (accessed 22 October 2018).
- El Malki, M. 2011. Researching in an unsuitable environment: The Palestinian case. In R. Heacock and E. Conte (eds), *Critical Research in the Social Sciences: A Transdisciplinary East-West Handbook*. Birzeit University, pp. 159–179 (in Arabic).
- El Sakka, A. 2014. *The Influence of 'Arab Springs'*. Masarat: The Palestinian Center for Research and Strategic Studies, Ramallah (in Arabic).
- El Sakka, A., Aude, S. and Myriam, C. 2015. Entretien avec Abaher El Sakka; Palestine: les chantiers de recherches en sciences sociales sur les révolutions arabes. *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* [Online], 138. Available at: <http://journals.openedition.org/remmm/9285> (accessed 28 February 2020).
- Fasheh, M. 1996. *The Main Challenges: Ending the Occupation of Our Minds; The Main Means: Building Learning Environments and Re-contextual Knowledge*. In *PDME III*. Norway: Maskew Miller, pp. 3–26.
- Foucault, M. 1976. *La volonté du Savoir*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Hammani, R. and Tamari, S. 1997. Populist paradigms: Palestinian sociology. *Contemporary Sociology*, 26(3): 275–279.
- Hanafi, S. 1999. The Image of Others, between Arabic and French Agendas, In Seteney Shamy & Linda Herrera (eds.), *Social Science in Egypt: Emerging Voices*. Cairo: AUC, pp. 34–56.
- Hanafi, S. 2009. Palestinian sociological production: Funding and national considerations. In S. Patel (ed.), *ISA Handbook of Diverse Sociological Traditions*. London: SAGE, pp. 257–266.
- Hanafi, S. and Tabar, L. 2005. *Donors, International Organizations, Local NGOs. Emergence of the Palestinian Globalized Elite*. Ramallah: Muwatin and Institute of Jerusalem Studies.
- Khatibi, A. 1975. Sociologie du monde arabe. *Position, BESM*, 126(1): 13–26.
- Lahire, B. 2016. *Pour la sociologie. Et pour en finir avec une prétendue 'culture de l'excuse'*. Paris: La Découverte.
- Oudetallah, K. 2012. Palestinian social knowledge as a colonial knowledge. *qadita.net*, 4 June. Available at: www.qadita.net/featured/khaled-3/ (accessed 22 October 2018) (in Arabic).
- Romani, V. 2012. Sciences sociales entre nationalisme et mondialisation, Le cas des Territoires occupés palestiniens. *Sociétés contemporaines*, 2(78).
- Shihade, M. 2017. Education and decolonization: On not reading Ibn Khaldun in Palestine. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 6(1): 79–93.
- Tamari, S. 1980. The Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza: The sociology of dependency. In K. Nakhleh and E. Zureik (eds), *The Sociology of the Palestinians*. Duke: University Press/ London: Croom Helm, p. 238.
- Taraki, L. 1980. Higher education, resistance, and state building. *International Higher Education*, 18.

- Yehia, A, A. 2013. Contribution to the critique of the Arab preoccupation with the 'knowledge/ ideology' dualism: The Palestinian case as an example. Master's thesis in sociology, Birzeit university. (in Arabic).
- Zahlan, A. 1972. The science and technology gap in the Arab-Israeli conflict. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 8(3): 17–36.

Copyright protected