

*The Politics of Knowledge Production and Circulation in the
occupied Palestinian territory (oPt)*

**Aid Creates Knowledge: ‘Significant’ International
Expertise Vs. ‘Trivial’ Local and Diaspora Expertise
for ‘Local’ Knowledge Production in Palestine**

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Introduction, Objectives and Motivation

- Who really produce knowledge in the oPt? Why the international experts and donors' opinion matters more?
- What is the impact of aid dependency status on the politics of knowledge production in the oPt?
- Why the Palestinian expatriates and Diaspora have a limited, fragmented and unsustainable role?
- How do the Arab regional context and the particularity of the Palestinian case affect the politics of knowledge production in the oPt?
- And, What are the 'political' dynamics of knowledge production in the oPt, and how they can be framed?

Conceptual and Contextual Framework: Knowledge Production Environment in the Arab World

- Defining Knowledge? Popular vs. Erudite knowledge.
- ‘Knowledge’ as the one devoted to make a change in the people’s life, i.e. a research-based knowledge.
- The regional Arab context:
 - ‘Serious’ structural deficiencies and inherent-like obstacles that dis-allow Arabs to catch-up with modernity.
 - Absence of ‘freedoms’.
 - Traditional ‘banker’ educational system.
 - ‘Filtering’ mechanisms and culture.
 - Failure of the Arab knowledge market.
 - Dilemmas of Arab development are epistemological in essence.

Knowledge Production Status in the oPt: Capacities, Obstacles and Challenges

- ‘Nothing is wrong with the genes; it has to do with the surrounding environment’.
- ‘Occupation, wars, and internal conflicts have an overwhelmingly disruptive influence on the knowledge society’.
- Knowledge production in Palestine and its politics needs to be understood as the ‘academia of the colonized’.
- The occupation and the dream to acquire freedom urge Palestinians to deal with the colonial condition as a trigger, but never as a catalyst, to knowledge production.
- Research output in the oPt is limited in volume, relatively poor in quality, lacks a clear direction, and is far away from originality and creativity.

Knowledge Production Status in the oPt...Contd

- ‘We don’t produce knowledge. We import and nationalize it’.
- The socio-economic and political realms are not supportive to the acquisition, creation and production of knowledge.
- The NGOs leading role in knowledge production, i.e. the ‘dilemma of producing research outside universities’.
- The quantitative aspect and information is ‘patchy’ at best.

Table. 1: Country Comparisons of few research-based knowledge indicators

Country	Palestine	Jordan	Lebanon	Egypt	Israel
Total population (000)	4017	5924	4099	75498	6928
Researchers per million inhabitants (FTE)	250	1952	NA	617	6784
Expenditure on R&D as a % of GDP	0.09	0.34	NA	0.23	4.74
Pupil / teacher ratio (primary)	30	20	14	27	13
Total Book production	114	NA	289	1410	1969
GDP per capita (PPP) \$	2900	4628	9741	4953	24097

Five-Dimensional Framework: Politics of Knowledge Production in the oPt

- ‘It is donor-driven knowledge production to great extent. They decide what to support and what not to support’.
- ‘The best way to improve the politics of knowledge is to recombine ‘know-what’ and ‘know-how’ in a variety of ways which challenge existing institutions and approaches’.
- The politics of knowledge production in the oPt need to be understood through three inter-related cuts: donor’s knowledge, Diaspora's knowledge, and local’s knowledge.
- Thus, five aspects can be addressed which frame the understanding of the knowledge production politics in the oPt:

Politics of Financing and Int’l Aid Agenda

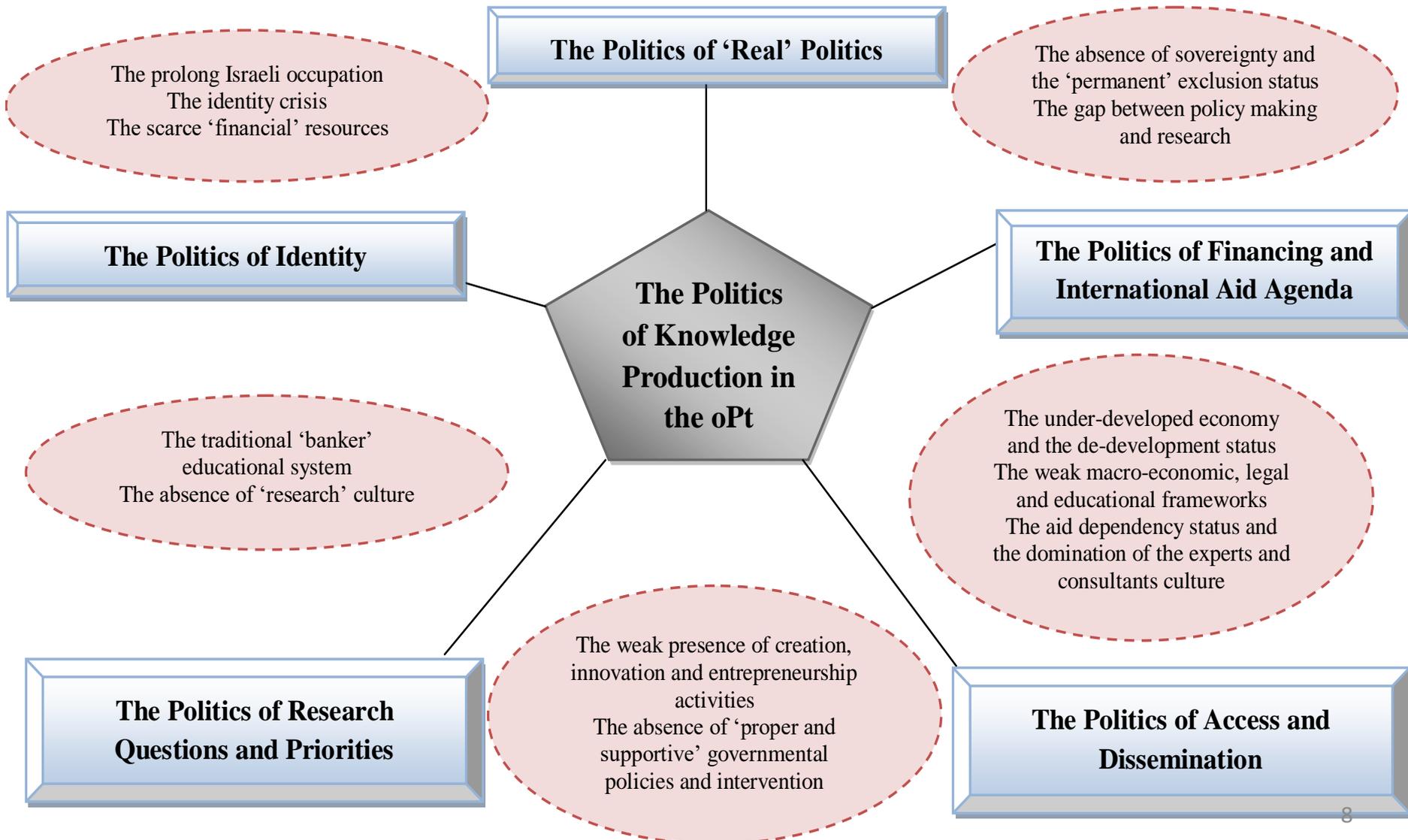
Politics of ‘Real’ Politics

Politics of identity

Politics of Research Questions/Priorities

Politics of Access and Dissemination

A Five-Dimensional Framework for Politics of Knowledge Production



Five-Dimensional Framework: Politics of Knowledge Production in the oPt

- In relation to *the Politics of Financing and International Aid Agenda*:
 - Without external financial assistance, it is likely there would be no research conducted within the oPt.
 - Two areas of concern: research that responds to international demand rather than PNA and national priorities; and donors investment in external research capacity.
- In relation to *the Politics of Identity*:
 - The implications of the identity crisis is represented in alienation, brain drain, and factiousness.
 - TOKTEN and PALESTA as bridge to connect the Palestinian expatriates with the ‘center of gravity’.
 - TOKTEN: focuses on the Gov’t sector; attracts ‘junior’ experts; has limited resources ad sustainability; designed by the donors.

Five-Dimensional Framework: Politics of Knowledge Production in the oPt...Contd

- PALESTA: non-representative Diaspora members; ownership dilemma; function as institutions as opposes to network.
- These initiatives remain immature, unsystematic, arbitrary, unsustainable, aid-dependent, and lack the institutional support.

➤ In relation to *the Politics of 'real' politics*:

- Impact on the curricula and the 'striking' changes.
- Impact on the education system.

➤ In relation to *the Politics of Access and Dissemination and the Politics of Research Questions and Priorities*:

- It is defined by power relations and asymmetry.
- The PNA prioritizes the international 'conventional wisdom'.
- The Palestinian knowledge is produced by the donor's money and because of it.

Conclusion and Wrapping-Up

- The prolonged Israeli occupation and conflict created a status of aid dependency in the oPt which influences all life aspects including the knowledge production realm and its politics.
- In the oPt, aid creates knowledge and the dominant knowledge on conflict 'resolution', state-building and development is a product of the donor community and international experts.
- The Palestinian expatriates role in knowledge production remain limited, unsustainable, and fragmented.
- Understanding the politics of knowledge production in the oPt requires also understating the political economy of international aid and identity politics aspects.
- This macro-micro approach reveals that the international expertise will continue to re-produce its blueprints and knowledge within a top-down framework, unless a shift in power balances occur and the 'locals' sit in the 'driver seat'.

‘And I say that life is indeed darkness save when there is urge, And all urge is blind save when there is knowledge, And all knowledge is vain save when there is work...’. Gibran Khalil Gibran

Thank You for Your Attention!

Questions and Comments...

