



# Complex entanglements: Moving from policy to public sociology in the Arab world

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## **Abstract**

In this article, the author surveys his own career to illustrate some of the dilemmas of research, especially when it assumes a critical and public face. He shows how his work on Palestinian refugees, their socioeconomic rights, their right of return and their camps evolved toward complex forms of traditional and organic public sociology. The article concludes with reflections on one of the major dilemmas researchers face: conducting public research without losing its critical edge, even toward the deprived groups it seeks to protect. The moral of the story: good scientists are not always popular.

## **Keywords**

Arab social science, critical research, Palestinian refugees, policy research, public research

In the Arab world, the profile of the intellectual is well known: typically, he or she is a theorist who talks about tradition, modernity, authoritarianism, democracy, identity, Arab unity, globalization and so on but avoids stepping into society to conduct empirical research. Even social scientists are often guilty of pontificating like philosophers, raising questions rather than offering concrete answers (Hanafi, 2012).

It is even rarer to hear professional social researchers speak in the public sphere.<sup>1</sup> This is due not only to the absence of their products in the mass media or newspapers but also to the difficulty of conducting fieldwork in the Arab world, given the authoritarian regimes and the lack of research capacity. Social research agendas in the Arab region – the choice

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of topics and sometimes the methodology – are often driven by donor interests or by the urgency of immediate social problems. There are important exceptions to this rule, and it is to some of them that I have turned for guidance and inspiration. In this article, I survey my own research trajectory to illustrate some of the dilemmas researchers face while doing research, especially when it assumes a critical and public face.

## **Damascus, Cairo and Ramallah: Crawling toward public sociology**

In 1994, I finished my PhD in France. It examined engineers as a socioprofessional group in Syria and Egypt. My first inclination was to extend my investigations to other middle-class occupations in these same countries, but as a Palestinian and former president of the General Union of Palestinian Students in France, I became involved in many debates concerning the emerging peace process, known as the Madrid Process. As prospects for a new Palestinian entity improved, I decided to study the contribution of the Palestinian diaspora to the construction of this entity.

Clearly, my choice of topic was related to how I saw my engagement in the public sphere. I discussed the project with Philippe Fargues, the director of the French Centre d'études et de documentation économique juridique et sociale in Cairo (CEDEJ). Together we wrote a research proposal dealing with two features of the diaspora: its demography and its economy. It is worth noting that the European Union was only interested in the economic aspect of this research, while the French Foreign Ministry was attracted by the demographic question. The upshot was two fascinating projects. Since I was most interested in the economy, I dealt with this aspect, publishing two academic books and many articles.

At that time, I was not aware of the importance of writing for a large public. At most, I talked to journalists from time to time. I was afraid to give out information that was not grounded in scientific research. I had little experience in presenting my research, but I quickly learned to draw policy implications from my findings. I was approached by a Palestinian deputy minister in the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation in Ramallah, who had read my 1997 book, *The Role of Business People in the Diaspora in the Construction of the Palestinian Entity*. He wanted me to help him establish a Directorate of Expatriate Affairs in his Ministry. I found myself in a dilemma: should I accept a grant from the Ford Foundation to pursue my research or should I suspend my career as a researcher in order to work as a policy advisor, applying the knowledge I had accumulated. I opted for the latter, at that time believing that the Oslo Peace Process would result in the termination of the occupation. This project lasted one year. The Directorate was successfully established, and two conferences were organized, each bringing roughly 150 Palestinian business people from all over the world to the Palestinian territories.

However, I found the relationship between the domineering prince and the dependent researcher to be tumultuous, so I returned to CEDEJ for three more years to pursue research on two fronts: to continue my analysis of the question of Palestinian refugees in the diaspora and to investigate the relationships among donors, international organizations and local NGOs in the Palestinian territories. Again, I was motivated by a deep

desire to conduct research that would be useful for the emerging Palestinian entity. Much to my chagrin, I discovered that donors were mainly interested in funding NGOs and were reluctant to support unions and political parties. Moreover, the donors were keen on NGO style research centers outside and disconnected from universities. Here I found myself with another dilemma: conducting research funded by NGOs, through a research center that not only has NGO status but is one of the leading organizations in the Palestinian NGO Network (PNGOs).

The result of my research was a manuscript (written with Linda Tabar) that criticized both the donor community and local NGOs. It was sent to two reviewers: one an academic and one an NGO leader from PNGOs. The former was very positive, but the latter was not. The director of the research center was also unhappy since he feared that my research might reinforce 'the general climate of criticism of NGOs waged by the Palestinian National Authority.' The manuscript was sent out again to three new reviewers. All reports recommended publication, and it became my first real encounter with public sociology. I was invited to many places to present our research. I learned how to be careful with my lectures, tailoring them to audiences with a balance of criticism and provocation. I found myself in the middle of a milieu where small NGOs appreciated my research while the bigger ones were unhappy with my results. I learned how to interpret the audience's smiles and scattered laughter and not to be easily intimidated. I learned a lot from these talks on the basis of which I revised my analysis.

After three years conducting professional and public research at CEDEJ, I was hired to be the director of a research and advocacy center called the Palestinian Center for Diaspora and Refugees (Shaml) in Ramallah. At this center, I conducted research on subjects such as the living conditions of the Palestinian refugees, the debate over their right of return and the political negotiations with Israelis over this matter.

Most of my critical research was not published in Arabic but in English. This gave me international and regional visibility but at the expense of visibility in the locality in which I was working. I was also actively experimenting with creative and rights-based solutions to the Palestinian refugee problem. I developed concepts such as the extra-territorial nation-state, the distinction between the right of return and the possibility of return, and between right of return and rites of return. My main audience was academic and policy circles. Only subsequently did I realize that writing in Arabic more than likely would have got me into a lot of trouble.

It was very difficult to continue living in Ramallah with a tourist visa, as in early 2004 the Israeli authorities started to limit my visa to one month at a time, which meant I had to leave and return every month. I felt I had exhausted my time in Palestine, so I sought a new location. I left Palestine to assume a teaching position at the American University of Beirut. It was here that I discovered the problem of researchers who publish globally but perish locally (Hanafi, 2011). From then on I vowed to translate all that I produced into Arabic so as to help generate debate with the broader public as well as with policy makers.

## **Beirut: Time for confrontations**

Worn out by the intensity of the Second Intifada (2000–2005), I moved to the American University of Beirut where I founded the monthly Sociology Café, which aims at

creating a forum for informal discussions between students, professors and the public on critical issues of life in Lebanon and the region. An invited speaker usually initiates the discussion. Since 2006, I have co-organized 52 sessions with Ray Jureidini and then Nabil Dajani. Lebanese newspapers often report on the debates produced in these monthly encounters.

In terms of research, I decided to move into urban sociology and work in the slums of Beirut. I wrote a proposal to study Hay al-Sulom in the southern suburbs with a small component to compare it with Beirut's infamous Shatila refugee camp. Alas, one donor agency offered me funding but only to study the Shatila camp. At first I was disappointed, but it wasn't long before I found myself again in the middle of a debate about Palestinian socioeconomic and civil rights. The context is important. In Lebanon, Palestinian refugees do not have some basic rights such as the right to work or to own property, even though they have been living there for 65 years.

In 2005 there were two important issues: first, the liberation of Lebanon from Syrian tutelage and, second, the establishment of the Lebanese–Palestinian Dialogue Committee (LPDC). The latter functioned as an agency attached to the Prime Minister's cabinet and was heavily funded by many donors seeking to improve the situation of Palestinians in Lebanon. In this vein, the Swiss embassy mobilized a Swiss humanitarian agency to fund a workshop composed of Palestinian and Lebanese experts to assess the need for Palestinians to receive more vocational training. In this way, the agency argued, refugees would be able to work as qualified workers without changing the existing legal framework that bars them from work, denying them access to any profession and even to the formal labor market. I was a participant in this workshop and spoke vehemently against its rationale and against working within the framework of existing rights. Tensions rose, and there were many clashes between the Palestinian and the Lebanese participants. The Swiss agency then called for two ad hoc meetings: one with Palestinian experts and another with Lebanese experts. In the meeting, the representative of the Swiss agency told me that I was politicizing the process and she argued that her agency is a humanitarian one and therefore cannot address the right to work for the Palestinian refugees. After heated arguments, she threatened to withdraw the funding. I replied cynically that there were many refugee communities in Africa that deserve more attention than the Palestinian refugees, and we would be glad to divert the funding to them. One member of the Palestinian delegation was unhappy with what I had said and asked me to use 'I' instead of 'we.' My comments criticized the donor community for their dichotomous thinking: relief vs. development and humanitarianism vs. politics.

Humanitarian organizations deprive refugees of their political existence by treating them as bodies to be fed and sheltered. Humanitarian law refers to 'protected people,' but current humanitarian practices focus mainly on 'victims' or at times, to appear more positive, they refer to them as 'survivors.' By classifying people as victims or even as survivors, the basis of humanitarian action is shifted from rights to welfare. In disaster areas – the spaces of exception – values of generosity and pragmatism obscure the rights and responsibilities of refugees, which would endow them with their own agency.

I have been very interested in demystifying the depoliticization of humanitarianism since the beginning of the Second Intifada. In 2003 in Jerusalem Adi Ophir and I

co-organized a two-day workshop on 'The Politics of Humanitarianism in the Occupied Territories' for international, Palestinian and Israeli human rights and humanitarian organizations. Scholars and practitioners presented their different visions, generating much discussion and even some tension. The debate was so absorbing that Peter Hansen, the Commissioner General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestine Refugees, who came just to present a paper, stayed for the whole workshop. When I became research director of the program 'Policy and Governance in Palestinian Refugee Camps' at the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI), I helped to organize lectures with practitioners from international and local organizations, further contributing to the debate on humanitarianism. When Karen Abu Zeid, the successor Commissioner General of the UNRWA, was invited as an IFI guest, she, too, recognized the tension between the political and the humanitarian. For her, 'This tension is manifested in a variety of ways. One of its most striking manifestations is the contrast between the readiness of states to fund emergency responses, compared to their failure to address the questions of international law and politics that cause these emergencies. That tension is clear in the way in which the urgency to resolve underlying questions of justice and peace for Palestinians is somehow divorced from the challenge of providing for their human needs.'<sup>2</sup>

So far I have described my advance toward public sociology, but I was now keen to undertake a more organic public sociology on two fronts: contributing to the Right to Work Campaign for the Palestinian refugees and engaging with the governance system in the refugee camps, based on research in the Nahr el-Bared refugee camp in northern Lebanon.

### *Right to work campaign*

I was writing a lot in right-wing and left-wing newspapers in Arabic and in English to reach different audiences and to understand the opposition to Palestinians having rights to work and property. I wanted to demonstrate that the issue is not only a sectarian one. Yes in Lebanon there are many sectarian divides in politics but there is almost a consensus that opposes extending these rights to Palestinians, including among both Sunnis and Shiites. All are more than happy to exploit Palestinian laborers in the black market. Religion does not tell us everything. Indeed, social stratification might reveal more than religion.

I was invited to give a talk by the Hezbollah think tank, and I had many meetings with members of its Political Bureau to persuade them to take a real stance to change the discriminatory laws. The Palestinian ambassador charged me, along with Sakher Abu Fakhre, with negotiating on his behalf with the governmental coalition (March 14 Coalition) for changing the labor laws. The grim result of this experience was increased disillusionment with the politicians' double language.

In January 2011, I proposed the march as a form of protest. It had been used effectively in 1983 in France by second generation immigrants of Algerian origin demanding better integration, both socially and in the labor market. I initiated the first contact with a group of associations (from various political tendencies) to organize a March for the Socio-economic and Civil Rights of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. We met every

week and, by the end, we had gathered support from 102 associations, unions and representatives of youth movements of Palestinian and Lebanese political parties and factions. The June 2010 march brought around 6000 Palestinian and Lebanese from all over Lebanon to Beirut.

This civil society initiative was received with a lot of suspicion from several Palestinian political factions. For many, civil society organizations should conduct advocacy campaigns or provide services, but they should not mobilize constituencies, because that is the exclusive function of political parties. As one said, cynically, 'Civil society organizations can be coopted easily by foreign powers; they should not take the lead in mobilizing demonstrations.' Hamas and the pro-Syrian coalition withdrew suddenly from the organization of the march. Subsequently, Osama Hamdan, one of the leaders of Hamas, added that their withdrawal was in part due to a newspaper interview where I referred positively to the 1983 *Marche des beurs* in France. They considered this a call for the integration of Palestinian refugees into Lebanon, which would undermine the right of return.

Here one can see how social science in the Arab world is doubly delegitimized – from above by the political leaders and from below by religious leaders (among others). Hamas leadership was simply opposed to the linking of the Palestinian march to an historical one in France. I was also surprised how many right-wing Lebanese politicians used the term 'integration' in a pejorative way. In an interview, Amin al-Jamyel, the head of Phalange Party, declared that 'issuing a new law in favor of easing the entrance of Palestinian refugees into Lebanon is one step toward their integration which I denounce.'

In short, it was very challenging to engage a public that is not used to dialogue with social science scholars. This does not mean abandoning the project but rather investing time and energy into being subtle and careful in transmitting social science. Intermingling with the public inspires a deeper understanding of reality. It would have never occurred to me to theorize the Israeli colonial project as a 'spacio-cidal' project had I not constantly felt claustrophobic in the West Bank as Israel reduced it to many small Bantustans all divided from one another. I learned how to use the term 'integration of Palestinian refugees' without implying any antagonism to the right of return. I learned to avoid using the term 'governance' in Arabic as people would confuse it with 'government.' A high ranking officer of the Internal Security Forces threatened to arrest me for using 'governance' in the title of an IFI workshop. For him, the governance of camps is the business of the state only.

I also learned to be patient with practitioners who were not accustomed to postponing normative claims until they were empirically supported. Thus, I invited three members from the popular committees of the camp to discuss a working paper I produced for IFI: 'Governance of the Palestinian Refugee Camps in the Arab East: Governmentalities in Quest of Legitimacy.' Two of them said it was the first time they had been invited to such a seminar and they were especially grateful. However, they were very defensive when I suggested that the popular committees had lost legitimacy with the general camp population. The chair of the session, a faculty member at the American University of Beirut, told me how difficult it was to organize a discussion between practitioners and academics. It required a strong chair to keep the session on track.

### *Negotiating the reconstruction of Nahr el-Bared refugee camp*

While I was doing my research on the governance system in the refugee camps of Lebanon and beyond, Fatah al-Islam, a radical militarized group, gained control of the Nahr el-Bared camp (NBC) in the north of Lebanon. The Lebanese Army responded with armed intervention, expelled the militia, destroyed two-thirds of the camp and brought the remaining part under total military control. There was fierce controversy over the reconstruction of the camp and its administration. Prime Minister Siniora declared that 'Nahr el-Bared would be a model for other camps,' and very soon foreign intelligence services became consultants to the Lebanese political and military authorities.

The government's plan for a new, modern and secure camp left no place for traditional social fabric and living patterns. When the plan was reported in the press, it provoked resistance from the community, which had not been consulted. In Baddawi camp, where most of the NBC residents had taken refuge, a spontaneous grassroots initiative emerged with the goal of formulating a counter-plan. It was energized by the widespread conviction that NBC's destruction and the government's reconstruction plans were politically motivated. Named the Nahr el-Bared Reconstruction Commission for Civil Action and Studies (NBRC), the group immediately attracted activist academics and technicians from beyond Nahr el-Bared with prior reconstruction experience in Lebanon. The result was an expanded and diverse network that included architects and planners who contributed their diverse knowledge and experience to the local committee, empowering the community to oppose the state's project.

The real dynamo of this initiative was Ismael Sheikh Hassan, an urban planner and community activist. We both wanted urban planning from below with full community participation, but we differed over the role of the urban planners. I drew on my knowledge of Jenin camp, where the political commissars exercised a heavy influence. I wanted urban planners to play a more proactive role by informing public discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of different options. Sheikh Hassan favored community voices over urban planners. However, we shared the view that urban planners should counter-balance the power of the political commissars. In addition, Sheikh Hassan, like other Palestinian activists, had a historically rooted mistrust of UNRWA and was reluctant to cooperate with the agency. Based on my knowledge of the reconstruction of Jenin in 2002, I, on the other hand, thought that UNRWA could make a great contribution to community participation. After a long discussion, a delegation of the NBRC did meet UNRWA, and the latter was delighted with the NBRC's progress in planning the reconstruction.

However, persuading the Lebanese authorities to accept the NBRC/UNRWA as an interlocutor was a painful process. Here I used my cultural and social capital as a professor at AUB. Initially, the Lebanese–Palestinian Dialogue Committee (LPDC) refused any Palestinian interlocutor under the pretext that if we called on the PLO Hamas would be upset, and vice versa. We asked the LPDC to accept the NBRC as a civil society initiative, but they refused. I called the head of UNRWA, Richard Cook, to report that we would not cooperate with UNRWA unless the NBRC was present. Cook called the LPDC, but they continued to refuse our incorporation. They said that they would accept me alone as an individual but not as representative of the NBRC. I refused to go under

this label. UNRWA threatened to withdraw from the process. Finally, I was invited as a representative of the NBRC, and after the first meeting a more technical delegation from the NBRC continued to meet with the Lebanese authority in charge of the reconstruction. After the battle, protracted negotiations began between the various Lebanese actors and the NBRC/UNRWA. Security-related issues raised by the military dictated all spatial and design considerations. Nonetheless, thanks to the UNRWA–NBRC partnership, the planning process did incorporate some of the interests of the Palestinians.

### *The Vienna Document: A model of exclusion*

From the start of the battle, UNRWA had shouldered the burden of the NBC residents' immediate relief, but the reconstruction anticipated from the outset would inevitably require massive international funding. On 7 June 2007, scarcely two weeks after the military incursion was launched, the Lebanese government held its first meeting with UNRWA representatives to plan an international donor conference to rebuild the camp. The conference was ultimately set for June 2008 in Vienna under the sponsorship of Austria, Lebanon, the Arab League, UNRWA and the EU. In preparation for the event, the Lebanese government drew up what came to be known as the Vienna Document, a comprehensive recovery and reconstruction plan including cost estimates, for presentation to the donor-participants prior to the conference.

The camp's physical reconstruction was only one aspect of the Lebanese government's vision and in fact took second place to 'Establishing clear and effective governance in NBC.' This included 'enforcing security and rule of law inside NBC through community and proximity policing' (Government of Lebanon, 2008: 46). To this end, the document requested US\$5 million in donor funds for 'Capacity building and technical assistance to the (Lebanese) Internal Security Forces (ISF) aimed at introducing community and proximity policing into NBC' (Government of Lebanon, 2008: 48).

A major flaw in the document's proposal for 'transparent and effective' camp governance is its problematic reading of the latter as purely a security issue, which flies in the face of the widely accepted contemporary discourse on good governance and its necessary components of administration, community representation and economic development. By proposing policing as the main component of governance, the plan reduces the Palestinian refugees to the status of 'security subjects' and frames the camp as an 'insecurity island.' The document uses the attractive term 'community policing,' with its connotations of community empowerment and citizenship action, but the policing it describes is performed exclusively by the police.

This one-sided decision making was reinforced by the PLO's exclusion from the formulation of the Vienna Document's security-related sections. The document makes a point of stating that the 'above security arrangements for NBC were agreed upon with the Palestinian Liberation Organization' (Government of Lebanon, 2008: 51), but Abbas Zaki, PLO ambassador to Lebanon, told me that he had not been consulted about the security issue in the camp. I informed Ismael Sheikh Hassan, who joined Zaki to protest to the LPDC, but the document was not altered.

Without doubt, the PLO's weakness makes this kind of exclusion possible, but it is risky to pursue and secure funding for a one-sided vision of governance in a Palestinian

camp, which moreover is planned as a prototype for all the Palestinian camps in the country. This is especially the case when the solutions proposed are not based on a critical review either of NBC's pre-conflict situation or on the failures of the Palestinian and Lebanese sides that precipitated the rise of Fatah al-Islam in the first place.

Sheikh Hassan and I wrote a piece called 'Constructing and governing Nahr el-Bared camp: An "ideal" model of exclusion' for the *Journal of Palestine Studies* (in Arabic). We wanted to explain the whole story of NBC: its destruction, looting, reconstruction and the plan to establish a mode of governance based exclusively on security. Even though the journal is based in Beirut, the piece did not generate debate. I called a friend at *al-nahar* newspaper, which is very widely read by supporters of the government coalition. After its publication there, the LPDC replied to me in a very harsh and impolite way. Several journalists wrote to criticize my writings, and I responded with other articles. However, debate was not without intimidation. The head of the LPDC, who is also the president of the American University of Beirut Alumni Association, talked with the administration of my university, the chair of my department and other colleagues. He tried to convince them to denounce my writing, arguing that it might harm the relationship between the University and the Lebanese authority. I was supported by my university, but my friend Ismael Sheikh Hassan was arrested because of his writing about Nahr el-Bared, which suggests that critical public social science can be a dangerous proposition.

## Between critical and public social science

One of the major dilemmas researchers face is to conduct public research without losing their critical edge even toward the deprived groups that they seek to protect. Good scientists are not always popular. Louis Pasteur, who saved many through his invention of vaccines, failed to be elected to the Senate in France. I do believe that sociologists' commitments should be expressed by their choice of topics and how they disseminate their knowledge beyond writing for academic journals. But as regards the research process, once a topic is chosen, fieldwork is fieldwork and should follow its path in the most objective way possible. Of Bertolt Brecht's committed art, Adorno (1980) said that Brecht ended by doing bad art and bad politics. Criticisms addressed to the community being studied should be considered a way of strengthening it, rather than weakening it; knowledge of weaknesses should be empowering.

I should confess here that sometimes things are very complex. There have been occasions when I have not published the results of fieldwork because they violate the immediate interests of international solidarity groups who have come to Palestine to support people under siege. I am not an advocate of activist research (Hale, 2006) that is politically aligned to the cause of its object, but I do align myself with subjects when their rights are violated. This alignment can become political in the sense of making political compromises. For instance, when defending the Palestinian right of return to their place of origin, I found myself advising people on tactical matters of the more immediate survival of Palestinian refugees. 'Surrendering,' to use Wolff's (1992) term, to the group you are studying can be generative of a deeper scholarly understanding and beneficial to the research, on condition that the researcher does not lose sight of their primary

commitment to critical thinking. Researchers may be loyal to a political party or to an ideology, but this should be seen as different from loyalty to the academic sphere.

My choice to work on *The Power of Inclusive Exclusion: Anatomy of Israeli Rule in the Occupied Palestinian Territories* (2009) with anti-colonial Israelis Adi Ophir and Michal Givoni was unpopular in Lebanon, and I faced a smear campaign from some leftists. At the time, I thought that constructing a healthy conception of the conflict and collaborating with anti-colonial Israelis was more important than my popularity. I hoped that working with dissident Israelis would send a strong message that the Arab–Israeli conflict has nothing to do with religion but revolved around a classical colonial project waged by Zionist ideology, which we could collectively oppose, whether we were Arab or Israeli.

I had imagined that writing about my research trajectory would be easy, but it has not been, especially because I don't want to fall into the trap of heroism, celebration or victimhood. Engaging in public sociology and dealing with critical issues is like crossing a minefield, even as it offers a sense of commitment to the society (through the choice of a topic which is relevant to society) and a sense of justice (helping victims to resist their oppressors). At the heart of this precarious engagement is Pierre Bourdieu's idea of sociology as a martial art, in which sociology disarms people of their common sense, their ideologies, their folk understandings – in short, their self-deceptions. The question, then, is whether scholars should be in front of the people or behind them, whether they should comfort them (a sort of populism) or remind them of the complexity of social phenomena. In this biographical essay, I have shown how I dealt with the complexity of the Palestinian right of return, their socioeconomic rights and their rights to the city, at the same time that political factions and commissars (including leaders of civil society organizations) were focusing almost exclusively on the right of return. To forge ahead of the people when the overwhelming political and social pressures are holding them back is a hazardous operation indeed.

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## Notes

1. Here I am using Michael Burawoy's (2005) typology of knowledge: professional, critical, public and policy.
2. From her speech for the Host and Donors Meeting, held in Amman on 11 December 2006.

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### Résumé

Dans cet article, je passe en revue ma propre carrière pour illustrer certains des dilemmes de la recherche, notamment si elle a une face critique et publique. Je montre comment mon travail avec des réfugiés palestiniens, leurs droits socio-économiques, leur droit au retour et leurs camps ont évolué vers des formes complexes de sociologie publique traditionnelle et organique. Je conclus avec quelques réflexions sur l'un des autres dilemmes majeurs auxquels les chercheurs sont confrontés: comment mener une recherche publique tout en conservant une approche critique, même envers les groupes défavorisés que cette recherche vise à protéger. La morale de l'histoire: les bons scientifiques ne sont pas toujours populaires.

### Mots-clés

Recherche appliquée, recherche critique, recherche publique, réfugiés palestiniens, sciences sociales arabes

### Resumen

En este artículo, repaso mi propia carrera para ilustrar algunos de los dilemas de investigar, en especial cuando la investigación asume una imagen crítica y pública. Muestro cómo mi trabajo sobre los refugiados palestinos, sus derechos socioeconómicos, su derecho a regresar y sus campamentos evolucionó hacia formas complejas de la sociología pública tradicional y orgánica. Concluyo con reflexiones sobre uno de los principales dilemas

que enfrentan los investigadores: llevar adelante una investigación pública sin perder su lado crítico, aun hacia los grupos desfavorecidos que busca proteger. La moraleja es: los buenos científicos no siempre son populares.

**Palabras clave**

Ciencias sociales árabes, investigación crítica, investigación política, investigación pública, refugiados palestinos