



Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS)

Palestinian Diaspora: Building Transnational Capital

Khaled Islaih

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The Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS)

Founded in Jerusalem in 1994 as an independent, non-profit institution to contribute to the policy-making process by conducting economic and social policy research. MAS is governed by a Board of Trustees consisting of prominent academics, businessmen and distinguished personalities from Palestine and the Arab Countries.

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MAS is dedicated to producing sound and innovative policy research, relevant to economic and social development in Palestine, with the aim of assisting policy-makers and fostering public participation in the formulation of economic and social policies.

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- ◆ Promoting knowledge-based policy formulation by conducting economic and social policy research in accordance with the expressed priorities and needs of decision-makers.
- ◆ Evaluating economic and social policies and their impact at different levels for correction and review of existing policies.
- ◆ Providing a forum for free, open and democratic public debate among all stakeholders on the socio-economic policy-making process.
- ◆ Disseminating up-to-date socio-economic information and research results.
- ◆ Providing technical support and expert advice to PNA bodies, the private sector, and NGOs to enhance their engagement and participation in policy formulation.
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Foreword

The Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute is pleased to introduce this study about ways to improve and deploy social capital among Palestinians in the Diaspora; taking the case of Palestinians in Canada as a case study. This study is the sixth study in the research program titled “Deployment of Social Capital for the benefit of development in the Occupied Palestinian Territories” which MAS undertakes with support from the Arab Fund for Social and Economic Development.

The study aims to define policies that would enhance social capital among Diaspora Palestinians and to define ways to mobilize the effort of Palestinian abroad to help economic development in the occupied Palestinian Territories. The study stresses the importance of cultivating the resources among Diaspora Palestinians and of protecting their identity, culture and tradition.

The study reviews the opportunities which the new communication technologies provide in order to maximize the cross-border social capital. This can help the Diaspora Palestinians to communicate with their countrymen back home and share with them aspirations and problems. The new communication technology can also help to mobilize the solidarities with the Palestinian people in other host countries. The study ends by providing policy recommendations for policy makers to work actively in order to enhance the role of Diaspora Palestinians in the domestic efforts for independence and progress.

With the publication of this study I would like to thank the researcher for following up the latest techniques in social communication and the ways it can be deployed for enhancing social capital as well as the reviewers who helped to enrich the study. Finally, I would like to thank the Arab Fund for Social and Economic Development for its funding for this study and continuous support for the research programs at MAS as well as the Palestinian development effort in general.

Dr. Samir Abdullah
Director General

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Executive Summary

Globalization and advances in social and mobile technologies have created a new media environment and increased the interconnectivity and mobility of individuals, businesses, communities and societies around the world. Despite physical boundaries, the pervasive penetration of technology in our lives is turning the world into a global society accessible from anywhere at any time. In a sense, this new phenomena has rendered physical borders obsolete and accelerated the circulation of ideas, capital, information, media images, practices, technical/scientific knowledge across and within borders.

The Palestinian Diaspora is spread around the globe, and is capable of playing an important role in the societal transformation in Palestine; however, flexible and collaborative engagement strategies are needed. At the end of 2009 there were 10.9 million Palestinians worldwide, more than half of whom live in Diaspora communities (51.8%). In addition: 3.99 million Palestinians (36.7%) live in West Bank and Gaza, 1.25 million (11.5%) live in Israel proper, 3.24 million (29.8%) live in Jordan, 1.78 million (16.3%) in other Arab countries and 618,000 (5.7%) live in countries outside of the Middle East. Despite changes in the geographic distribution of the Palestinian Diaspora over the past six decades, the majority remain in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria; close to their towns and villages of origin. In fact, most still live within 100 kilometers of the borders of historical Palestine.

The study aims to develop new ways of thinking about Diaspora/Homeland relationships in order to build Palestinian social capital within a changing global social order. In particular, this study stresses the ways in which socio-technological evolution carries important implications for the study of Diaspora/Homeland relationships. Diaspora groups around the world are now using social media and mobile devices to coordinate activities, share ideas, make business transactions and mobilize in solidarity with their compatriots back home.

The study makes use of Diaspora networks, transnational citizenship, etc to explain and influence patterns and modes of communication and collaboration among the Palestinian Diaspora and the Homeland. To explain the potential of this convergence in terms of Diaspora/Homeland relations, the study questions conventional, state-centric research methods

and the role of research in the process of social change and human development.

To broaden this process of knowledge questioning the study utilizes a narrative and storytelling approach which should appeal to a wider audience, inspire new insights and broaden the base of individuals and organizations working to strengthen the Diaspora/Homeland partnership. By using this interdisciplinary approach our work promotes a new generation of Diaspora engagement strategies such as: Diaspora Diplomacy, cyber citizenship or netizenship and open development. The aim of these strategies is to engage the Palestinian Diaspora in social change, economic development and state-building processes in the Homeland. Put more succinctly, the study will explain how advances in information and communication technologies are changing the social order within both organizations and societies; this topic is particularly relevant within the contemporary Arab context in light of the recent, successful revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt.

Furthermore, this study explains how new digital technologies are transcending territorial boundaries to reconnect dispersed communities through social networks, collaborative communities and Diaspora networks. Moreover, it seeks to explain the role of the Palestinian Diaspora in economic development and state-building in Palestine.

The study also explains how local and global activist groups are using the new transnational paradigm to counteract Israeli oppression against Palestinians by adopting modes of network solidarity and global activism.

The study shows that expatriates from different countries are channeling information, innovative ideas, intellectual capacities, new technological skills, smart business models and democratic political habits and practices to their homeland. Governments around the globe are engaged in efforts to identify and link skilled expatriates to national sustainable development projects.

The case study included herein focuses on the Palestinian Diaspora community in Canada. Palestinian migration to Canada has been driven by a number of interconnected factors over the past few decades. The first wave of migration began just after 1967 when a handful of immigrants left the city of Nazareth and the surrounding areas as part of an Israeli initiative to alter the demographics of historical Palestine. In the 1970's, additional families from the Palestinian communities inside Israel joined

their relatives in Canada; nevertheless the number of Canadian-Palestinians remained below 5,000 in 1980. In the late 1980's, however, Canadian authorities began allowing immigration on a business investment basis. According to the 2006 census, the number of Canadian residents of Palestinian origin had risen to 23,975.

Two events affected the Palestinian community in Canada during the 1990s, first, the Gulf war in 1991 and second the arrival of large numbers of investors and business people from the Gulf countries to Canada. The new comers created a business community which branches out into many different sectors of the economy, including: real-estate, construction services, wholesale and retail sales and many more. Taken together, these business ventures have worked to facilitate connections between host countries and places in the Arab world. At the professional level, Palestinian-Canadians are represented in virtually all professions, including: academic scholarship, formal politics, community leadership, medicine, and banking and finance.

To connect Palestinians around the world and enhance their contributions to Palestine an effective Diaspora Engagement strategy is needed. The following recommendations are suggested to initiate the process:

1. Mapping the Palestinian Diaspora: Build an effective engagement strategy which starts by gathering data on the Diaspora. Such data should include, but is not limited to: geographical distribution, gender, age, skills, residence status, remittances flows and belonging to networks and groups.
2. Raise awareness of the Diaspora's potentially revolutionary role in developing Palestinian communities locally and globally.
3. Build human and institutional capacities to engage the Palestinians Diaspora. We recommend that each country develop its own initiatives to reflect its unique social, cultural, economic and political needs.
4. Reduce obstacles facing Diaspora engagement: Diaspora engagement sustainability requires continuous feedback to eliminate barriers and facilitate cross-border exchange. Palestinian authorities are advised to explore structural, cultural, social and political barriers that may hinder success and limit the technical possibilities for engagement.
5. Develop a Diaspora engagement philosophy: The dominant perceptions of victimization and separation should be replaced with a new vision of empowerment and engagement among all stakeholders. Such stakeholders include: government bodies, media, the private

sector, international organizations, embassies and diplomatic missions in Palestine.

6. Ensure that Diaspora engagement is part of the broader information and communications technology strategy in Palestine.
7. Encourage the establishment of Hometown Associations which could potentially fulfill several functions, including: social exchange, political influence and development support.
8. Encourage the use of Web 2.0 tools for citizen and Diaspora diplomacy purposes.
9. Establish a Palestinian Institute for Diaspora and Transnational Studies to research, analyze and enhance linkages with the Diaspora, thus facilitating socioeconomic development in Palestine.
10. Study Diaspora engagement policies and strategies of other countries: As part of enhancing Diaspora engagement in Palestine it is important to make use of the successful strategies developed by other countries, such as India.

MAS Editor

1. Introduction: Changing Global Social Order

Globalization and advances in social and mobile technologies have created a new media environment and increased the interconnectivity and mobility of individuals, businesses, communities and societies around the world. Despite physical boundaries, the pervasive penetration of technology in our lives is turning the world into a global society accessible from anywhere at any time. In a sense, this new phenomena has rendered physical borders obsolete and accelerated the circulation of ideas, capital, information, media images, practices, technical/scientific knowledge across and within borders.

In social terms, new media has expanded cross-border social processes and activities and reshaped how we think, learn, live and work. By doing this, social media became an extension of our senses and mental abilities, much like a hammer is an extension of our physical capacity. For individuals, mobile and media technologies have enabled interpersonal communication internationally through the live diffusion of voice, text and visual communications at minimal cost. On a larger scale, the intensive use of social and mobile media devices is creating new horizontal socialization patterns and enabling collaboration, participation and engagement locally and globally (Blossom, 2009).

This socio-technological evolution carries important implications for the study of Diaspora/Homeland relationships. Diaspora groups around the world are using social media and mobile devices to coordinate activities, share ideas, make business transactions and mobilize in solidarity with their compatriots back home. According to social theorists, this has had a direct impact on social formations (such as social capital), public landscapes, cultural identities, economic flows and human mobility within societies and across borders.

Diaspora and migrant communities are using Web 2.0 and mobile phones creatively to connect with their families and communities back home. By doing this, the Diaspora is enabling new socialization patterns and eventually shifting toward an alternative transnational social order. A new social science is needed to analyse these rapidly shifting trends and overcome the gaps of conventional conceptualizations of agency and structure. Conventional social theory suffers from a methodological limitation, namely a tendency to normalize a nation-state fragmented

worldview in what is an increasingly interconnected world (Shiller, 2009). For example, state-centric social theories are not capable of capturing the intensity and diversity of today's transnational processes and linkages, much less to assess their societal impact. Part of the reason for this is that conventional social theory, with its outdated notions of society, territoriality and borders, lacks the proper terminology to describe or define the complexity of new transnational dynamics and processes.

To facilitate this conceptual shift and overcome the limitations of methodological nationalism embedded within existing intellectual and institutional structures, social scientists coined new terms, such as transnational social fields, Diaspora networks, transnational citizenship, transnationalism from below, transnational competences, Diaspora politics and long- distance nationalism to describe cross-border collaboration. The study makes use of this emerging field to explain and influence patterns and modes of communications and collaboration among the Palestinian Diaspora and the Homeland.

In this new era of social networks and open communication, the notion of society is altered and social spaces are no longer limited by territorial boundaries. For example, crossing national borders is becoming a routine practice for many population groups including migrants, activists, entrepreneurs and users of social networking sites, such as Facebook, Youtube and Twitter. As a result, they challenge long-held assumptions about the senses of identity and citizenship. In sum, this fundamental shift has undermined the credibility of state-centric sociological research methods to study exchanges within transnational societies like Palestine where the majority of live in the Diaspora (Levitt, 2004).

2. Re-thinking Diaspora: Exploring the Geography of Palestinian Social Capital

The ongoing evolution of communication technologies is changing societies, cultures and virtually everything else. The world is shrinking through the compression of distance and time that is turning the local into global and global into local (Rosenau, 2003). With computers, the Internet and mobile devices, individuals are able to spread news quickly from and to anywhere. Technologies, more than mere tools, are creating new trends, patterns and practices in our everyday lives. Moreover, the internet revolution and the proliferation of mobile phones and applications are connecting places and people in a borderless digital world.

Furthermore, the growing impact of cross-border digital technologies is altering the order of societies by reshaping everyday practices, work experiences and overall human potential. At the theoretical level, this new order is relying on Transnational Humanities as a framework for analyzing the rapid changes in surrounding human systems, such as organizations, communities and societies (Vertovec, 2009). It is also questioning fundamental social notions including citizenship, society and economic geography.

Information and communication technology is connecting the global Diaspora with their countries of origin. Rapid developments in new media and mobile devices combined with the sharp decline in the cost communication, have enabled a larger share of the world's population to partake in the new opportunities for collaboration. Access to a computer with an internet connection, means that chatting via instant messaging or video calling via Skype are virtually free.

Understanding these realities, trends and methodological challenges demands new approaches, conceptual tools and policy responses. Over the last two decades, an increased number of research initiatives were launched in North America and Europe, such as the establishment of specialized research centers, release of studies and books, as well as academic conferences focused on transnational flows, practices, processes, and communities. The overall goal of these initiatives was to develop new methodologies, theories and policy response to adapt to this evolutionary new transnational sociological paradigm and the accompanied socio-cultural transformations.

Transnational Humanities has emerged as a new framework to facilitate this conceptual shift and overcome the limitations of methodological nationalism. The classic Migration/Diaspora research methods were based on the state-centric models that conceived of migratory movement as if from one container to another. This limited focus leads to one sided conclusion of migration motives on the one hand, and assimilation process in the host society on the other. In contrast, Transnational Humanities recognizes that societies are mixed formations shaped by constant flows of goods, services and ideas in an increasingly borderless digital world.

Transnational Humanities utilizes the necessary tools and terminology to study the complexity and multiplicity of the transnational social order (Vertovec, 2009).

Using more inclusive methods allows researchers to make better sense of this order and the diverse identities, processes, messages, symbols, interpretation and relationships it holds. To prepare, schools and universities in multicultural societies are revising curricula to build transnational competences among citizens and graduates to help them work meaningfully in a transnational world (Koehn, 2010).

Conceptualizing the Diaspora as part of this emerging transnational social order has many advantages. It moves the analysis beyond those who are in the Diaspora and those left behind and take into account their broader connections and networks. One doesn't have to move to engage in cross-border practices. People who stay behind keep connected to Diaspora through social networks while they themselves are exposed to a constant flow of economic and social remittances, such as ideas, practices, lifestyles, habits, and worldviews. (Levitt, 2004).

Furthermore, netizenship is emerging as a new social force generating intellectual and structural changes and transformation in development assumptions and models. A Netizen refers to anyone using the Internet to foster civic engagement, community outreach and advocacy. For example, Egyptian and Tunisian netizens launched historic revolutions in their countries that eventually led to fundamental changes in their social and political systems. Netizenship facilitates mass participation and, due to its adaptive and generative nature, builds collective intelligence, fosters empowerment and is a source of solutions for difficult systemic challenges. It does all of this by enabling spontaneous dialogue and conversations within groups of peers. At one level, it facilitates dialogue among citizens of a given country, then initiates dialogue among citizens

and their local or national government – all while instantly expanding the circle of dialogue to the global level. The feedback and ideas of such intertwined circles of debate open new avenues of thinking and develop new courses of action to overcome the systemic barriers to social change and economic development (Hauben, 1997).

2.1 Mapping Palestinian Diaspora

The Diaspora is in position to play an important role in promoting state-building efforts and development in Palestine by adopting this new mode of thinking and move on to the challenge of how to use networking technologies more efficiently towards these ends.

Using netizenship to reframe Palestinian development challenges within transnational contexts stimulates empowerment locally and solidarity globally. Blurring the boundaries between social orders comes with new participatory worldviews, empowering attitudes and a culture of sharing and giving. Raising awareness and building human capacities are both essential in the creation of a healthy climate for new transnational dynamics and processes to evolve within Palestinian society. This positive societal change might lead to new modes of social psychology and significant behavioral changes among individual and organizations, which, in turn, could help in state-building and development efforts.

While the Palestinian Diaspora is spread around the globe, and is capable of playing an important role in the societal transformation in Palestine, flexible and collaborative engagement strategies are needed. According to Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) projections, at the end of 2009¹ there were 10.9 million Palestinians worldwide, more than half of whom live in Diaspora communities (51.8%). 3.99 million Palestinians (36.7%) live in West Bank and Gaza; 1.25 million (11.5%) live in Israel proper; 3.24 million (29.8%) live in Jordan; 1.78 million (16.3%) in other Arab countries and 618 thousands (5.7%) in countries outside of the Middle East.

The Diaspora is composed primarily of those displaced or expelled following the creation of Israel in 1948 and their offspring. Almost two-thirds of the Palestinian population was made homeless and dispersed to neighboring countries, including Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt. According to United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)

¹ www.pcbs.gov.ps accessed August 14, 2010.

records, the number of registered Palestinian refugees increased from 870,158 refugees in 1953 to 4,671,811 in 2008. The figures also include the approximately 1 million Palestinians who became refugees following the occupation of West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967. Today, estimates of the rate emigration/displacement to neighboring Arab countries and beyond as being as much as 2% of the total population per year (FAFO, 2002).

Despite changes in the geographic distribution of the Palestinian Diaspora over the past six decades, the majority remain in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, close to their towns and villages of origin. In fact, most still live within 100 kilometers of the borders of historical Palestine. Nevertheless, the geography of Palestinian Diaspora was reshaped by regional conflicts, during which Palestinian refugees were forced to flee host countries in search of safety. Changes in political regimes, discriminatory policies of host countries, relationship between Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and host governments and other economic factors have shaped the geographic distribution of the Palestinian Diaspora around the globe (Schultz, 2003).

The Palestinian Diaspora in Lebanon clearly demonstrates the ongoing change in Diaspora distribution patterns. The number of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon has decreased over time. Internal conflicts, civil war and other political obstacles pushed large numbers of Palestinians out of Lebanon to Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway and Canada. From the 1950's onward, of large Palestinian Diaspora communities formed in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates. Following the first Gulf War, many Palestinians were expelled or migrated from the Gulf to Canada, Sweden, United States or other countries in the Arab world. Currently, many Palestinian refugees are experiencing persecution in Iraq and fleeing to Syria, Jordan or elsewhere - some have been reported as far away as India and Thailand (Gassner, 2006).

Edward Said: Between Worlds

Edward Said (1935-2003) is widely considered to be among the greatest intellectuals of our time. With his extraordinary ability to cross borders between disciplines and methodological orthodoxies, his contribution to the social sciences and humanities are limitless. His creative scholarship and real world activism revolutionized the social sciences, liberated humanities from its biased Euro-centric focus and enhanced alternative knowledge models including post-colonialism and humanism.

Since his childhood, Said lived his life on the borderlands between cultures, countries, languages and professions. His everyday experiences gave him a unique understanding of exile and Diaspora. In his memoir, he wrote 'exiles cross borders, break barriers of thought and experience'. Later in life, his experiences and transnational involvement made him a pioneer in Diaspora activism.

In his seminal work, *Orientalism* (1978), he exposed Western patterns of dominating, re-structuring and maintaining authority over the Orient especially in the Muslim world. For centuries, western scholars, artists, administrators and explorers have used Western military, economic, and cultural dominance to stereotype and dominate Muslim people, under the guise of scientific objectivity. His revolution in cultural studies was mimicked by many scholars to expose this same behavior in other parts of the world.

Dr. Said was deeply involved in the struggle for justice in Palestine. Not only was he a role model for intellectual activists, but for years he served as a member of the Palestine National Council where he helped write the Palestinian Constitution and vote for the Declaration of independence in Algeria (1988). He did not support the Oslo accords of 1993, where he felt that Palestinians got a bad deal. Instead, he favored a single Jewish-Palestinian state.

2.2 Palestinians in Cyberspace: Moving from Citizens to Netizens

Engaging a dispersed Diaspora requires new thinking to move beyond geographically and institutionally confined conceptual frameworks. Collaborative technology-based strategies help in re-conceptualizing social realities, rethinking assumptions, overcoming intellectual barriers and accepting complexity and plurality as the new norm.

For the stateless Diaspora, the increasing penetration of social media tools and mobile devices is providing new platforms for Diaspora communities to bridge space and time to connect with communities in the Homeland. With social media, Palestinians have the opportunity to reform notions of citizenship and belonging. In this new digitally connected world, residents of these communities are becoming netizens and coming together in digital spaces to air opinions, share ideas and coordinate activities.

Netizens live physically in one country but are in contact with countless others. As such, they are emerging as a flexible tool for mobilization. Netizens use online spaces to affect change offline in the real world. Following the success of the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions, Palestinians in Palestine and the Diaspora discovered the transformational potential of netizenship. Netizenship was used to organize large-scale protests in March of 2011 to end the political fragmentation between Hamas and Fatah. Another global initiative was held later in May, 2011 to end the Israeli occupation.

Due to a growing awareness of the potential of netizenship, many politicians and community figures in Palestine have opened Facebook accounts. Even the Prime Minister Dr. Salam Fayyad has started to use his Facebook page as a space to engage people in the work of his government by seeking opinions and feedback.

Using tools and concepts like netizenship builds citizen participation, fosters transparency and increases social capital. However, new ways of thinking are still need to foster new behaviors. This might involve Systems Thinking and Social Network Analysis to promote new social habits, routines and behavior within Homeland and Diaspora communities. In Systems Thinking, changes in attitudes lead to changes in behaviors, thoughts, relationships and the overall system (Castells, 2010).

3. Transnational Social Capital for State-Building

Historically, it has often been the case that national creation myths are formed by people and populations in exile. Lenin, Gandhi, and Ho Chi Min all spent time abroad before returning to their Homeland with projects of state-building or recreation. Today, several stateless Diasporas including Kurds and Kashmiris continue their struggle toward self-determination and national independence from exile (Vertovec, 2009). Similarly, the mobilization toward Palestinian self-determination and state-building was initiated in the Diaspora by leaders such as Yasser Arafat, who, from exile, led the Palestinian movement for over forty years.

The exchange of political influence between the Diaspora and Homeland is known as Diaspora politics or 'long-distance nationalism'. Through new technologies, transnational networks enable ties and collaboration worldwide with exceptional speed and efficiency. Diaspora political practices include participation through formal parties and associations to lobby authorities of host countries for better policies toward their countries of origin. These political activities also aim to enhance their own social status in the host country by improving access to services and fighting discrimination and exclusion. In certain cases, Diaspora groups build post-national alliances with supporters in other recipient countries to help lobby support for causes back in the Homeland.

Globalization is upsetting the traditional order throughout public and private life, including politics. It is reshaping basic concepts, such as the state, borders, power and citizenship. Politics in the 21st century is driven by networks that enable new actors, norms, patterns, and spaces to emerge. The traditional notion of a population group living within confined boundaries has transformed to one of networked social structures (Castells, 2010).

The social impact of networked environments stem from the dynamism that helps to make it generative process. In other words, network logic is not deterministic; indeed, it enables diverse socio-political possibilities and alternative futures to exist at the same time. It reshapes relationships among actors, enables new actors to emerge and redefines or decentralizes power relations. It also encourages a shift from citizenry to netizenry where people have the opportunity to move beyond geographically bounded social membership. Furthermore, modern networking

technologies are also taking away the monopolies of power from centralized government authorities by fostering opportunities for citizen participation and transparency (Hauben, 1997).

Yasser Arafat: Boundary-Crossing Leadership

Yasser Arafat (1929-2003) led the Palestinian struggle before and after 1969, when he was elected chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). In 1988, he was chosen by the Palestine National Council as president of a newly declared Palestinian State. In 1996, he was elected as president of the Palestinian National Authority in West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Arafat's reign saw him move from the realm of armed resistance to participation in signing ceremonies on the White House lawn; from a long and fierce war with Israel to the sharing of Nobel Peace Prize with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres. His leadership style inspired the awakening of Palestinian nationalism. He helped transform the Palestinian people from a community of scattered refugees to a unified people determined to achieve their quest for independence and self determination. With his charisma and tactical skills, he galvanized the Palestinian masses and shaped coalitions among the diverse political forces. His bargaining skills also kept the Palestinian cause on international agenda for four decades.

Through the PLO's 'peace offensive' of the 1990's, ending with the Oslo Accords, many observers argue that Arafat managed to establish the legitimacy of Palestinian struggle in the international community and, to a large extent, within Israel (Mattar, 2000).

In today's interconnected world, expatriate communities are capable of influencing state-building and conflict resolution through social exchanges, knowledge transfers and by building global solidarity alliances.

Social empowerment and internal peace building is another avenue for Diaspora interventions. Expatriates can use communication technologies to coordinate a response to emergencies and reduce the impact of internal conflicts and civil unrest. Social networks help to connect expatriates living abroad.

In both the Homeland and Diaspora, networking is new. Historically, Palestinian society has been organized around family and community networks. In the political realm, the Palestinian liberation movement used

various networking strategies to organize its activities in exile and inside Palestine. Today, the use of information technologies has the capacity to modernize this tradition of domestic networking and expand its outreach to global frontiers to promote justice and statehood.

The Palestinian quest toward statehood and self-determination is part of global network of Palestinian solidarity groups, peace and anti-war activists and others dedicated to workers' rights, social justice and environmental protection. Palestinian Diaspora activists played a critical role in the emergence of this transnational movement that many argue has proven to be a more effective than the relatively weak Palestinian institutions operating outside the borders of the Homeland. The emerging alliances have global advocacy networks to share ideas and coordinate actions broadly and more efficiently.

Through self organizing mechanisms, a culture of participation and transparency is gaining ground in Palestine and parts of the Diaspora (Kotz, 2009). To reap the political benefits of the new networked global order in its mission to bring forth self-determination and statehood, a new participatory leadership is needed to transform power hierarchies and foster participation and transparency. At the same time, research institutions need to develop their capacity to capture the knowledge flow and social transfer circulating within the networks.

In addition to networking logic, new capacities are also needed to facilitate knowledge sharing and coordinate actions among Palestinians living abroad. More importantly, building these capacities is highly critical to enabling individuals to reap the benefits of the ongoing transformation. In other words, transnational skills ease the flow of information and knowledge sharing, feedback exchange and enable collective reasoning concerning emerging patterns and trends. This might help Palestinians create a more conducive environment for social renewal and economic regeneration.

Building network thinking and transnational competences within Palestinian Homeland/Diaspora communities might lead to more open political system in Palestine. This allows Palestinians to make use of the emerging global political order of open governance, open democracy and open politics. Moreover, linking the Palestinian struggle with the global search for sustainability and social justice might have an impact on the process of state-building and negotiations with Israel. Unlike the oppressive knowledge flows, this openness might help provide Palestinian

leaders, policy makers, scholars and activists with new outlooks, conceptual tools, and terminology to alter the systemic networks of injustice and de-development.

4. Transnational Social Capital for Socioeconomic Development

In a globally networked economy, knowledge has become a driving force for economic development and social transformation. In this context, Diaspora communities have a growing potential to bridge knowledge gaps in the countries of origin. The combination of such trends has reshaped the experience of the Diaspora and has had serious consequences for development in expatriates' Homelands.

Advances in communication technologies offer a means of fostering Diaspora involvement in trans-border development initiatives. New technologies can facilitate Diaspora involvement in ongoing state-building and reconstruction efforts.

In the economic domain, Diaspora expatriates might address the need for job creation and provision of job opportunities through business outsourcing, helping entrepreneurs find new market outlets abroad and transferring knowledge to help small-scale farmers learn new practices and techniques. In addition, expatriates might offer electronic business initiatives to meet Diaspora needs, such as the creation of online schools to teach Diaspora children about their heritage and culture, thus enhancing their attachment to the Homeland.

PADICO: Investing in Palestine

Palestine Development and Investment, Ltd (PADICO) is a Palestinian Diaspora and Arab business initiative aimed at building the Palestinian economy. It was established in 1993 as a foreign, limited, public shareholding company in Liberia by a group of distinguished Palestinian and Arab businessmen.

Over the years, the company's operations have branched out in a variety of economic sectors, including infrastructure, construction, real estate, communications, tourism, industry and financial services. PADICO has partnered with local and foreign investors to undertake a number of major projects, such as the Palestine Telecommunication Group (Jawwal), the Palestine Securities Exchange (PSE), the Palestine Real Estate Co. (PRICO), the Palestine Tourism Investment Co. (PTIC), the Palestine Industrial Estate Development Co. (PEIDCO), the Palestine Industrial Investment Co. (PIIC) and the Palestine Poultry Co. (PPC).

Despite the adverse circumstances under which it operates, PADICO achieved substantial returns. In 2009, net profits reached 42.2 Million USD - nearly doubling those of 2008 (22.5 million).

Source: www.padico.com

The Indian Diaspora in the United States is an exemplary case. Indian expatriates instigated investment back home from multinational companies in the Information Technology (IT) sector. This has not only created high-skilled jobs in India, but has also enhanced the country's exports and reshaped overall economic performance (Gueron; Spevacek, 2008).

Qattan Foundation: we plant and they shall harvest

The A. M. Qattan foundation is a Palestinian Diaspora charitable foundation focused on transforming and preserving culture in Palestine and the larger Arab world. The foundation operates from offices in Ramallah, Gaza and London (U.K). It was founded in 1994, by Abdel Mohsin Al-Qattan, an international Palestinian businessman. He was born in Jaffa on November 5th, 1929. He left in 1947 to study at the American University of Beirut. At the time of his departure, he did not know that next visit home would come after five decades of continuous exile.

The foundation envisions a just, free and tolerant society actively engaged in the production of knowledge, literature and art. To achieve this vision, work is focused on two principle areas: education and culture. These are seen as pillars for human development and cultural transformation.

The foundation has a variety of programs, including the Qattan Centre for Education, Research and Development, established to improve both learning and teaching practices in Palestine and the Qattan Centre for the Child, established in Gaza to provide a wide range of learning resources to enhance curiosity and creativity among Gaza's youth. The organization has also launched programs in Culture and Science, as well as an Audio-Visual Project. Both aim to promote innovation and creativity in the Palestinian school system.

Source: www.qattanfoundation.org

In the socio-cultural domain, cyber exchange between the Diaspora and Homeland might lead to social innovation and new means of fundraising, mobilization and exploration into new opportunities for engagement (Cheran, 2003). This can especially benefit the country of origin where new social norms and process may be born out of the exchange.

The Indian experience demonstrates the role of expatriate knowledge networks in enabling economic transformation and brain *gain*. For example, the Global Indian Network of Knowledge (Global INK) serves as virtual facilitator of knowledge transfers from abroad that do not require overseas experts to relocate. Their primary focus is to enable youth in rural India and the urban middle class to become entrepreneurs.

5. Palestinian Canadians: Case Study

Canada is composed of people from all around the world. The most recent Canadian Census of 2006 found that 20% of all Canadians are foreign born, marking the highest proportion in the last 75 years. Canada also has the highest per capita immigration rate in the world, welcoming more 250,000 immigrants, often highly skilled and educated, every year.

5.1 Canadian Multicultural Communities

With more than a hundred ethnicities speaking more than two hundred languages, Canada is often cited as a model of multicultural cohesion. Newcomers arrive from all over the world, but the countries of origin and ethnic backgrounds have changed significantly since World War II. Canada now attracts and accepts fewer immigrants from traditional Western sources, such as Europe and the United States, and more from Asian countries, such as China, India, the Philippines and Pakistan. This shift was due to the changing of the Immigration Act that once excluded applicants based on race, occupation and nationality, to a points system with three alternative categories: family, economic class and refugee status. The fact that Europe has also enjoyed an improved standard of living since the 1960's has contributed to this shift by lowering their rates of emigration.

The shift in Canadian immigration has enhanced ethnic and linguistic diversity in the country. According to Census 2006, Canada received around 1.11 million immigrants between 2001 and 2006, with the largest proportion (58.3%) having been born in Asia (including Arab Countries). This is in stark contrast to 1971 when only 12.1% of recent immigrants came from Asia.

In 2006, those born in Europe made up the second largest group of recent immigrants (16.1%). Europe had been the main source of immigrants, reaching 61.1% of the total in 1971. Recent Immigrants born in Central and South America make up 10.8%, while another 10.6% were born in Africa. This ethnic diversity has generated a vibrant language linguistic culture. In 2006, the majority (70.2%) of the foreign-born population reported a mother language other than English or French. Among the foreign-born who had a non-English, non-French mother tongue, the largest group was Chinese (18.6%), followed by Italian (6.6%), Punjabi (5.8%), German (5.4%), Tagalog (4.8%) and Arabic (4.7%).

The majority (68.9%) of recent immigrants tend to settle in the larger metropolitan areas, such as Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. The concentration of immigrants in cities has turned these centers into hubs for Diasporas increasingly wired into their respective countries of origin through a web of social networks and economic exchanges. The cultural diversity and transnational mobility of Canadians presents them with new challenges and opportunities unimaginable a few decades ago. Canadians of all backgrounds have familial, working, educational, and cultural attachments and connections to another country. In addition, thousands of Canadian youth study work or travel abroad each year and more than 2.5 million Canadian live outside of the country. In today's shrinking world, Diaspora groups in Canada, including Palestinian-Canadians, are positioned to play an important role in developing both their Host and Home countries²³.

5.2 Palestinian Diaspora⁴

Palestinian migration to Canada was driven by a number of factors. It started after 1967, when a few immigrants arrived from the city of Nazareth and the surrounding areas as part of an Israeli initiative to alter the demographics of historical Palestine. At the time, few university graduates came to Canada for fear that they would not be able to return back home to Palestine. This included prominent Palestinian-Canadian scholars such as Ismail Zayed, Fadle Naqib, and Yusuf Omar. In the 1970's, additional families from the Palestinian communities inside Israel joined their relatives in Canada, nevertheless the number of Canadian-Palestinians remained below 5000 in 1980.

After the Israeli invasion of Lebanon of 1982, thousands of Palestinians from Lebanese refugee camps arrived in Canada. Larger waves from Kuwait and other Gulf countries arrived in the aftermath of 1991 Gulf War on humanitarian grounds or as political refugees. In spite of these waves, Palestinian immigration was not limited to politics. In the late 1980's, Canadian authorities started to allow immigration on a business investment basis. As a result, Canada became profitable for immigration consulting agencies, especially among Palestinians living in the Gulf. Many Canadian delegations visited Gulf countries, such as Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates, to recruit wealthy Palestinian investors. The final wave has come in the last decade, when thousands of Palestinian political

² www.statcan.gc.ca accessed August 25, 2010.

³ www.Canadaworld.ca accessed September 5, 2010

⁴ www.multiculturalCanada.com accessed September 8, 2010

refugees from West Bank arrived following the second Intifada and the degraded economic and security situation it left in its wake.

According to the 2006 census, the number of Canadian residents of Palestinian origin was 23,975 individuals. However, the published figures for Palestinian-Canadians is a significant underestimate because so many Palestinians have entered the country using Jordanian, Egyptian, Israeli or Lebanese travel documents. Often Palestinians claim to want to conceal their identity to avoid being regarded as “security risks”.

Due to ongoing cultural cross-fertilization, the Palestinian Diaspora in Canada enjoys a favorable position to facilitate transfers and remittance to Palestine and other sites of Palestinian Diaspora, including Lebanon, Jordan and Syria. Yet, they also must maintain a fine balance between trying to nurture connections back home and integrating into their host countries.

**Canadian Residents of Palestinian Origin,
Census 2006**

Canadian Provinces	Palestinian population
Ontario	15,000
Quebec	4,940
Alberta	1,580
British Columbia	1,275
Nova Scotia	575
Manitoba	300
New Brunswick	135
Prince Edward	95
Newfoundland	45
Saskatchewan	30
Total	23,975

Source: www.statcan.gc.ca accessed September 12, 2010

5.3 Economic and Community Life

The Palestinian community in Canada was impacted by the first Gulf war of 1991 and the arrival of large numbers of investors and business owners from the Gulf. They have created a business community that branches out into real-estate, construction services, wholesale and retail sales, as well as other businesses that are connecting their host country to places in the

Arab world. At the professional level, Palestinian-Canadians are represented in virtually all professions, including academic scholarship, formal politics, community leadership, medicine, banking and finance.

Palestinian Canadians excel in organizing their communities at the local level. They have collaborated with other Arab communities to form non-profit and community-based organizations in nearly every Canadian city with high concentrations of Canadians of Palestinian or Arab origin. Mr. George Farkouh and Mr. Shawki Fahel are prominent examples of the Palestinian Diaspora.

George Farkouh originally from Acre, became a refugee in Lebanon. In 1959, he immigrated to Canada at the age of 12. He was elected mayor of Elliot Lake, Ontario where he served until 2006.

In contrast, Mr. Fahel arrived to Canada from Nazareth in 1968, at the age of eighteen. He started his contracting business in 1979. The business prospered and branched out in new sectors. He now owns several businesses in contracting and trading with headquarters in Waterloo (Hanifi, 2000).

In recent years, the emergence of a second generation of Palestinian-Canadians has taken Palestinian activism in Canada to higher levels. Through collaboration with other Canadian activist groups, Palestinian community leaders and university students have created many initiatives to foster local and global solidarity with the Palestinian struggle for justice and self-determination. These include the creation of Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid (CAIA), Toronto Palestine Film Festival (TPFF), the Canadian Boat to Gaza, Al-Awda – Canada, Global Boycott Divestment and Sanctions Campaign, Beit Zatoun, and a number of other initiatives⁵.

While the Palestinian-Canadian Diaspora is active and relatively organized at the local level in Canada, the community lacks coordination at both the provincial and federal levels. This lack of coordination is usually worse in times of crisis in Palestine and the broader Middle East. This lack of a clear strategy might be influenced by political division in the Palestinian homeland and lack of an overarching Palestinian Diaspora strategy abroad (Schulz, 2003).

⁵ www.diversitywatch.ryerson.ca accessed October 10, 2010

6. Palestinian Diaspora Strategy: Connecting Palestinians in an interconnected World

The rapid evolution of information technology is transforming thinking about the Diaspora and migration experiences. In the past, immigrants and refugees were isolated from their home countries. Today, the use of modern information technology by expatriates is increasingly enabling them to maintain daily relations with their homeland. This is enabling new forms of socialization online and the capacity to transform offline social structures.

This new thinking is enabling governments to use Diaspora capital for socioeconomic development through business entrepreneurship, financial remittances, investment, skills and knowledge circulation back home. Governments have launched initiatives to mobilize Diaspora for development purposes. Usually, new Diaspora programs face the challenge of recognition by expatriates, as many are reluctant to get involved in common ventures with government. Building real partnerships with the Diaspora, and the engaging them in a productive dialogue, might be a lengthy and complex process. To do so, governments have created specific institutions to work with Diasporas, designed websites to reach out to expatriates and introduced specific incentives to attract their contributions to the home country (Ionescu, 2007).

Many developing countries in Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe and South America have created diverse Diaspora engagement strategies and institutional structures in their governments. Diaspora structures range from a distinct Diaspora ministries to quasi-government institutions. India, Syria, Georgia and Bangladesh are amongst those which have dedicated ministries. The ministries aim to inform those abroad of conditions in the homeland. For instance, the Ministry of Overseas Indians Affairs runs a three week “Know India” internship among second and subsequent generation Diaspora to mobilize investment, skills, knowledge sharing and, ultimately, return and resettlement. In contrast, countries such as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Benin, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Chile, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Lithuania, Mali, Mexico, Romania, Senegal, Tunisia, Turkey and Peru all have special bodies dealing with Diaspora communities (Ionescu, 2007).

Over the years, governments and civil society in the Homeland have launched a broad range of Diaspora initiatives, networks and associations to facilitate their contributions to their countries of origin. They have developed business networks, such as the Lebanese Business Network, the Transnational Chambers of Commerce, professional networks, such as the Global Korean Network, scientific networks, such as the Latin American Scientific Association and skills development initiatives, such as Africa Recruit, Hometown Associations and Ghana Abroad.

To connect Palestinians around the world and enhance their contributions to Palestine, an effective Diaspora Engagement strategy is needed. The following recommendations are suggested to initiate the process:

- ✧ Map the Palestinian Diaspora
Building an effective engagement strategy starts with gathering data on the Diaspora, including geographical distribution, gender, age, skills, residence status, remittances flows and belonging to networks and groups. Furthermore, work with the Diaspora requires flexible methodologies to acknowledge its diversity and include a broad range of people and places. The widespread usage of social and mobile technologies will help in gathering this information.

- ✧ Raise awareness of Diaspora's potentially revolutionary role in developing Palestinian communities locally and globally.
The Diaspora has been described as a development agent by many observers, including governments in their Homeland, international development organizations and researchers. By carrying out cross-border transfers and remittances, the Diaspora facilitates the circulation of wealth, knowledge and ideas around the world and expands transnational social spaces. Social networks and mobile phones offer unprecedented opportunities to build sustained bridges between the Palestinian Homeland and Diaspora communities by facilitating communication and collaboration quickly and inexpensively.

Raising awareness of the new models for Diaspora engagement, such as Digital Diasporas, Mobiles for Development and Development 2.0 in Palestinian communities around the world might consolidate development efforts and lead to better outcomes. Palestinian universities, research institutes and media outlets should design education, training and research programs to build transnational skills and promote a culture of cooperation, sharing and volunteerism within Palestinian society in order to reap the benefits of a rapidly changing global economic order.

- ✧ Build human and institutional capacities to engage the Palestinians
Diaspora

While the PA recognizes the importance of the Diaspora, there is still little in terms of an institutional framework for engaging them. We recommend that each country develop its own initiatives to reflect its unique social, cultural, economic and political needs.

In Palestine, ‘crowdsourcing’ strategies might offer an effective avenue of Diaspora engagement in socio-economic development and state-building. Crowdsourcing is a mode of open collaboration within groups and communities to facilitate participation and innovation. The advantage of this approach is that it fosters transparency and performance by limiting bureaucracy and inefficiency.

The generative nature of crowdsourcing in Diaspora engagement might lead to additional benefits. To name a few: transforming education in Palestine, enhancing cultural identity and building human capacities to meet the challenges development and state-building. By enabling a mutually beneficial engagement strategy to both Homeland and Diaspora populations, the flexibility of crowdsourcing strategies facilitates the flow Diaspora investments, remittances, knowledge transfers to Palestine. At the same time, crowdsourcing supports Diaspora efforts to preserve the cultural identity in the second generation by fostering their connections with Palestine.

The Palestinian Diaspora is facing an identity crisis with their children. They need support to preserve the heritage, culture and language in subsequent generations, especially while Palestine remains occupied and so difficult to access. Through crowdsourcing innovation, Palestinian authorities and civil society organization in the oPt might form partnerships to design special Diaspora youth programs through the Ministry of Education, universities and youth organizations to connect Palestinian Diaspora youth with their cultural heritage. Building such cultural links could be done through organized visits to Palestine and support by social media.

- ✧ Reduce obstacles facing Diaspora engagement
- Diaspora engagement sustainability requires continuous feedback to eliminate barriers and facilitate cross-border exchange. Palestinian authorities are advised to explore structural, cultural, social and political barriers that may hinder success and limit the technical possibilities for engagement. Policy makers need to address various

barriers that might limit Diaspora involvement in the development agenda. In addition to the Israeli occupation, this might include engagement in the ongoing national divide between Fatah and Hamas, bureaucracy, corruption and poor consular services.

Open strategies, combined with effective leadership and communication capacities, might help to overcome such barriers. Open leadership reduces the influence of stereotypes, strengthens transparency and facilitates constructive cross-border development initiatives.

- ❖ **Develop a Diaspora engagement philosophy**
To replace the dominant perceptions of victimization and separation with a new vision of empowerment and engagement among all stakeholders, including government bodies, media, the private sector, international organizations, embassies and diplomatic mission in Palestine, a philosophical shift is needed.
- ❖ **Ensure that Diaspora engagement is part of a broader information and communications technology strategy in Palestine**
Open development models foster the power of the group to achieve shared goals and build digital innovation by enabling low income communities and marginalized groups to use technology creatively and in innovative ways. Nevertheless, such benefits require a culture of sharing and transparency, an effective information technology strategy, knowledge and skills and, most importantly, a visionary leadership.
- ❖ **Encourage the establishment of Hometown Associations**
Building Hometown Association is one of the most original Diaspora engagement strategies. Typically formed by immigrants who seek to support their places of origins and maintain sense of community, Hometown Associations might fulfill several functions, including social exchange, political influence and development support.
- ❖ **Encourage the use of Web 2.0 tools for citizen and Diaspora diplomacy purposes**
As a participatory technology, Web 2.0 allows people to cooperate, create, publish, share content, comment and chat with each other in real-time around the world. This instant interactivity offers an unprecedented opportunity for Palestinian social media users, living in the Diaspora or inside Palestine, to influence local and global policies.

Palestinian Web 2.0 users might use citizen diplomacy skills to counter stereotypes and brand Palestinian cultural heritage locally and globally.

✧ Establish a Palestinian Institute for Diaspora and Transnational Studies

Due to the growing importance of the Diasporas in today's shrinking world, building a Palestinian Institute for Diaspora and Transnational Studies to research, analyze and enhance linkages with the Diaspora would benefit socioeconomic development in Palestine. This institute could also work on a range of topics, including transnational education to prepare university graduates to work abroad and entrepreneurship promotion among Palestinian youth at home and abroad.

✧ Study Diaspora engagement policies and strategies of other countries

As part of enhancing Diaspora engagement in Palestine, it is important to make use of the successful strategies developed by other countries, such as India.

Due to India's integrated approach to expatriate engagement, they are now the biggest beneficiary of migrant remittances (Vezzoli, 2010). According to the World Bank, Indian expatriates remittances totaled USD\$ 55 billion in 2010, compared, with USD\$ 51 billion for China. The Indian expatriate experience could serve as a model for decision makers concerned with the development and sustainability of Palestine.

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