

# Framing Arab Poverty Knowledge Production: A Socio-bibliometric Study

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## Introduction

Based on Mannheim's theory (1936) that knowledge is socially constructed, and its production process is influenced by the social context in which it occurs, this study seeks to identify and analyze the social influences and forces behind the knowledge produced and disseminated in the form of academic journal articles on the topic of poverty in the Arab World. Certain features and elements of the final body of knowledge (the articles) will be taken as telling indicators of the process in hindsight. These will be the basis of three kinds of analyses that will be carried out: content analysis, authorship analysis, and citation analysis. In content analysis, I will scrutinize the poverty concepts used, the methodologies applied, the use of theory, including theoretical frameworks of the studies, the prevailing political and epistemological paradigms, the structure of the articles, and the types of articles (critique, essay, fieldwork). In authorship analysis, I will survey the sociological markers pertaining to the authors and institutions producing the articles. In citation analysis, I will analyze the characteristics and trends of the references. Ultimately, I seek to answer the following: What are the social factors conditioning the production of academic articles on poverty in the Arab World, and what are the observed trends thereof?

## Methodology

A sample of 201 articles was retrieved by running a keyword search in Arabic, English and French, for the period between 2000 and 2014, for (Poverty OR Destitution OR 'Social Exclusion' OR 'Social Class') AND ('Middle East' OR Arab OR [The name of every Arab country]),

or their equivalent in Arabic or French. English references were primarily obtained from the Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus (136 articles), but Arabic references were scarcer, primarily due to the limited availability of Arabic databases. E-Marefa, the only reliable Arabic database, yielded 29 results, while the rest of the articles were retrieved from other online or print sources. The French articles were obtained from the CAIRN platform (9 articles). Only articles that explicitly tackle 'Poverty' in any Arab country were analyzed, including comparative studies of other countries or regions.

In a spreadsheet, coded information on each article's sociological markers was collected and imported into SPSS for analysis: title in English; title in original language; language; translation; date of publication; journal issue number; journal of publication; author; number of authors; institutional affiliation; country of institutional affiliation; region of institutional affiliation; discipline; diasporic status of author; geographical scope; keywords; and a list of cited authors. The spreadsheet was also uploaded to Cortext Manager, an online Network Analysis tool that produces network maps of cited authors. The top cited authors were identified, and a co-citation network map was created using a statistical semantic measure proposed by Weeds (2003). The network is also organized according to clusters of interconnected subgroups of authors distinguished by colored circles. This is done by applying the Louvain community detection algorithm based on the work of Blondel et al. (2008).

Qualitatively, an analysis of the most cited authors was first conducted to examine their discipline, institutional affiliation, connection to other cited authors, their most commonly cited contribution to the body of poverty knowledge, and how their influence prevails in the articles. Secondly, a qualitative analysis of a sample of knowledge produced from within the Arab world was conducted to scrutinize the following elements: dominant paradigms, the choice of the research question, and what was being actively left out or dismissed.

**Table 14.1** Number and percentage of production by language

Language	No	%
<i>Arabic</i>	55	27.4
<i>English</i>	136	67.7
<i>French</i>	10	5
<i>Total</i>	201	100

### Sociological markers of the articles

The first major insight from our study is that the Arab poverty knowledge network of producers and influencers is highly elitist in nature in that it is run by certain institutions and academics to the exclusion of other factions of both the knowledge society and society as a whole. According to O'Connor (2001), this echoes the politics of knowledge in broad terms; well-placed researchers act as advocates for certain theoretical frameworks and methodologies. On one hand, this has resulted in the professionalization of poverty knowledge and the adherence to established standards of scientific expertise. On the other hand, 'the claim to scientific objectivity rests on technical skills, methods, information, and professional networks that historically have excluded those groups most vulnerable to poverty ... putting poverty knowledge in a position not just to reflect but to replicate the social inequalities' (O'Connor, 2001: 11). Arab poverty knowledge appears to be a political act or an exercise of power, in which academic elite overwhelmingly affiliated with the UN System institutions (World Bank, Economic Research Forum, UNDP, ESCWA, etc.) determines how poverty is defined, measured, studied, and ultimately dealt with.

### Authorship

The majority of the authors in our sample are university academics (73.2%) hence the university is numerically the biggest producer of knowledge on poverty, and more frequently from inside the Arab World than outside. The second greatest producer is international organizations (10.5%), namely the World Bank. It is noteworthy that the World Bank is also the most cited author in the 201 articles.

Granted that all 201 articles are academic journal articles, working papers, or conference papers, 28.9% of them are working or conference papers published by the Economic Research Forum (ERF). The publication of the remaining articles is more or less divided equally among 102 academic journals, each publishing no more than 3.5% of the articles. This indicates that there is no single dominant producer of Arab poverty knowledge, but the ERF is nevertheless an outstanding one.

All of the articles published by the ERF are written from an econometric approach, mostly by academic economists, and mostly in the English language. This reflects the fact that, of the entire sample of articles, 67.7% are in English, 27.4% in Arabic, and the remaining 5% in French. Although almost half of the articles (47.3%) are coauthored by two or more authors,

one author emerges as the most prolific: Sami Bibi has written 7% of all articles and almost half of the English articles on Tunisia (Bibi, n.d.). It is noteworthy that he is also the seventh most cited author by the authors of the 201 articles.

### **Geography of production of articles**

Approximately 65.2% of authors were located inside the Arab World at the time of writing their respective articles. This leaves over a third of them writing from outside the region. Narrowing down to country, we find that 12.4% of authors were located in Iraq, 11.9% in Egypt, 10.9% in the USA, 9% in Tunisia, 7.5% in Jordan, 7% in Lebanon, 6% in the UK, 5% in Canada, and the rest were distributed among numerous other Arab and non-Arab countries.

### **Content as captured by keywords**

How has the ideological evolution of the global poverty discourse influenced Arab poverty studies? A quantitative study of recurring keywords across the articles reveals that State Policy and Intervention is the most prevalent one (64.65%). This is in line with the Post Washington Consensus paradigm that promotes state intervention. After that, by decreasing frequency, we find that Social Inequality, Poverty Measurement, Rural Poverty, Employment, Poverty Causes/Determinants, Education, Urban Poverty, and Spending Behavior are tackled. The prevalence of Social Inequality as another top keyword also points to the adoption of the pro-poor growth literature in the poverty discourse after decades of neglect.

Looking at articles written from inside the Arab World and the rest of the articles separately, we find that the three most frequently referenced keywords/themes are still State Policy and Intervention, Economic System, and Social Inequality. This means that writing the article from inside the Arab World does not isolate the author from the dominant paradigm in the West. However, Poverty Causes, Education, and Employment are much more prevalent in articles written in the Arab World while Rural Poverty is more frequent in articles from outside the Arab World.

Separating the articles by language shows that Arabic articles are the most likely to tackle Education or Poverty Causes/Determinants, the English ones are the most concerned with Social Inequality, Rural Poverty, Poverty Measurement, and Spending Behavior, whereas the French ones

have the highest frequencies for State Policy and Intervention, Economic System, Employment, and Urban Poverty.

### **Content as captured by research topic**

Analyzing the choice of research questions tackled in the articles reveals another prevalent paradigm that echoes that of the West: poverty research ‘takes postindustrial capitalism as a given and focuses primarily on evaluating welfare programs, as well as on measuring and modeling the demographic and behavioral characteristics of the poor’ (O’Connor, 2001: 16). The two most frequently chosen research topics in our sample are, by decreasing order of frequency: poverty alleviation methods – mostly subsidies and transfers with the present economic system taken as a given – at 18.4% and profiling/measuring poverty within a certain location and/or for a certain demographic at 15%. After that comes pro-poor growth at 9%, where the effect of economic growth – again with the present economic system taken for granted – on the poverty level is studied. Pro-poor growth is based on Dollar and Kraay’s (2001) paper and is in line with the ‘inclusive growth’ rhetoric put forth by the World Bank.

At 8%, Income Inequality is the fourth most tackled research topic. Only 5% of articles tackle gender inequality, and only one article provides social class analysis. This not only emphasizes the prevalent tendency to reduce human welfare to a mathematical equation, but also reflects the struggle between the individualist and structuralist interpretations in Western poverty knowledge and has created ‘tension within liberal thought’, as explained by O’Connor (2001: 9).

The individualist interpretation has become the most prevalent one as there is a ‘virtual absence of class as an analytic category, at least as compared with more individualized measures of status such as family background and human capital’ (idem). Another sign of the domination of individualist rhetoric is ‘the reduction of race and gender to little more than demographic, rather than structurally constituted categories’ (idem). The present economic and social structures are taken as inevitable conditions rather than systems that are ‘socially created and maintained’ (idem). The discourse on poverty and reform has unnoticed ideological boundaries that ‘eclipse an alternative, more institutionalist and social democratic research tradition’ for the sake of ‘remaining realistic or “relevant” for political purposes’ (idem). This individualist rhetoric is also echoed in the articles tackling the determinants of poverty as the main topic and making

up 7% of the sample. The determinants are identified using regression analysis, and the possible factors considered are most often characteristics specific to the poor people or the space they inhabit, thereby isolating them from the grander scheme of the social and/or economic structure they are bound to. Conspicuous by its absence is a discussion of the non-poor's role or impact on the poverty level. Another remarkable observation is that the determinants of poverty are tackled less frequently than poverty reduction strategies. The discourse focuses on solving the problem more often than it tries to uncover its causes.

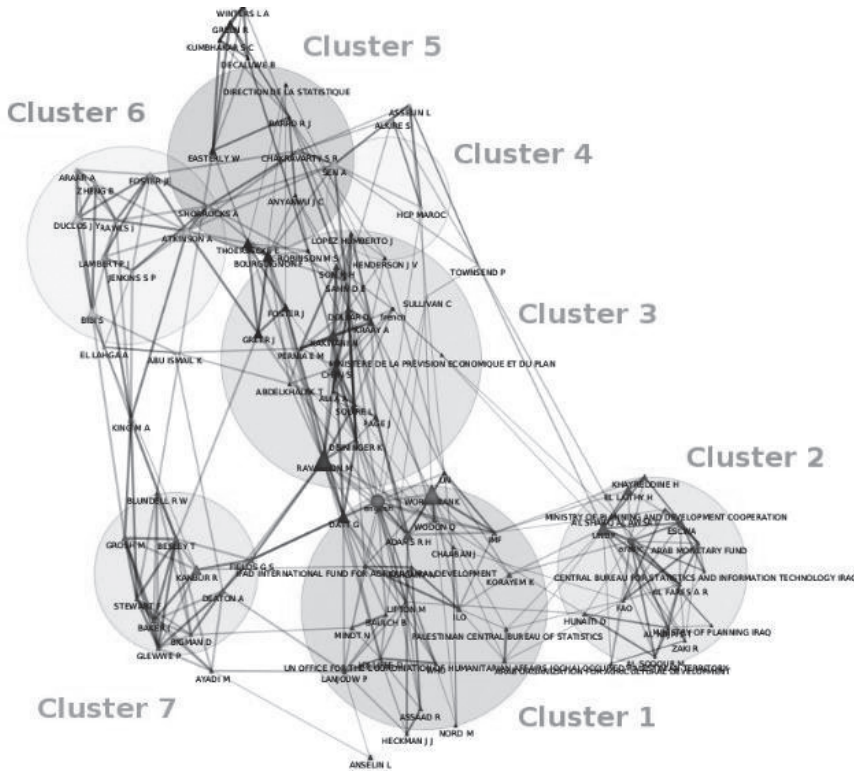
### Network and citation analysis

The citations used in the articles are indicative of the collective knowledge production process and the dynamics of the underlying discourse among authors on a global level.

#### *The co-citation network*

Figure 14.1 depicts a map of the co-citation<sup>1</sup> network connecting the top 100 cited authors, who are the major influencers of the authors of our study. Rather than focusing on the authors of our study, i.e. authors of Arab poverty articles, the map is a visualization and mathematization of the broader field of global poverty scholarship reflected in the citations of the sampled articles. This is based on the assumption that scholarship can be seen as discourse among agents engaging in a network. Authors that are co-cited are inserted into a discourse with one another, forming together a certain intellectual tradition, niche or another commonality amongst them.

As Figure 14.1. shows, the nodes of the network are heterogeneous: the triangles correspond to authors cited at least five times in our sample, and the dots correspond to languages of the articles –Arabic, English, or French. The size of the node is directly proportional to the total number of times the respective author is cited. Every incident of pairs of cited authors is taken into account to construct a co-occurrence matrix from which a proximity network is tracked using a statistical semantic measure proposed by Weeds (2003: 82). The grey lines linking the nodes indicate co-citations, with widths directly proportional to the number of co-citations. The circles depict clusters, or groups of highly interconnected nodes representing authors that are cited simultaneously in the entire set of articles.



**Figure 14.1** Co-citation map by language of article  
 Source: Author’s own, created using the CorText platform

The network is also organized according to clusters of interconnected subgroups of authors distinguished by colored circles. This is done by applying the Louvain community detection algorithm based on the work of Blondel et al. (2008). Each cluster is assigned a tag (‘English’, ‘Arabic’, ‘French’) indicating the most commonly used language in the publications citing the authors of the corresponding cluster (chi2 specificity score). The computation was performed using the CorText platform of IFRIS<sup>2</sup>. In order to analyze the network and understand the roles and relationships of its agents, we evaluate the position of the co-cited authors in the network map as a whole and in his or her respective cluster.

The map shows that the nodes representing the 100 top cited authors are well-connected across all three languages, yet each language belongs to a distinct cluster comprised of even tighter interconnections. The total number of clusters, each of which is identified by a distinctly colored circle, is seven and we describe them as the following:

*The English language cluster*

The English articles, represented by the red dot in the pink circle in the middle, belong to a cluster in which they are shown to frequently cite authors including, by decreasing order of citation frequency: The World Bank (WB), Richard H. McAdams, Karima Korayem, the International Labor Organization (ILO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Luc Anselin, and others. Although the WB is the top cited author in the network and the cluster, it is not uniformly co-cited with each of the agents of the English language cluster. As shown by the map, the darkest edges linked to it are linked to a few other authors, and lighter edges link it to the rest of the cluster members. It is most heavily co-cited with Quentin Wodon, an Adviser in the World Bank's Education Department, Richard H. McAdams, an economist who was part of the Economics Research team at the World Bank Group, the IMF, which is also highly affiliated with the WB, and the 'UN' as a generic author. This subcluster is highly redundant as all of the aforementioned are highly affiliated with the WB or the UN system institutions. This indicates that the authors who cite the WB tend to cite researchers and institutions highly affiliated with the Bank hence creating a discourse hegemonized by the narrative of the WB.

*The Arabic language cluster*

The Arabic articles, represented by the green dot in the teal circle at the bottom right, belong to a cluster in which they are shown to frequently cite authors including, by decreasing order of citation frequency: the UNDP, ESCWA, Heba El Laithy, Doukhi Hunaiti, and others. Similar to the English language cluster yet to a lesser extent, the discourse in this cluster is heavily influenced by UN agencies and economists affiliated therewith.

*The French language cluster*

The French language cluster is depicted by the blue circle in the center, and its top co-cited authors are, by decreasing order: Martin Ravallion, Gaurav Datt, Nanak Kakwani, Shaohua Chen, Aart Kraay, and David Dollar, all of whom have worked at the WB as economists or statisticians. Hence the French-language poverty discourse is also heavily influenced by the WB narrative.

*The Amartya Sen cluster*

At the periphery of the network (beige circle at the top) lies a smaller, singular cluster with fewer nodes and looser connections within itself and with other clusters. It is dominated by a singular yet highly influential author who holds a distinctive position in the poverty discourse. Amartya Sen is one of the few economists who are cited for their theories in addition to their econometric methods and poverty measurements. He is most frequently cited



for his axiomatic framework (Sen, 1976) and theories on multidimensional poverty (Sen, 1987). He is one of the top cited authors who are not affiliated with the UN system institutions even though he has influenced the UNDP's Human Development Reports and the WB's poverty rhetoric with his capability approach to defining poverty.

#### *The Foster-Greer-Thorbecke cluster*

The cluster depicted by the purple circle at the top has Francois Bourguignon, William Easterly, James Foster, Erik Thoerbecke, and Joel Greer as the main hubs. The most central node is Francois Bourguignon, Professor of Economics at the Paris School of Economics and former Chief Economist and Senior Vice President at the World Bank in Washington. He is most cited for his work on transfers and poverty targeting (Bourguignon and Fields, 1997).

#### *The Atkison-Bibi-Duclos cluster*

A sixth distinct cluster, depicted by the light green circle is centered around the economists Jeans-Yves Duclos, Anthony Atkinson, and Sami Bibi. Duclos is a researcher at CIRPÉE, an Inter-University Centre on Risk, Economic Policies, and Employment and a program coordinator at PEP, an international organization that links researchers globally. He is most cited for his work on measuring Horizontal Inequity (Duclos and Lambert, 1998).

#### *The Kanbur-Deaton-Besley-Fields cluster*

The last cluster in the co-citation network – the green circle at the bottom left – has several mainstream economists, some of whom are highly affiliated with the World Bank. The core node is Ravi Kanbur, a British economist and university professor who worked at the WB for almost two decades and directed the World Development Report. He is most cited for his work with Tim Besley on food subsidies (Besley and Kanbur, 1988).

### **Top cited authors**

Tracking down the institutional affiliations of major contributors to the discourse has shown, as depicted in Table 14.2, that the top 25 most cited authors on the topic of Arab Poverty are comprised of 19 central authors positioned at the cores of the co-citation clusters, three semi-peripheral authors positioned in between the core and the periphery of each cluster, and three peripheral authors positioned at the outer borders of the clusters. The central authors can be grouped into: authors who are directly affiliated with the UN system and its specialized agencies: The World Bank, UNDP, ESCWA, and their employees; two Arab economists affiliated

**Table 14.2** Most Cited Authors

<b>Cited Author; Network Position</b>	<b>No. of Citations</b>	<b>Most Commonly Cited for</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Connection to Other Cited Authors</b>
<b>World Bank; Central</b>	208	World Development Report data		Specialized agency of the United Nations
<b>Martin Ravallion; Central</b>	173	Poverty measurement steps (Ravallion, 1998)	As of 2013 he was the inaugural Edmond D. Villani Professor of Economics at Georgetown University, and previously had been director of the research department at the World Bank, Washington	Director of research department at WB from 1988 to 2013
<b>UNDP; Central</b>	119	The Human Development Reports		Specialized agency of the United Nations; Influenced by Sen's capability approach
<b>Gaurav Datt; Central</b>	66	Poverty targeting (Datt and Ravallion, 1995)	Monash University, Melbourne, Australia	Has worked in research positions at the WB and co-authored numerous publications with Martin Ravallion

<b>Cited Author; Network Position</b>	<b>No. of Citations</b>	<b>Most Commonly Cited for</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Connection to Other Cited Authors</b>
<b>Amartya Sen; Central</b>	58	Multidimensional poverty (Sen, 1987) and the axiomatic framework (Sen, 1976)	Professor of Economics and Philosophy at Harvard University	Influenced UNDP's Human Development Reports
<b>Heba El Laithy; Central</b>	54	Poverty line studies (El Laithy, 1996)	Professor of Statistics, Cairo University	ERF Fellow, collaborates with Sami Bibi
<b>Sami Bibi; Central</b>	50	Methodology for studying pro-poorness of economic growth (Bibi, 2005)	Research Advisor, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), Labour Program, Research and Data Development (RDD) Division	ERF Fellow, collaborates with Heba El Laithy, has provided training workshops on econometric software (STRATA) for poverty analysis at the World Bank Institute and UNDP Syria, is closely connected to Jean-Yves DUCLOS
<b>Jean-Yves Duclos; Central</b>	47	Measurement of Horizontal Inequity (Duclos and Lambert, 1998)	Researcher at CIRPÉE (Inter-University Centre on Risk, Economic Policies, and Employment) and Professor at University of Laval	Has collaborated with Sami Bibi
<b>Nanak Kakwani; Central</b>	47	Economic growth and inequality (Kakwani and Pernia, 2000)	Professor of Economics at University of South Wales, Australia	Consultant: World Bank, Washington DC and UNDP, Manila

(Continued)

**Table 14.2** (Continued)

<b>Cited Author; Network Position</b>	<b>No. of Citations</b>	<b>Most Commonly Cited for</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Connection to Other Cited Authors</b>
<b>ESCWA; Central</b>	47	Economic indicators from Technical Papers		Specialized agency of the United Nations; Collaborates with UNDP
<b>Francois Bourguignon; Central</b>	45	Transfers and poverty targeting (Bourguignon and Fields, 1997)	Professor of Economics, Paris School of Economics	Previously: Chief Economist and Senior Vice President, World Bank, Washington, Worked with Chakravarty and Atkinson
<b>Erik Thorerbecke; Central</b>	43	Foster-Greer- Thorbecke class of poverty measures (Foster et al., 1984)	Professor of Economics, Cornell University	FGT measure was developed by Professor Erik Thorbecke, his former student Professor Joel Greer, and another graduate student at Cornell University at the time, Professor James Foster.
<b>Ravi Kanbur; Central</b>	43	Food Subsidies (Besley and Kanbur, 1988)	Professor of Economics, Cornell University	D. Phil. (Oxford). Thesis Advisers: Joseph Stiglitz, James Mirrlees and Amartya Sen) 1989- 1997 World Bank
<b>Anthony Atkinson (Sir); Central</b>	42	Inequality measure (Atkinson, 1970)	Warden, Nuffield College, Oxford	Co-authored a book with Francois Bourguignon

<b>Cited Author; Network Position</b>	<b>No. of Citations</b>	<b>Most Commonly Cited for</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Connection to Other Cited Authors</b>
<b>Shaohua Chen; Central</b>	41	Growth Incidence Curve (Ravallion and Chen, 2003)	Senior Statistician in the Development Economics Research Group of the World Bank	Senior Statistician in the Development Economics Research Group of the World Bank, Collaborated with Martin Ravallion and Gaurav Datt
<b>Joel Greer; Central</b>	38	Foster-Greer-Thorbecke class of poverty measures	US General Accounting Office, Washington, and previously with Cornell University	FGT measure was developed by Professor Erik Thorbecke, his former student Professor Joel Greer, and another graduate student at Cornell University at the time, Professor James Foster.
<b>Richard H. McAdams; Central</b>	38	Measuring inequality and poverty (Adams and Page, 2003)	Professor of Law at the University of Chicago Law School	
<b>William Easterly; Central</b>	30	Economic growth	Professor of Economics, New York University	World Bank: 1985-2001
<b>James Foster; Central</b>	29	Foster-Greer-Thorbecke class of poverty measures	Professor of Economics and International Affairs at The Elliott School of International Affairs at The George Washington University	FGT measure was developed by Professor Erik Thorbecke, his former student Professor Joel Greer, and another graduate student at Cornell University at the time, Professor James Foster, co-authored a book and co-taught with Amartya Sen

(Continued)

Table 14.2 (Continued)

<b>Cited Author; Network Position</b>	<b>No. of Citations</b>	<b>Most Commonly Cited for</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Connection to Other Cited Authors</b>
<b>Doukhi Hunaiti; Peripheral</b>	23	Rural Poverty (Hunaiti, 2005)	Professor of Rural Development and Agricultural Economics, University of Jordan	
<b>Karima Korayem; Peripheral</b>	21	Poverty measurement for Egypt	Professor of Economics, Faculty of Commerce (Girls), Al- Azhar University	Consultant to World Bank, UNDP, ESCWA, and ILO
<b>Luc Anselin; Peripheral</b>	21	Spatial Regression Analysis (Anselin, 2003)	Director of the School of Geographical Sciences and Urban Planning (ASU), Arizona State University	
<b>Satya R. Chakravart y; Semi-peripheral</b>	21	Poverty measurement (Chakravarty, 1983)	Professor of Economics at Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata, India	Co-authored publications with Bourguignon, Ravi Kanbur
<b>ILO; Semi-peripheral</b>	21	Employment figures		Specialized agency of the United Nations
<b>Angus Deaton; Semi-peripheral</b>	20	The measurement of poverty in India and around the world (Deaton, 2005)	Professor of Economics and International Affairs at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs and the Economics Department at Princeton University	

*Central Authors: The United Nations System*

with the ERF; and academics (mostly economists) who have influenced the work of the UN specialized agencies but are not directly affiliated with them. The semi-peripheral authors are the ILO, which is another UN specialized agency, and two academic economists unaffiliated with the UN and its agencies. The peripheral authors are two Arab economists unaffiliated with the ERF or the UN agencies and a niche economist who is specialized in spatial econometrics.

The most central authors who make up the cores of the co-citation clusters are the agencies and employees of the United Nations System consisting of: the World Bank, UNDP, ESCWA, and the authors who have worked for or collaborated significantly with these institutions: Martin Ravallion, Gaurav Datt, Nanak Kakwani, Francois Bourguignon, Ravi Kanbur, Shaohua Chen, and William Easterly.

The most cited author in our sample is the World Bank, a specialized agency of the United Nations System.

*Central authors: Academics unaffiliated with the UN System*

The top cited authors outside the UN System are mostly academic economists with long careers as university professors, who have influenced the work of the UN agencies in traceable ways, yet have never been employed by a UN agency. The top cited one in this category is Amartya Sen, Nobel Laureate and Professor of Economics at Harvard University. He contributed to formulating the United Nations' Human Development Index, which has become 'the most authoritative international source of welfare comparisons between countries' (Steele, 2001). He has also contributed the multi-dimensional definition of poverty, which examines the 'capability' to function in society and includes dimensions in addition to income, such as education, health, security, self-confidence, access to opportunities, facilities, resources, and human rights (Sen, 1987).

*Central authors: Arab economists affiliated with the ERF*

The only Arab authors with a central position in the co-citation network are Sami Bibi and Heba El Laithy, both academics and Research Fellows at the ERF. Heba El Laithy is an Egyptian statistics university professor, who is most cited for her poverty line studies (El Laithy, 1996). It is interesting to note that they are mainly cited by articles whose authors are affiliated to institutions within the region. This means that there is a local debate on poverty.

*Semi-peripheral authors*

The ILO is the only UN agency without a central position in the co-citation network. As an organization specialized in employment rights and data, its semi-peripheral position might be due to its less relevant role in the poverty discourse than, say, that of the WB's or UNDP's. It is most commonly cited for employment figures. Another semi-peripheral node is Satya Chakravarty, an Indian economist who has co-authored publications with central authors, such as Francois Bourguignon and Ravi Kanbur.

*Peripheral authors*

Three of the top 25 cited authors have a peripheral position in the co-citation network: Doukhi Hunaiti, Karima Korayem, and Luc Anselin. Hunaiti and Korayem are both Arab academic economists. While Korayem has worked as a consultant to the World Bank, UNDP, ESCWA, and ILO, Hunaiti is rather independent of the UN system. Korayem is most cited for figures on Egyptian poverty while Hunaiti is cited for his work on rural poverty (Hunaiti, 2005). Luc Anselin is also an academic economist specializing in spatial econometrics and is not affiliated with the UN system.

**Qualitative analysis of Arab poverty knowledge production**

Qualitative text analysis of the articles in our sample reveals that Arab poverty knowledge is of an overwhelming ideological nature, reflecting the evolution of the Washington Consensus in the US. Poverty knowledge is 'a project of twentieth-century liberalism ... deeply rooted in the rise of the "new liberalism" that emerged in late nineteenth-century Euro-American political culture as an alternative to the laissez-faire individualism of the industrial age' (O'Connor, 2001: 8).

The Western discourse on poverty in Third World Countries, led by the World Bank (WB) and academic economists, has gone through three distinct stages of ideological evolution and paradigm shifts. The major reference point in this historical evolution is the Washington Consensus (WC), a term that represents the near-consensus of the international financial institutions, the American government, the Federal Reserve Board, and the major think tanks in Washington to implement certain policy reforms in order to stimulate growth, decrease inflation, maintain a healthy balance of payments, and distribute income in an equitable manner in the developing world (Lora, 2009). Accordingly, the three



phases are: the Pre-WC phase, the WC phase, and the post-WC phase (Saad-Filho, 2010).

There is a predominance of the rhetoric on the benefits of economic growth, economic reform/market liberalization, and subsidies and transfers as anti-poverty strategies then tested using policy simulation models. This, again, is in line with the ‘trickle-down’ paradigm that contends that poverty reduction is a by-product of economic growth and neoliberal policies. Again, inclusive growth is also present in the literature and represented by the term ‘pro-poor growth’. As expected (because they are not in line with the dominant paradigm), the role of charity, income redistribution, the private sector, education, and health care receives little attention in the sampled articles. While microfinance, as a major anti-poverty strategy, has received remarkable attention worldwide, it was rarely referred to in our sample. Even in the least neoliberalist articles, the market and economic performance are still advocated for whatever they are worth. To quote one of the articles using this rhetoric: ‘Despite the controversy about the causal link between openness and economic performance in the literature, the virtues of trade’s contributions to faster growth and poverty alleviation are generally recognized’ (Hassine and Kandil, 2008: 2).

In addition to the dominant neoliberal bias in the discourse, there is a less prevalent narrative that emerges in a minority of the articles. Its paradigms, frameworks, and talking points serve to point out the loopholes and omissions of the neoliberalist narrative while putting forth some alternative concepts, methodologies, and solutions pertaining to Arab poverty. The findings are based on qualitative text analysis of around 17 articles that comprise an alternative niche within the poverty discourse.

This anti-neoliberal discourse gives forth several arguments that challenge the benefits of globalization to alleviating poverty, criticize the effects of the Structural Adjustment Programs often prescribed for developing countries by the WB or IMF, and debate the validity of the ‘trickle-down’ argument. Besides explicitly contesting neoliberalism, some authors offer an alternative discourse by using qualitative methods to break away from the predominantly quantitative tradition in Arab poverty studies. Others refer to local faith-based concepts and solutions pertaining to poverty, revealing that, for the most part, they are in line with secular concepts and narratives yet offer untapped solutions designed to alleviate poverty and inequality. Only two articles study the historical context of Arab poverty by studying the history of colonialism, imperialism, war, and conflict.

One article does the exceptional by engaging the ‘voices of the poor’ in the study and comparing them with macro-level data.

## Conclusion

The findings in this study indicate that the majority of academic knowledge on Arab Poverty is modelled after the typical empirical economics article, based on the norms of the UN Systems institution cluster, in its structure and methodologies. There is hegemony of the discipline of economics of this topic and not enough sociological, anthropological, historical, political, or interdisciplinary takes on the subject. The quantitative method is used enormously, and the qualitative one is almost completely neglected. The data source is predominantly secondary, and there is a lack of purpose-specific fieldwork. There is a lack of any study of social inequality or class analysis as a bigger picture in which poverty prevails. Fawaz Traboulsi (2005) criticizes poverty studies, as they replace studies on income distribution – the latter at best restricted to the global level (the rich billion and the rest) – as poverty begins to resemble a natural catastrophe or a contagious disease. Consequently, we study poverty without studying wealth. We define the ‘poor’ but not the ‘rich.’ As for the middle classes, they are either pictured as being reduced in size and effectiveness and consequently dying out or are assigned the role of repositories of the democratic mission. In both cases, very little in terms of socio-political effort is invested in studying their political behavior, assuming that they might tend toward a homogeneous and unidirectional political behavior (Traboulsi, 2005: 530). In the same line, Thomas Piketty (2014) sees the tax system as a chief reason of the social inequality and thus calls for taxing capital to redress wealth redistribution.

The vast majority of articles are concerned with poverty alleviation strategies, but significantly less so with determinants or causes of poverty. There is a prevalent neoliberal paradigm propagated by the Washington Consensus and observed in the text analysis of the articles, as most champion the free market, trade liberalization, and globalization and neglect the role of the grander economic structure, market failures, the non-poor class, income redistribution, charity, microfinance, etc. Most articles are produced in English although two thirds of them are written from inside the Arab region by non-diasporic writers. There is a prevalent Western hegemony of thought, structure, and language. In a nutshell, ‘Globalization is now seen to be the only game in town: MENA had better learn the rules and start playing by them – or else’ (Bush, 2004: 676).

## Notes

\* The authors would like to thank the Lebanese Council for Scientific Research for its grant.

1 Co-citation is the frequency with which two authors are cited together by the same article.

2 CorText is the digital platform of IFRIS (Institut Francilien Recherche, Innovation, Société) which includes a direct access to network computing tools named the CorText Manager.

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