المجلس العربي
للعلوم الاجتماعية

Arab Council
for the Social Sciences

Conseil Arabe
pour les Sciences Sociales

# ANNUAL REPORT

2021

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## I. GENERAL INFORMATION

- Organization Name: Arab Council for the Social Sciences (ACSS)
- Date of report: March 1, 2022
- Reporting Period: January 1, 2021 - December 31, 2021
- Name, email address, and phone number of primary contact:

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- Some acronyms used in the report:
  - ACSS: Arab Council for the Social Sciences
  - A&F: BoT Administration and Finance Sub-committee
  - ASSM: Arab Social Science Monitor
  - ASSR: Arab Social Science Report
  - BoT: Board of Trustees
  - CCNY: Carnegie Corporation of New York
  - CLG: Company Limited by Guarantee
  - CoP: Critiques of Power
  - CSS: Critical Security Studies
  - ECFP: Early Career Fellows Program
  - EKWG: Ethnography and Knowledge Working Group
  - F&A: Finance and Administration
  - FPOS: Foundation to Promote Open Society (a member of Open Society Foundations – OSF)
  - IDRC: International Development Research Centre
  - LoA: Letter of Agreement
  - MoU: Memorandum of Understanding
  - MPK: Mapping the Production of Knowledge
  - NewGen: New Generation of Social Scientists in the Arab Region
  - NPF: New Paradigms Factory
  - OSF: Open Society Foundations
  - PC: Program Coordinator
  - PD: Professional Development
  - RBM: Results Based Management
  - RGP : Research Grants Program)
  - RAP: Research on the Arts Program
  - Sida: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
  - SGP: Small Grants Program
  - BSCSS: Beirut School for Critical Security Studies
  - ToC: Table of Contents
  - ToR: Terms of Reference
  - WHR: World Humanities Report

## II. PROJECT ENVIRONMENT AND INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGY:

Another eventful year for the Arab region, Lebanon and the ACSS, 2021 was witness to a gamut of challenges. Some parts of the Arab region continued to experience spiraling violence and upheavals, falling into chaos, while others were subject to intensifying authoritarian measures and suppression of freedoms. At the same time, Covid-19 continued to incur casualties and threaten the lives of people around the world, with new variants of the disease appearing in the second half of the year. However, 2021 also saw large scale national and global campaigns to vaccinate populations resulting in an increasing normalization of, and coexistence with, the disease, minimizing the number of fatalities and largely assuaging public fear. On the other hand, in Lebanon, political, banking and fiscal crises that began in late 2019 have grown worse over time and continued to impact negatively the lives of ordinary people. Most of 2021 witnessed a national political impasse with the failure to form a cabinet to manage the ailing economy and bring a closure and justice to families that suffered from the Beirut port explosion of August 2020. Lebanon continued to experience high inflation and a shortage of access to basic goods and services. The worst infrastructural problems have been the severe electricity cuts and gas and fuel shortages.

Concerning the banking crisis in Lebanon, the funds in USD that the ACSS held in the bank before October 2019 are still difficult to access. They cannot be used for wire transfers outside the country and can only be used for internal transfers or withdrawals in small amounts. However, funds received after that date are kept in a "fresh dollar" account and can be transferred and withdrawn freely. Thus far, this system means that ACSS is able to conduct its business as before, although transactions tend to take more time and the bank is charging much higher fees and commissions on banking transactions.

As mentioned in the 2020 report, the ACSS Board of Trustees had agreed to try and open branches or affiliate organizations in Cyprus, Abu Dhabi and Jordan. Lawyers were hired in all three countries and paperwork prepared. However, of these, only measures towards the establishment of the Jordan branch seemed successful. In addition, the Board of Trustees decided in 2021 to pursue the establishment of an affiliate organization in the United States that would be a non-profit organization, registered as n 501 C 3.

At the ACSS, we have learned to navigate these difficult circumstances. We put in place and negotiated with the bank procedures for transferring funds to our community of grantees without major delays. Also, on the Covid-19 front, in fall 2021, we stopped working from home and reopened the office. With one exception, all office staff have received at least two doses of the vaccine. We continue to be mindful of social distancing in the office and still hold many of our

meetings and workshops online. In 2022, we are carefully looking into going back to face-to-face events, that are of a core value for our convenings and networking.

Our celebration of 10 years of active presence in the Arab region was the highlight of 2021. On this occasion, we organized ten successful webinars on different aspects of our work and the social sciences, some of which were jointly held with partner institutions. On the institutional development front, we commissioned an external evaluation of the ACSS, focusing on the years 2016 to 2020 that pinpointed areas of strengths and improvements and gave us a sense of direction for the future. We are using the recommendations of the evaluation as well as our own reading of what needs to be done to manage the on-going protracted crisis. In March 2021, we held electronic elections for six new members of the Board of Trustees, which included, for the first time, an equal number of women and men. Towards the end of the year, we launched an interim two-year strategy (2021-2022) to help us test new programmatic interventions and design a longer term seven-year strategy (2023-2030). All the while, our programmatic activities have continued without major delays or interruptions.

Moreover, after reluctantly having had to postpone the Fifth ACSS Conference from its original dates in May 2021 due to Covid-19, we succeeded in organizing our conference in December 2021, in an extremely innovative format: the conference was held as a hybrid in-person and online event in three Arab cities: Casablanca, Cairo and Beirut. Finally, 2021 ended on a good note as, after more than two years of paperwork, we were finally able to obtain official approval of establishing a branch for the ACSS in Amman, Jordan. This has enabled us to open a bank account in Jordan, which we believe will greatly reduce our banking problems and facilitate our financial procedures.

In the following sections we review the progress we made on the institutional and programmatic fronts in 2021, address the challenges we faced in each program as well as the measures we adopted in the face of surrounding events and changes.

### A. New Interim Strategy: 2021-2022

The Interim Strategy was designed to provide the guidelines for a two-year period to act as a bridge between the previous five-year strategy (2016-2020) and the planned seven-year strategy (2023-2030). This formulation was adopted by the Board of Trustees given the upheaval and uncertainties of the current times, which makes it impractical to set firm targets and goals. Instead, the interim strategy will be a framework to help the ACSS navigate both the immediate crises and also plan for incorporating the needed agility and flexibility into its long-term planning.

As mentioned in the section above, the economic, political, health and safety uncertainties facing the region and the globe have had direct implications on ACSS activities, constituents and operations. These include:

- Financial uncertainties (currency devaluation, difficulties in bank transfers; financial impediments to receiving and disbursing funds)
- Everyday security concerns given deteriorating economic and political conditions.
- Deteriorating infrastructure (electricity, transport, internet)
- Compromised health and wellbeing of staff.

Operationally, this underlines the importance of establishing sound Risk Management plans and procedures and diversifying structurally in order to spread risk (opening new branches and subsidiaries, fostering new partnerships)

Substantively, this underscores the importance of conceptualizing "the crisis" not as a momentary or passing situation, but as an ongoing condition. This means that "Crisis" itself becomes an object of analysis and knowledge production for the ACSS and the academic community in the region. Crisis also reshapes processes of knowledge production in fundamental ways and therefore implies a rethinking, for the long term, ACSS modalities, activities and programs.

## Methodology for Developing Interim Strategy

The Interim Strategy was developed through the following steps:

**Reflecting on Previous Five-year Strategy (2016-2020)- (February-March 2021):**

- Assessing the impact of 2020 – a pivotal year (Appendix 1– Targets of 2020 strategy).

1) Target 1 – Governance: Plans for this target were completed on time. However, the context changed significantly and therefore the needs have changed as well. The Interim Strategy outlines the new governance needs to be addressed, most significant of which is the diversification of the structure of the ACSS, by establishing branches, affiliates and partnerships in various countries in order to ensure smooth running of the organization and spread financial and operational risks.

2) Target 2 – Financial Sustainability: Significant progress was made on obtaining core funding and establishing partnerships for co-funded activities (six major programs are now co-funded with regional and international institutions). However, work on the endowment was slow; there were difficulties in identifying a consultant with the relevant experience and the financial crisis in Lebanon, starting in fall 2019, followed by the pandemic, derailed this work. The Interim Strategy picks up this issue and will try once again to achieve progress, given the importance of an endowment for long-term financial security.

3) Target 3 – Regional Reach: The two Focal Points (Palestine and Algeria) are performing valuable roles in strengthening outreach and providing ACSS with feedback on priorities and needs of the research communities in those two countries. Membership was also increasing exponentially during the first two years of the previous Strategy. However, the pandemic has slowed down progress on this front and attention was diverted away from establishing focal

points to establishing branches and bank accounts outside Lebanon. Still, connections with the membership have continued and even intensified in 2021, with several General Assembly and country-specific zoom meetings held in order to update the members on the ACSS and receive their feedback. The Interim Strategy proposes several activities to strengthen outreach to the members and other constituents.

4) Target 4 – Institutional Support: The activities for this target proceeded as planned and the number of institutions (research centers, university departments, collectives) receiving funding through grants programs is increasing. In addition, an inter-university network was formed through the New Generation Program. However, there is more to be done in this regard and the Interim Strategy proposes a focus on Institutional Membership in the coming period and on more networking of institutions of higher education and research.

5) Target 5 – Publications: the ACSS successfully increased its publications, and diversified the types of outputs, in the past period. Instead of a Journal as proposed in the Strategy, the BoT decided that an annual review publication, called *Qiraat*, would be launched and the first two editions are currently being edited for publication. In addition, however, the pandemic and the inability to hold in-person activities, shifted attention to virtual events and a new online presence. The year 2021 saw the organization of a series of highly successful ACSS webinars, both as outputs from various Working Groups and in celebration of the ACSS 10th anniversary. In addition, outputs from programs have diversified and now include podcasts, short videos and blog essays. The Interim Strategy continues to focus on Publications and Dissemination as vital areas of growth for the ACSS.

6) Target 6 – Research Uptake: This was and continues to be the most challenging of the Targets from the previous Strategy. Not only is the policy environment in the region unstable and generally unreceptive to evidence-based planning, but establishing collaborations between research and other institutions is particularly difficult. The ACSS did pilot a program for university and civil society collaboration (focusing on Lebanon) that could be continued and even scaled up to other countries if funding were available. Other types of planned collaborations were derailed by the events starting in fall 2019. In addition, several programs (most notably the New Paradigms Factory program) focus on building bridges between researchers and activists. The Interim Strategy focuses on dissemination to new audiences and also the proposed Working Group on "Rethinking Crisis" will focus on the regional context for research uptake under prevailing conditions.

- **Developing the Interim Strategy (April-June 2021)**

  - BoT discussions (January 2021, June 2021)
  - Discussion with BoT ad-hoc committee for the Strategy (Drs. Ragui Assaad, Mona Harb, Suad Joseph)
  - Internal discussions with staff

- Advice from consultants
- Recommendations from external evaluation (submitted in May 2021). (See section on "External Evaluation" below).
- The Interim Strategy was approved by the BoT in June 2021

➢ **Updating the Interim Strategy**

Between June and December 2021, the subcommittees of the Board of Trustees met several times to discuss specific activities to be held in 2022 that would lay the groundwork for the longer-term strategy and develop plans in manageable and yet ambitious and forward-looking ways. The committees include:

- Administration and Finance
- Membership
- Publications
- Academic Freedom, Rights and Societal Responsibility

The results of these meetings and other consultations (listed above) led to an updated version of the Interim Strategy. This update, and the list of activities, was approved by the BoT on January 31, 2022.

➢ **Interim Strategy – Ongoing Work**

Over the period of the Interim Strategy, work is focusing on the targets listed below, in addition to maintaining the ongoing robust programming of the ACSS which comprises more than 30 programs.

1) **Articulating what we do best**

In 2021, internal and BoT discussions focused on the areas that ACSS is performing well, but noted the changing contexts and circumstances that require some rethinking of practices.

✓ **Governance (leadership, accountability, responsiveness)**

The ACSS presents a positive model of governance in the region. The relationship between the BoT and the staff has been especially strengthened during this period due to the many important structural issues that needed to be discussed (establishment of new branches, financial crisis etc.) However, the external evaluation and also the consultations have noted that more attention needs to be given to communication with the ACSS membership.

✓ **Institutional culture (flexibility, nimbleness, innovation)**

The ACSS staff has grown rapidly over the past few years and now constitutes 16 full time and 7 part-time staff (including Focal Points) plus consultants hired for specific programs. This growth on one hand, and the difficult working conditions in Beirut on the other, have been challenging. However, staff have shown remarkable resilience, dedication and commitment over the past years

and have contributed to finding innovative solutions to the difficulties in running programs and organizing activities.

- ✓ **Program development (establishing thematic priorities, new modalities, new constituents)**

The ACSS currently has more than 30 programs (Appendix 2 - Current Programs and Activities). These signal that the ACSS is open to different constituents, disciplines, thematic priorities and types of knowledge production. Research and publications supported by the ACSS range from issue of Health and Wellbeing, to Culture and Arts, to Oral History and Gender Studies, to Security Studies and New Regionalisms. ACSS outputs (including the new webinars) speak to academic audiences but also to journalists and activists. Importantly, recently the focus on youth and students at the BA and MA levels, and launching of several online courses, have added new audiences for the ACSS. More needs to be done to study the impact of this work and programming and to link such findings to Monitoring and Evaluation efforts. The external evaluation pointed to the importance of strengthening the Monitoring and Evaluation function at the ACSS, and this has been taken up seriously in the Interim Strategy and will be an area of focus in the coming year.

- ✓ **Program management (committee structure, consultation, support to researchers)**

The fact that ACSS organizes almost all its programs and activities through specialized committees and consultation groups is important to its functioning as a network of networks, and for building new networks between researchers in the region. This is a highly successful component of the ACSS and takes up much staff time and attention. The ACSS is highly attentive to ensuring diversity on its committees and to including as many perspectives and voices as possible while securing efficient outcomes. This style of program management also decentralizes decision-making and brings in new people into the ACSS community. People who serve on committees often then run for election to the Board of Trustees and take on new roles in management and governance.

- ✓ **Convening, dissemination, publication (networking, diverse outlets, multilingualism, outreach to different audiences)**

As mentioned in several places in this document, this is an area of growth but also one that demands more sustained attention and investment moving forward. This was also noted in the external evaluation. Growing the dissemination and publication activities of the ACSS also requires bringing on board individuals with different skills either as staff or consultants in order to strengthen in-house capacities. The balance between Arabic, English and French in activities and outputs also has to be maintained. The Interim Strategy includes exploring new partnerships in order to strengthen this aspect of the ACSS.

2) **New Operational and Programmatic Tracks for Institutional Adaptation in Light of New Conditions (Reducing and Managing Uncertainty for the Institution and for Grantees, Research Affiliates, Partners)**

- ➢ **Institutional Strengthening and Governance:**

- Branches and new structures may require new staff and country 'boards' or consultants (Jordan branch and bank account have been approved; US based 501 C 3 'sister organization' currently under establishment);
- Better integration of existing Focal Points (Palestine and Algeria);
- Developing and implementing an integrated HR and staffing plan;
- Strengthening the tools and function of internal Monitoring and Evaluation;
- Establishing an ACSS "Alumni" network;
- Maintaining more sustained interaction with ACSS members, individual and institutional, by holding 3-4 virtual meetings with members over 2022;
- Focusing on developing institutional as well as honorary membership.

➢ **Financial Sustainability**

- Planning for increased overheads and indirect costs for premises, banking and staff costs;
- Anticipating potential changes in donor priorities and broadening donor base and network;
- Developing financial tools for: measuring true cost recovery, strategic budgeting and forecasting, including scenarios for best-case and worst-case situations, with the aim of maintaining continuity for core mission and programs;
- Continuing efforts to establish a robust Capital Reserves fund through negotiations with current long-term donors
- Begin efforts for an endowment drive through establishing a "Friends of the ACSS" committee;
- Continued convening and expansion of the annual Partners and Donors Forum;
- Studying the feasibility of launching ACSS 'services' that can recover costs (training in grants management, research ethics, data management and sharing etc.).

➢ **New Modalities and Mechanisms**

- Establishing a Working Group for producing knowledge on/in crisis, including impact on knowledge institutions
- Rethinking "policy outreach" in contexts of authoritarianism and state failure
- Rethinking audiences and working on a communications strategy
- Dissemination in new and creative ways ("tribune libre, short publications /blogs /interviews /conversations/ podcasts /videos etc.)
- Exploring new partnerships for publication and dissemination, especially for "*Qiraat*" and book publications

➢ **Institutional Alliances and Networks (ACSS as a network of networks)**

Continuing to strengthen and expand existing networks and partnerships and exploring new ones:

- Regional and International (e.g. CLACSO, CODESRIA, INTERASIA)
- Partners and Donors Annual Forum
- Knowledge Connections Annual Forum

- Humanities in the Arab Region Forum
- NewGen Universities Network
- Exploring the possibility of establishing an "Ethics in Research" Forum
- Exploring the possibility of establishing an Association of Regional Research Organizations

3) **Laying the Groundwork for a Seven-year Strategy 2023-2030**

Throughout the process outlined above, the focus will be on developing ideas and plans for the future strategy. The work on the seven-year strategy will begin in May or June 2022 at the semi-annual Board of Trustees meeting and will be completed and approved by January 2023. The broad aims of the new strategy will be the following:

- Reorganize ACSS as an institution able to effectively negotiate contexts of crisis
- Establish a secure and sustainable institutional and financial structure
- Create channels of consultation, including crowdsourcing
- Pilot and incubate new initiatives and programs and test new modalities
- Establish ACSS as an anchor and stabilizing factor, a safe and inclusive space and a support for researchers in these critical times

**Strategy 2030 - Initial Ideas**

Initial ideas for the Strategy that will be discussed and tested include the following:

- Reaching maximal institutional growth for efficient administration as well as regional representation and reach (fully staffed HQ, branches, focal points, committee structure);
- The Arab Social Science Monitor becomes a full-fledged observatory of the state of Higher Education and Social Science research in the region;
- ACSS becomes the go-to source for Ethics in Social Science Research, including the establishment of an Ethics Review Board and Electronic Platform;
- ACSS becomes major advocate for, and an example of, open access to publications and research data;
- Expanding support for regional researchers for every career stage;
- The ACSS Academy and other training activities, such as summer institutes, online courses and training workshops contribute to developing and providing innovative pedagogical resources in Arabic for alternative and supplementary social science education in the region;
- Maintaining a roster of regular, high-quality publication and dissemination outlets for different regional and international audiences.

## B. Results Based Management (RBM)

Overall and Specific Objectives and Logframe:

Since 2012, the ACSS has been implementing a Results Based Management (RBM) approach and developed a Logframe to monitor and measure projects and activities in terms of how they meet the overall and four specific objectives of the institution (Appendix 3 – Logframe).

The Overall Objective is:

"To achieve a functioning institutional structure that identifies and supports improved social science in the region".

The Specific Objectives are:

1) To improve and expand production and use of social science research to address regional issues;
2) To achieve a new and larger generation of social scientists integrated into regional networks;
3) To achieve institutionalization of ACSS as a credible recognized network of researchers; and
4) To promote and implement good governance within the ACSS (this was added in 2016 based on the external evaluators' recommendations).

In addition to internally documenting and monitoring activities, as of 2015, the ACSS has been conducting an annual survey of grantees that requests updates on outputs and publications and solicits their opinions on their experience with the ACSS. The annual survey has been developed for gathering data for the Logframe and is considered an important input for planning and monitoring institutional growth and programmatic activities. The 2021 survey was sent out on December 22, 2021 and elicited a 22% response.

Overall, the results displayed in the Logframe were satisfactory, keeping in mind the exceptional circumstances that we continued to witness in 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the reduction/cancellation of in person events.

The Logframe reflected the following increases compared to 2020:

- An increase in the number of publications resulting from grants and fellowships (15% increase from 2020)
- An increase in the number of collaborations with other institutions (65% increase from 2020)
- An increase in the representation of women researchers applying to the ACSS Fifth Conference (51% females vs. 49% males this year. All the previous conferences included more male participants)
- An increase in the number of female BoT members to reach 50% of the Board (In the previous BoTs, the highest female ratio was 33%).

- Other positive indicators: Social media outreach (+22%), monthly visitors to our website (+7%) from 2020.
- An increase in ACSS membership compared to 2020: Twenty-one new individual members (active, associate, student) and two new institutional members.

## III. ACTIVITIES AND DEVELOPMENTS IN 2021

### A. Institutional Development

*Funding for developing institutional capacities is spread across all ACSS grants through both direct and indirect support budget lines. Core funding from Sida and Ford is essential for this component.*

**Board of Trustees**

The 2019-2021 Board of Trustees met virtually via Zoom on January 19, 25 and 26, 2021. The January meeting always includes a review and approval of the finances of the previous year and of the upcoming year's budget. Those were reviewed and ratified during the meeting.

This meeting was preceded by the three BoT sub-committee meetings: Membership, Administration and Finance, and Publications. The BoT discussed and decided on the steps to be taken for the March 2021 election of six new BoT members. They also decided to postpone the Fifth Conference from May to September and organize it virtually if it proves difficult to have it in-person (the conference was then again postponed to December 2021). The Director General briefed the attendees on the status of establishing branches in Jordan and the UAE. During this same meeting the BoT approved the Risk Management and IT policies.

The applications received for the external evaluation were reviewed and a decision was made accept the proposal submitted by Dr. Maha Elsaid and Ms. Shahdan Aram, after negotiating the proposed rates.

March 9 & 10, 2021 witnessed the election of the six new BoT members. The election was done virtually and securely via the Simplyvoting website (www.simplyvoting.com) and the results were officially registered with the Ministry of Interior Affairs (Appendix 4 - BoT List 2021-2023)

The new BoT met virtually on April 1, 2021 to assign the various positions among its members. The results were: Dr. Mohammed Bamyeh (as Chair); Dr. Abaher Elsakka (as Vice-Chair), Dr. Mary Kawar (as Treasurer) and Dr. Fadma Ait Mous (as Secretary). In addition, as BoT members were assigned to the various sub-committees: Administration and Finance; Publications, Membership and Academic Freedom, Rights and Societal Responsibility.

Two orientation sessions were scheduled for the new BoT on May 7 and 12, 2021 to introduce them to: the ACSS organization and structure; new entities, branches and financial situation; overview of

budget and grants received; decision-making procedure; membership; and the various active programs.

## Administrative and Financial Systems and Processes

### Database and Information Systems

The process of harmonizing ACSS information systems is now active on three major fronts; the website, the central database system and the website. As described in the previous report, ACSS is now using Good Grants as a Grants Management System (GMS) and all the application forms are now built on the platform including: grants, membership, NewGen program and surveys.

To help achieve the synchronization between our central data base (Salesforce), the GMS and WordPress (content management system), ACSS is collaborating with EI Technologies MENA (Salesforce official partner), that will be responsible for mapping and creating the custom fields between the different platforms, and importing the legacy data into the database.

Regarding the website, ACSS contracted a reputable web development company, Wonder Eight, to design the new website and we are now in the development phase. We will have a link very soon to review the webpages. The link between the Content Management System and Salesforce will be done through application program interface (APIs), and the synchronization will be done in real time.

The IT Officer will be responsible for managing, configuring and maintaining all these platforms after their successful implementation.

Finally, the IT officer drafted the office IT Policy which has since been approved by the BoT and will be shared with ACSS staff. Among other things, the policy regulates purchase of IT equipment, the use of IT during travel as well as secure use of IT equipment in the ACSS.

## Staffing

In 2021 new staff members joined the ACSS team including:

- Rami El Husseini, started on September 20, 2021, as full-time Head of Operations
- Tania Khalaf joined as part-time HR consultant as of June 15, 2021

As we welcome new members to the team, we had to bid goodbye to colleagues who had been with us for a long time. Ms. Najwa Grace Tohme retired from her full-time position as Finance Manager on October 15, 2021, after eight years of service at ACSS. Najwa will remain with the ACSS on part-time consultancy basis until February 15, 2022 to ensure a smooth transition and handover to her successor. In addition, Ms. Jana Chammaa, Senior Program Officer, also left ACSS on December 23, 2021, to emigrate to the US.

By end of 2021, the office included 20 employees as follows: 15 Lebanese, one Egyptian, one Jordanian, one Palestinian, and two Bangladeshis, out of whom 13 are females and seven are males.

In addition to the Beirut-based staff, the ACSS focal points in Palestine and Algeria who work on a part-time basis, include two senior consultants and one administrative/program coordinators (two Palestinians and one Algerian), making the total gender balance 16 females and eight males.

The ACSS continued to rely on part-time consultants for programmatic work, sometimes due to the absence of appropriate full-time staff and sometimes due to the specialized nature of the tasks. We appointed:

Dr. Lana Salman, consultant for the ethics in social science research initiative from October 2021 to June 2022

Also, the ACSS has continued to use the assistance of the following consultants in 2021:

• Dr. Lucine Taminian – lead researcher for the Survey of Social Sciences in Iraq Project

• Ms. Muneira Hoballah – consultant for work on the Critical Humanities Initiative, including the Arab Region component of the World Humanities Report.

• Dr. Hoda Elsadda - lead researcher for the Arab Oral History Archive: Gender, Alternative Histories, and the Production of Knowledge, (Gender Oral History Archive – GOHA)

**Staff Professional Development (PD)**

As part of its mission of academic and knowledge enhancement in the region, ACSS invests in the professional development of its staff and encourages them to use the generous funding available for further education and enrichment of staff competence.

Funding is not restricted to programs and trainings related to the ACSS work requirements or mission, but is in fact open to the preferences of the staff member. Staff who make use of the PD opportunities are allowed to take up to 20 days during the year to dedicate to their studies.

In 2021 several staff members enrolled in educational and training programs as follows:

- ACSS contributed to the tuition fees for the second year of the PhD. program for Ms. Lubna Maaliki, Program Coordinator, at Blanquerna Unviversitat Roman Llull, Spain.
- ACSS covered membership fees of Ms. Nada Chaya, ASSM Project Leader, for the Population Association of America and the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population, as well as tuition for online courses she attended on Data and Knowledge Management at Johns Hopkins University ("Executive Data Science Specialization"), and at UC Davis, both through Coursera ("Data Visualization with Tableau Specialization").
- Ms. Rebecca Daher, Senior Program Assistant, enrolled with the IFA for the Certified Financial Analyst- Level 1 certification course.
- Ms. Hiba Hammoud, Events and Administration Coordinator, enrolled at the Lebanese American University for the Human Resources Management diploma, starting October

2021, and for a full academic year, in addition to English classes with the International House.

- Mr. Wassim Alam, IT Officer, enrolled with Formatech for the Certified Ethical Hacker program.
- Mr. Elie Rahmeh, Senior Accountant, enrolled at Morgan for Certified Management Accountant certification courses.
- Ms. Jana Chammaa, Senior Program Officer, passed her Certified Associate Project Management Exam CAPM
- Mr. Rami Offeich, Data Analyst, registered with the University of California specialization courses on "Big Data" and "Computational Social Science Specialization", both through Coursera.
- Mr. Elias Kattar, Senior Publications and Editorial Officer, enrolled at the Insituto Cervantes to learn Spanish as of October 2021.
- Ms. Farah Al Souri, Senior Grants Officer, completed her MA studies in public policy and international affairs, at AUB with support from ACSS. She also started her French language courses on September 2021, at Berlitz.

**Focal Points**

To ensure more robust regional outreach and networking, the ACSS decided to establish focal points in different countries. The structure of the focal point comprises:

- An agreement with a local NGO for administrative and financial support;
- A consultancy agreement with a senior researcher to oversee functions of the focal point on a part time basis;
- A small advisory committee of 4-5 prominent researchers serving on a voluntary basis.

The basic role of the focal point is to disseminate funding opportunities and assist potential applicants in applying to them; receiving financial reports and receipts from grantees and disbursing payments (when and if required especially where there are banking restrictions in place) to local ACSS grantees; the planning of training and networking events; providing feedback to ACSS secretariat and Board of Trustees on local/national thematic and programmatic priorities. At the moment, the ACSS has two focal points in Palestine and Algeria.

***Palestine Focal Point***

Covid-19 continued to affect life causing some delay in the work of the Palestine focal point. In addition, Israel waged a new war against the Gaza Strip which coincided with the Palestinian protests against the eviction of Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in Jerusalem and breaking into the Aqsa mosque. This was followed by an internal Palestinian political crisis as a result of the assassination of Palestinian activist Nizar Banat at the hands of the Palestinian security forces. Shortly in the aftermath of these events, six well known Palestinian organizations were classified as terrorist and illegal which had a generally negative impact on civil society organizations in Palestine.

**Book on "Social Engineering of the Colony":**

Despite the above crises, the focal point concluded the compilation of and edited volume on "Social Engineering of the Colony" - including seven chapters - and an introduction was written by Dr. Eileen Kuttab (head of the focal point in Palestine), Dr. Amira Salmi and Dr. Lena Meari. The volume was sent to the ACSS for a final revision, peer review and publication.

The book addresses how the Zionist colonial power dismantled developmental, administrative, legal and security projects in Palestine, which not only stalled the achievement of national developmental programs, but also changed the nature and character of Palestinian society. The book also addresses different survival strategies of Palestinians including: Confrontation and steadfastness, adaptation and adjustment and finally integration, all depending on the interests and circumstances of different social groups.

**Fragmented Identities Project**

Within the context of the project "The Colony and the Borders" a conceptual framework was developed for the third stage of the project under the title of "Fragmented Identities". The first stage included an elaboration on borders, their geographies and how they are represented on the ground. The second stage addressed Israeli policies to change the character of the Palestinian society. The third stage – Fragmented Identities - was announced on the website of *Al Marsad* (the NGO hosting the focal point) and other platforms in October 2021. More than 15 researchers expressed interest in writing on the topic and ten proposals were received, nine of which were approved. A meeting was held with the applicants on Zoom in order to explain the project, writing standards and time line. The project is expected to be completed in 2022.

**Research Project on Comparing Social Transformations - Gaza, Ramallah and a 1948 town.**

The project offers financial support to at least two researchers to undertake a comparative study between two of the targeted cities (Gaza, Ramallah and a 1948 town) to examine social transformations from 2010-2020. The project was announced on *Al Marsad* website in October 2021.

**Participation in the ACSS Fifth Conference**

The focal point organized a roundtable on Zoom on the Social Engineering of the Colony at the Fifth Conference of the ACSS in December 2021. Eight researchers participated in the roundtable that was divided into two events. The first was chaired and facilitated by Eileen Kuttab and the second by Dr. Lena Meari.

**Impact of Covid-19 on Higher Education in Palestine:**

In 2021 four Palestinian universities, three in the West Bank and one in Gaza, were selected to undertake a study using focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with students, academic staff and professional associations to examine the impact of Covid-19 on the quality of education and student activism on campus.

**Renewal of membership of academic guidance committee**:

Dr. Fardous Abdrabu from Bethlehem University and Dr. Samer Raddad from Jerusalem University joined the Academic Steering Committee of the Focal Point office. In addition to the two new members, the Focal Point now comprises Dr. Eileen Kuttab (director), Mr. Firas Jaber (coordinator), and Drs. Essam Younis and Lena Meari from Gaza and Ramallah, respectively. The committee held three meetings in 2021 to discuss the plan of work and as well as the ongoing projects.

***Algeria Focal Point***

The Algeria Focal point was also operating under difficult circumstances in 2021, both due to the ongoing political struggle and instability in the country and due to a particularly difficult experience with Covid-19. Many of the plans from 2020 had to be postponed to 2021. When we took the decision to organize events virtually instead of waiting till we could hold them in-person, we were able to initiate several good activities.

**Seminar on Anthropology in the Maghreb Countries**

A seminar was organized on Zoom on January 14, 2021 on "Anthropology in the Maghreb Countries: Practices and Theories" which was well attended by a large number of participants on the ACSS Facebook page and Zoom. Dr. Abdelrahman Mousaoui from the University of Lyons 2 France and Dr. Khaled Mouna from Moulay Ismail University, Morocco were the main speakers and the seminar was facilitated by Dr. Nacer Djabi the ACSS focal point in Algeria and professor of political sociology at the University of Algiers.

**Algeria Country Network Meeting**

On 23 January 2021 a meeting was organized for ACSS grantees from Algeria in order to create an active research network, enhance communications between them and familiarize each other with their research work academic products. During the meeting which was held on Zoom, participants had the chance to present their projects and receive feedback from their peers.

**Participation in the ACSS Fifth Conference**

The Algeria focal point participated in the ACSS Fifth Conference on December 9, 2021. The virtual event was divided into two parts. The first part was a roundtable on the "Linguistic Issue in Algerian Universities: The Case of Social Sciences". Dr. Khawla Taleb Al Ibrahim professor of linguistics at the University of Algiers 2, Dr. Sherif Idriss, professor of political science at the University of Algiers 3, Dr. Ammar Amer, historian and director of CRASC (Center for Social and Cultural Anthropology) as well as Dr. Nacer Djabi, head of the ACSS focal point in Algeria and professor of political sociology, University of Algiers participated in the seminar.

The discussion revolved around the linguistic problem in Algerian universities as a reflection of a larger problem in the Algerian society since independence. Participants demonstrated how the problem is reproduced by universities particularly in the social sciences which teach the disciplines in

Arabic while the labor market is mostly dominated by French. Participants shared their own conundrum with the issue of language, focusing on the relationship between their own French academic legacy on one hand, and the need to instruct these disciplines in Arabic to students who do not master French or English.

The second roundtable was on the "Popular Uprisings in Algeria". Dr. Louisa Ait Hamdouch, professor of political science in the University of Algiers 3, Dr. Ben Zanini Bel-Kassem director of research in political science, CRASC and Dr. Nacer Djabi professor of political sociology participated in the event which was facilitated by Dr. Wafaa Braham Chaouch. Participants discussed the sociology of the public uprisings in Algeria with focus on its generational, gender and urban dimensions. They also discussed the role of political parties and trade unions in the uprisings and emphasized the role played by the military institution which has made political change in Algeria inexorable.

**External Evaluation of the ACSS**

In 2021, in dialogue with its key donors, the ACSS commissioned an external evaluation to take stock of its programs and inform its future strategy. An open call for applications was disseminated in the summer of 2020 with a September deadline. Only six applications were received and reviewed by the ACSS leadership and the Administration and Finance sub-committee of the BoT and it was decided to extend the deadline to October 15, 2020 in order to encourage more applicants. As there were no new expressions of interest by the October deadline, a decision was reached was to invite the team comprising Dr. Maha El Saeed, professor at Cairo University and Ms. Shahdan Aram, independent evaluator, who seemed to have the most relevant experience for the requirements of this evaluation.

The timing of the evaluation – funded by Sida - was of great importance. The ACSS five-year strategy came to an end in December 2020 at a difficult time in the Arab region. As mentioned above, the decision was to develop a two-year interim strategy (2021-2022) to address the regional uncertainties and evolving crises, to be followed by a full-fledged seven-year strategy (2023-2030), which could make good use of the findings of the external evaluation.

Thus, the main goals of the evaluation were to: assess the success of the ACSS in the implementation of the previous five-year strategy as well as to provide general and specific recommendations that would inform the ACSS future strategy. While presenting a critical overview of all the ACSS programs, the evaluation focused primarily on the assessment of the Arab Social Science Monitor (ASSM), the New Generation program, in addition to the ACSS institutional capacity and development, and communications and publications.

The evaluators undertook a thorough study surveying and interviewing a number of grantees and fellows, donors, members of working groups, members of the BoT and sub-committees as well as staff. The result was a 60-page report followed by 40 pages of annexes including a great number of recommendations (Appendix 5 - Executive Summary).

Several events were organized to discuss the evaluation findings. The first presentation was with the BoT on June 30, 2021, the second with representatives of the ACSS donor organizations on October 21, 2021 and the third with the ACSS General Assembly on December 22, 2021. Since then, the director general has entrusted members of the ACSS sub-committees with the task of reviewing the recommendations, each sub-committee within its own jurisdiction, to come up with a plan of action for the ACSS to implement in the interim strategy and to include in the longer-term seven-year strategy.

**Membership**

Although for the past few years membership applications were on the rise, in 2021 the ACSS witnessed a noticeable decline in number of applications: 40 applications vs. 129 in 2020. We assume that the pandemic is the main explanation for this decline, as well as the fact that incentives for membership (such as the travel grants that ACSS was providing members) were no longer viable under Covid-19 restrictions. The BoT sub-committee on membership reviewed the applications and twenty-three of these, representing different membership categories, were accepted. By December 2021 the ACSS members represented the following categories: 81 active (voting) members; 520 associate (non-voting) members, 99 students (non-voting members) and four institutional members.

In their October 2021 meeting, the Membership Committee agreed to reinforce the role and involvement of professional associations in the area of social sciences in the region by concluding agreements with a number of select professional societies, including them as members at the ACSS and providing them with the support they may need to organize activities. In 2021 the Membership Committee also discussed the need to reach out and gain access to Arab countries in which the ACSS is not well represented such as Iraq, Libya, Yemen and Oman. In addition, it was decided to share with the General Assembly discussions, decisions and recommendations of the BoT and offer members the opportunity to reflect on various issues.

**Funding**

The ACSS was able to secure the following funding in 2021 for current and future projects. New grant funds were received from:

- University of Wisconsin: $40,000 to support the Arab Region component of the World Humanities Report.
- UNESCO: $30,000 to support research for the World Humanities Report.
- Sida: A supplement amount of SEK 500,000 was received to cover the ACSS External Evaluation consultancy expenses.
- Open Society Foundation – Amman: US$150,000 as a support for the "New Generation" for the period September 1, 2021 – December 1, 2021.
- University of North Carolina: A $148,633 subgrant agreement was signed to continue the work on the "Arab Social Science Data Archive" for the years 2021-2022.

- Fondation Maison des Sciences de l'Homme (FMSH): A grant agreement amounting to US50,000 was received to support work being done on the International Panel on Exiting Violence (IPEV) project for the period July 1, 2021 – December 31, 2022.

### B. Convenings

*Funding for these activities are drawn from the Sida grant, with grantees' participation expenses covered by their respective programs, including Sida, IDRC and Carnegie Corporation of New York*

The ACSS organizes a biennial Conference and a biennial Research Forum on alternate years in addition to other public events.

Research Forum

As mentioned in the previous report, the Fourth Research Forum planned for 2020 was canceled due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, some of the workshops that were slated to take place during the Forum were held virtually. (For more details about the workshops, see section on Grants and Fellowships and Training below).

By the end of 2021, the ACSS decided to organize its biennial Research Forum in the summer of 2022 in Beirut, Lebanon. Because of the cancelation of the 2020 Forum, we are inviting a large number of grantees and fellows from the last three cycles as well as current cycles of all programs, and expect to have around 130 participants (compared to 90 in the regular Research Forum). In addition to ACSS grantees and fellows, the Research Forum will be attended by BoT members and selection committee members who will act as chairs and moderators of the various panels and roundtables.

Fifth ACSS Conference

The ACSS held its Fifth Conference titled "Interrogating the Social Sciences in the Vortex of Crises: Waves of Discontent and Demands for Change" in December 2021. The chosen theme focused on interrogating the social sciences and knowledge production during turbulent times in the Arab region. The theme of the Conference reflected the continued desire of the ACSS to promote new approaches and paradigms emerging across the disciplines of the social sciences and humanities and to better understand the constraints and potentials that shape the Arab region.

Presentations explored innovative, intellectual and methodological tools necessitated by the severity of events in the Arab region and the world at large in the last few years, the latest of which has been the struggle, with varying degrees of success, against the spread of Covid-19. They also examined how protest movements in many Arab countries were compelled to reconsider collective actions, such as mass rallies, and to opt for safer protest activities. The Fifth ACSS Conference addressed these issues through four sub themes:

- Inequality and Resistance

- The State and Risk Society
- Infrastructure and Survival
- Global, Regional and National Ecologies

The ACSS conference – organized biennially - is usually held in Lebanon, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the format was changed in 2021 to ensure the safety of all participants. We divided the conference into three in-person, one-day events, each held in a different city across the region: Casablanca (December 2), Cairo (December 7) and Beirut (December 10). In addition, the Council focal points organized virtual roundtables focusing on Palestine and Algeria (Appendix 6- Conference Sessions) While this unique format was mainly driven by adjustments to the imperatives of the pandemic, it also reflected the commitment of the ACSS to ensuring convening, direct networking and free discussion as well as regional representation and inclusion. Among the adjustments, however, was the decision not to include any sessions by grantees or working groups in order to keep the numbers down to a manageable size.

A 12-person committee was in charge of organizing the conference and had begun working in mid-2020. It included five BoT members, the two Focal Point representatives while the remaining five members were drawn from among distinguished scholars across the ACSS networks. The committee worked collaboratively to identify the themes of the conference and writing the call. Two hundred and twelve abstracts from all over the Arab region and the whole world were reviewed and 120 abstracts (90 individual and 30 organized panels) from 30 countries across the globe were chosen to be included in the conference. Each abstract or panel proposal was reviewed by three members of the committee.

For the first time, the Conference was organized in partnership with other academic institutions in two of the countries where it was held: In Morocco, with Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane and Hassan II University in Casablanca. In Egypt the Conference was organized in partnership with the American University in Cairo

To launch the conference, distinguished author, Ibrahim El-Kouni, delivered the keynote speech under the title of "Interrogating the Concept of Change". The session was facilitated by prominent journalist and Moroccan TV personality, Adnan Yassin.

In Cairo, the opening session was given by Dr. Ahmad Dallal, AUC President, and the author of the Third Arab Social Science Report entitled **"**The Academic Universes of Social Scientists in the Arab World: Career Trajectories and Networks in Universities**".**

Finally, the Beirut opening session was a plenary on the theme of the Fifth Conference in which three - members of the organizing committee (Drs. Mounir Saadani, Ziad Abu Rish and Haider Saeed) served as panelists. A fourth planned panelist, Dr. Sara Mourad, was unable to attend due to contracting covid-19. The panel was facilitated by Dr. Suzanne Kassab, member of the ACSS

BoT. This concluding panel also served as the 10th and final webinar of the ACSS 10th anniversary series.

Morocco program: http://www.theacss.org/pages/fifth-conference-morocco-schedule
Egypt Program: http://theacss.org/pages/fifth-conference-egypt-schedule
Lebanon Program: http://theacss.org/pages/fifth-conference-lebanon-schedule

**Lessons learned**

Given the situation created by the pandemic including the severe medical measures required for mobility and the ensuing reluctance to travel, it would have been quite acceptable or even expected to cancel the conference or postpone it to next year. However, we at the ACSS were weary of losing face to face interaction and convening which is so central to our work and the raison d'etre of our organization. Thus, we were ready to experiment with a new way to convene the conference that would not compromise the health of our participants and at the same time, allow them to meet in person. The new format has allowed us to do so while expanding the geographical outreach of the conference to include more countries and create new collaborations and partnerships with prominent academic institutions in our region. Even though the format of the 2021 conference was necessitated by the pandemic, the experience has been successful in many ways that we may actually consider repeating it with refinements in future events.

The ACSS Annual Lecture Series

In 2015 the ACSS inaugurated its Annual Lecture event. Each series of four lectures is named after a prominent Arab social scientist. The Annual Lecture celebrates prominent social scientists from the Arab region and encourages research along the paradigms and perspectives that they developed. The first series was named after the Palestinian political scientist and historian, Dr. Hanna Batatu. The second series celebrates the Moroccan sociologist and activist, Fatema Mernissi.

**Fatema Mernissi Annual Lecture Series:**

In 2019 ACSS inaugurated the Fatema Mernissi Lecture Series in Beirut which coincided with the anniversary of the passing away of the late Moroccan writer and sociologist. In 2020, the second lecture by Dr. Omaima Abou-Bakr, professor of English and Comparative Literature at Cairo University was held on Zoom.

The third lecture titled "Transformations of Feminist and Queer Movements in the Arab Region: Storytelling and Societal Change" was held on November 30, 2021 on Zoom, and presented by Dr. Zeina Zaatari (the Director of the Arab American Cultural Center and adjunct faculty in Anthropology at the University of Illinois at Chicago).

Zaatari's lecture reflected on and analyzed feminist and queer movements in the Arab region including their social change projects, institutions and organizations, and knowledge production and

transformations over time. The lecture drew on Mernissi's storytelling methodology evident in several of her books and essays where she tells stories about her life, the lives of others including her family members and people she met, as well as stories from various oral histories. Zaatari also focused on the birth of the sexual and bodily rights/queer movements and their connections and critiques of the women's movements, then she addressed the problem of visibility which often accompanies social change projects.

A video of the event was uploaded to the ACSS YouTube Channel for further dissemination (Please see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W3PerFQqyQE)

A short video, produced by the ACSS about the life and the legacy of Fatema Mernissi, was also shown (Please see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7eyxkSYhPhM)

More than 460 participants from the Arab region and across the world attended the live stream on "Zoom" and "Facebook", and more than 260 comments and questions were received. The lecture also received wide coverage in local and regional media platforms. For the media articles (Appendix 7 – Fatima Mernissi Media Coverage).

Donors' and Partners Forum:

On June 23, 2021, the ACSS facilitated the organization of a Donors and Partners Forum under the title of "Supporting Research and Knowledge Production in the Arab Region". The meeting was co-organized by the following ACSS donor organizations:

- Carnegie Corporation of New York
- Ford Foundation
- International Development Research Centre of Canada (IDRC)
- Open Society Foundations
- Swedish International Development Agency (Sida)

The three and half-hour meeting, which took place on Zoom, was attended by 20 organizations representing private foundations, public funding institutions, bilateral and multilateral organizations. It included three sets of presentations under the titles of 1) Patterns and Needs in Higher Education with a Focus on the Social Sciences and Humanities; 2) Priorities of Donor Organizations and 3) Research in Conflict (Appendix 8: Agenda and List of Participants). Each set of presentations was followed by discussions, the highlights and main points of which are summarized in the following section.

There was a consensus about the potentials to study digital knowledge production in the Arab region and an increasing sense of excitement about the opportunities but also concerns about the limitations of digital divides and the possible impact on rights and freedoms of researchers. Moreover, participants acknowledged that as the knowledge production ecosystem is becoming more diverse than ever before, with the rise and consolidation of a variety of knowledge producing organizations both from academia and civil society, there is a need for donors to reassess their

funding strategies and approaches to decide whether they are catering well to such a diverse ecosystem. Also, there seemed to be an agreement about the need for the Partners and Donors Forum which can serve as a Funder Affinity Group - a platform to share quandaries and best practices informed by field experts and practitioners. Several participants are already reaching out to each other and to the ACSS to explore and pursue ideas that were raised in the meeting. They are also interested to know how to help and support alternative and informal groups of young activists eager to find solutions for their societies.

General Assembly Meeting

The ACSS scheduled a General Assembly meeting via Zoom on December 16. In order for the meeting to take place, a quorum of 43 members was required. At the scheduled time of the meeting, only 40 members (including the BoT members) had signed up and only 39 members joined the meeting. According to the law, if there was no quorum, the meeting is to be postponed. A call for another meeting takes place, a week or ten days after the first meeting and would be legal regardless of the number of attendants.

The meeting was postponed to December 22 and was attended by 38 members. The agenda of the meeting included reporting on ACSS administrative and financial developments in the past two years, followed by an update on the establishment of branches and/or offices for the ACSS, the main findings of the external evaluation of the ACSS, efforts to establish an endowment, and new programs at the ACSS (NewGen). Members of the General Assembly were engaged in the discussions, had important comments to make on the activities of the ACSS as well as ideas for the sustainability and development of its programs.

### C. Grants and Fellowships Programs

*Funding for the ACSS grants and fellowships program are from Sida (RGP, ECFP and NPF); IDRC (RGP); Carnegie (ECFP); Mellon Foundation (RAP, RGP and ECFP), OSF (NPF) and IDRC (SGP).*

Following is a review of the progress made in the core grants offered by the Grants and Fellowships Unit in 2021:

**Research Grants Program (RGP)**

RGP is based on open call for proposals for research under a broad theme selected usually in consultation with the Board of Trustees. It provides funding and support for up to 18 months for individuals and teams and 24 months for collectives and institutions, and targets regional and diaspora researchers, senior and junior researchers post the PhD.
The RGP program is now in its 9th cycle. The theme for the first three cycles was "inequality, mobility and development"; the following three cycles carried the title "environmentalism, impoverishment and social justice movements: Interdisciplinary perspectives" and the third three cycles, which were launched in 2019 now address the theme of "health and livelihoods in the Arab region: wellbeing and vulnerability in conflict"

**RGP Cycle 8:**
The Grants and Fellowship unit launched the call for applications for Cycle 8 on August 13, 2020 and closed it on December 8, 2020. We received 42 applications from individuals and teams; no applications from collectives or institutions. We decided to extend the application deadline until January 28, 2021, and implement an intensive dissemination strategy for the call to attract applications from institutions and collectives and also ensure a diverse geographic reach. Indeed, the submission rate increased by 152% pushing the number of applications to 106 from 11 Arab countries distributed as follows: 47 Individuals, 43 Teams, 13 Institutions and 3 Collectives.

The ACSS secretariat eliminated 31 out of the 106 applications because they were either incomplete and/or ineligible. It is worth mentioning that the selection committee has the right to retrieve screened-out applications and bring them back into the pool if they did not agree with the decisions of the secretariat.

Selection Committee Meeting – February 17-18, 2021:
The selection/advisory committee convened on February 17 and 18, 2021 with all members serving as both selection and advisory committee. During the meeting which was held online, the committee reviewed all the highly ranked applications. Their decisions were as follows: four awards; three conditional awards, 16 revise and resubmit and 83 Reject. It is worth mentioning that 15% of the applications – which is higher than previous cycles - received a 'Revise and Resubmit' decision to submit for the next cycle. These applications came from: seven individuals, seven teams and two institutions. One major reason - related to the shortage of funding – was behind the rise in number of revise and resubmits. As is the practice, the Grants and Fellowships team informed the selection committee about the available budget for RGP8. After they did their selection, the committee realized that the budget we had was not enough to cover all selected projects. Consequently, the committee had to revisit their ranking decisions and ended up finally selecting seven projects for funding. As a result, several of the proposals the committee had chosen to fund were moved to the revise and resubmit category. The silver lining in this is that the development of a relatively large group of revise and resubmits encouraged the committee to pay special attention to this category of applicants and find ways to help them develop their proposals for submission to the following round of RGP. In their advisory meeting held on February 24, 2021, the committee discussed several options to do that, and one of the concrete results was the organization of a webinar to educate the interested public about the topic and encourage researchers, including revise and resubmits, to send applications to RGP 9.

By the end of the selection meeting, the committee issued a statement reflecting on the pool of applications and the decisions they have made. The selection meeting concluded by selecting seven projects (three individuals and four teams) from Morocco and Palestine (Appendix 9 for full details on the awarded projects).

Advisory Committee Meeting February 24, 2021:

We organized a three-hour meeting for the selection/advisory committee on February 24, to discuss their observations and comments on the round of selections they just completed including their opinions about the general trends as well as research agendas and gaps. The meeting was useful in that it brought up for discussion both procedural and substantive issues. To start with, the committee confirmed again that they favored the current arrangement whereby they all took part in the reading and selection of proposals. Initially, Grants and Fellowships had suggested - mainly for budgetary reasons - a two level arrangement whereby some members read all proposals and the rest reviewed the shortlisted ones and reached funding decisions. The committee emphasized again that the best part of the selection process was that they all read the proposals and were educated in the process by their colleagues who represented different disciplinary perspectives, thus enriching the discussion.

On the procedural front, as indicated above, the committee discussed how to help applicants write better proposals by addressing the call requirements and all proposal components. Based on their recommendations, we revised the call to include specific questions on each of the required elements (e.g. research problem, theoretical framework, methodology etc) that applicants had to respond to. The committee also recommended that we revisit the different weights we assign to the proposal elements for their review (for example more weight to research questions and research problem). On a more substantive level, the committee noted the difficulty encountered by applicants in thinking and writing their methodology sections and the ethical considerations discussion particularly in the context of the fieldwork uncertainty created by Covid-19. They suggested that applicants be required to dedicate sections in their proposals to discuss the new challenges they are facing rather than assume that fieldwork will proceed smoothly without problems.

Two clear geographical and substantive trends were uncovered in RGP8. The first is that the overwhelming majority of the winning proposals came from Morocco and the second is that many of the proposals addressed Covid-19 and cancer. While the first finding was a vote of confidence in the Moroccan research community who demonstrated that they had a research agenda and strong interest in the topic, it also showed that as a unit, we needed to put in place a better outreach and dissemination strategy of the call so it reaches a wider audience in other Arab countries. As for the second finding, the committee suggested that they capture the interest in rising research themes and educate the public about important yet unexplored areas by organizing webinars and writing blogs and think pieces on different issues. This would help expand the scope of potential applications and provide direct assistance to the revise and resubmits as they developed their proposals.

Grantees' Workshop – April and May, 2021:
The workshop for cycle 8 was scheduled to take place in conjunction with the ACSS Fifth Conference planned for May 2021 in Lebanon. Due to the uncertainty imposed by the pandemic, the ACSS decided to postpone the conference till December 2021. As a result, the workshop was held online via Zoom on April 28-29, 2021. In addition to group discussions and presentations, each grantee met separately with a member of the selection committee for an hour in order to present

their projects and address the comments provided by the committee (either as recommendations or conditions) prior to starting the project (Appendix 9 - Agenda and email communication). From our experience with grantees, these one-on- one meetings are greatly appreciated as opportunities where they receive close mentorship and valuable comments before the launch of their projects.

Additionally, we asked our new cohort of grantees to read the ACSS Research Ethics Guidelines and fill out a questionnaire on the ethical approaches they will be adopting in the field and beyond. Dr. Jamil Mouawad - ACSS Consultant on Research Ethics - reviewed the responses to the questionnaire and designed one-on-one sessions focused on ethics and gave comments to grantees on their ethical questions and approaches.

Moreover, grantees from Cycle 7 and 8 will be invited to present their work at the ACSS Fourth Research Forum scheduled to take place in June 2022 in Beirut.

**RGP Cycle 9**:
Cycle 9 of the Research Grants Program was launched on August 12, 2021 (see announcement here). The deadline for applications' submission was November 23, 2021 and the selection meeting will be held on January 26 and 28, 2022. The awardees will be asked to attend a workshop prior to starting their grant.

Prior to launching the call, we reflected on the discussions that happened during the February advisory committee meeting and revised the call to elaborate on the guidelines for writing a proposal. We reframed the section on how to write a proposal to provide detailed instructions that help applicants specifically address all the required issues.

Additionally, and based on the above discussions of the Advisory Committee and our observations from previous cycles particularly on the need for better geographical diversity and expansion of the pool of grantees, we organized an information session on Monday October 11, 2021 (one month prior to the RGP 9 application deadline) that targeted researchers interested in the topic who wanted to learn more about the study of health from a social science perspective, as well as applicants to the first two cycles of RGP who did not make it to the list of funded proposals. We designed the webinar so it would have two parts. The first dealt with trends in health research as well as framing and conceptual issues and the second would address methodological approaches and ethics of research. Six of the seven members of the committee took part in the webinar presenting in the first part on: why the social sciences are needed for the study of health, the relationship between health and livelihoods, and unexplored areas in Covid-19 research. In the second part, the presenters shared their own methods and approaches in health research particularly in situations of conflict areas, working with health providers as political actors and technical experts, and finally the ethics of doing research on health.

The webinar was attended by around 80 participants from the Arab region and the diaspora including: Algeria, Canada, Egypt, Germany, Malaysia, Lebanon, Netherlands, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Kingdom, United States, Yemen and Austria. It was conducted mainly in Arabic (one presentation only was in English but we had English, Arabic and French translation) and the committee clearly succeeded in engaging the audience who asked several interesting questions. To watch the webinar please click here and for the English translation of the recording please click here.

**Early Career Fellows Program (ECFP)**

The Postdoctoral Fellowship Program was launched in 2015 to enable young researchers, up to three years out of the PhD, to pursue their research and publishing plans, become part of Arab research networks, plan a research career in the Arab region and expand their opportunities in finding tenure in academic institutions in the region. In order to respond to existing needs and talents in the region, the program is open by theme as well as to all disciplines in the social sciences and humanities. Starting with cycle 5, the program was renamed the Early Career Fellows Program (ECFP) and the term of the fellowship was extended from 9 to 12 months.

**Cycle 8, 2021**:
Cycle 8 was launched on February 19 and closed on May 26, 2021. For this cycle we received 18 applications from six Arab countries, compared to 16 applications in the previous cycle. The selection committee composed of five members from Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, Tunisia and Palestine met on June 29, 2021. The committee read all applications and selected four fellows from Palestine, Syria, and Morocco.

Selected fellows represented different disciplinary backgrounds in social sciences and the humanities, including comparative literature, sociology, and arts. They covered topics ranging from Syrian intellectual immigration, Islamic intellectual history in contemporary Sufi culture, religion and identity on social media, and new literary genre in settler colonial texts (Appendix 10 – List of funded projects). Fellows selected in this cycle will present their work in the Fourth Research Forum.

**Cycle 9, 2022:**
Cycle 9 was launched on December 23, 2021 and will be closed on February 24, 2022. We have exceptionally launched this cycle earlier than usual (we usually announce the call in February) as a means to attract a higher number of applications. Depending on the number of proposals received, grants given and expended amounts, we will decide whether we can launch another cycle in 2022.

**Small Grants Program (SGP)**

The Small Grants Program (SGP) was initiated in November 2016. The first theme of the program was "Youth" and "Urban Spatial Inequalities" (based on the request of the Ford Foundation) and the main purpose of the program is to provide junior researchers in the region

with access to flexible funding with a short turnover period. In 2021, the SGP adopted a new theme on "Research Ethics: Ethical Dilemmas in the Social Sciences". Three cycles on this theme will run between 2021 and 2023 and will be open to former ACSS grantees who are interested in unpacking an ethical conundrum they have encountered during fieldwork while conducting their ACSS funded project. The first theme on program was funded by a grant from the Ford Foundation and with supplementary funds from the SIDA and IDRC grants to the ACSS. The second theme on ethics is funded by IDRC.

This current funding opportunity is part of the ACSS initiative on "Research Ethics for the Social Sciences," within which the ACSS will also launch "The Arab Platform for Ethical Research in the Social Sciences."

**Cycle 1, 2020**:
Cycle 1 was launched on August 21, 2020 and closed on October 15, 2020. For this cycle we received 40 applications only from nine Arab countries and screened out seven. The selection committee composed of four members from Lebanon met on December 16 and 17, 2020 and selected four projects from Palestine, Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt. Selected grantees worked on their projects between March and September 2021.

The program in Cycle 1 offered different modalities for fellows to unpack their ethical conundrum, such as: conducting additional fieldwork to explore new ethical approaches, writing a reflection paper to be published, and organizing dissemination events. The plan is to publish the grantees' outputs on "The Arab Platform for Ethical Research in the Social Sciences." The aim of the platform is to raise awareness on the importance of ethical conduct of research. It will include an online and interactive training program that targets junior researchers and students at the Masters and PhD level. The platform also aims to foster discussion about principles of research ethics in social sciences and their adaptability to field research requirements and developments in the social sciences and humanities, particularly in conflict and insecure settings.

The four grantees were invited to a workshop organized by ACSS on July 2, 2021. During the workshop the grantees presented their projects and ethical conundrum to each other. We also invited two members of the selection committee to act as trainers for grantees. The trainers met individually with each grantee and commented on their projects, methods and advised them on the publication process. At the end of their grant, grantees submitted a draft article whereby the trainers gave extensive comments to improve the quality and chances for publications.

**Cycle 2, 2021**:
In 2021, we revised the call to make clearer what an "ethical dilemma" is and what we expect from applicants. We also revised the three modalities of the previous cycle (writing a thinking/reflection paper for publication; organizing a dissemination event; and conducting additional fieldwork to

explore new ethical approaches), and now grantees can engage in different activities. Examples of activities include but are not limited to: fieldwork, consultation, re-reading of field notes, library archival research and dissemination activities.

We launched the call for the Cycle 2 November 19, 2021 and closed it on January 5, 2022. We received 18 applications from six Arab countries. The selection committee will meet mid-February 2022 to select from the pool of applications. Appendix 11- full details of the program.

**ACSS-FMSH Short-term Postdoctoral Mobility Program in the Social Sciences and Humanities**

This short-term fellowship program is organized in partnership with the Fondation maison des sciences de l'homme (FMSH) in Paris, and is managed by both the ACSS and FMSH. The fellowship is short-term (2-3 months) and targets individual researchers who are residents and nationals of the Arab region. The recipients of this fellowship should have received their PhD degree within the past six years, and plan to conduct research in France (including field research, library and archival work, as well as other types of data collection). In addition to a monthly stipend of €1,600, the FMSH helps applicants in finding a host institution in France for their intended period of stay.

**Cycle 4, 2021**:
The call for Cycle 4 of the ACSS-FMSH Short-Term Postdoctoral Mobility Fellowship Program was announced on September 7, 2020 and extended till March 15, 2021. For this cycle we received 17 applications from six Arab countries. A committee of three scholars from France and the Arab region was formed, and met virtually on May 4, 2021. The committee selected four fellows from Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. The fellows affiliated with different research centers in France such as ESO Angers, Centre de recherches Moyen-Orient Méditerranée, ENSA Toulouse, and Institut Interdisciplinaire d'Anthropologie du contemporain (Appendix 12 – List of funded projects). Fellows from this cycle will participate in the Fourth Research Forum.

**Cycle 5, 2022**
The call for Cycle 5 of the ACSS-FMSH Short-Term Postdoctoral Mobility Fellowship Program was announced on September 15, 2021 and closed on December 10, 2021. For this cycle we received 14 applications from four Arab countries. The same committee as the previous cycle will meet virtually on February 2, 2022 to discuss and select fellows.

**AFAC-ACSS Research on Arts (RAP)**

In 2017, the ACSS and the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC) agreed to partner on a collaborative research grants program for funding research on the arts. The program offers up to 18 months of funding to individuals, teams, collectives and institutions and encourages both academics and art practitioners to apply to the program.

**Workshop for Cycle 3 Grantees:**
We were planning to organize the workshop of the third cohort of RAP grantees physically in Beirut at the beginning of 2021, but given the travel restrictions and uncertainties imposed by the pandemic, AFAC and ACSS decided to hold the workshop online on February 2 and 3, 2021. The workshop included mentoring as well as plenary sessions. In the first part, each of the awarded grantees met separately with two members of the selection committee to discuss their project methodology, and planned course of work and receive their feedback to refine their projects. In the second part all grantees were called to a general meeting where they met each other as well as the other members of the selection committee who were not present during the mentoring sessions. The aim of this session was to create a sense of cohort and help them exchange their experiences and projects.

**Cycle 4, 2021**:
Cycle 4 of the Research on the Arts Program was launched on June 1, 2021 and closed on August 31, 2021 (see announcement here). We received a total of 61 applications divided as follows: 41 individuals, 11 teams and collectives, and nine institutions. The applications came from academics and art practitioners from 13 different Arab countries: Morocco, Yemen, Syria, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. AFAC and ACSS secretariat screened out 49% of the applications (30 out of 61) because they were either ineligible and/or incomplete. The RAP committee members convened in a two-day meeting on November 11 and 12, 2021 to select from the research proposals received. Their deliberations resulted in the selection of five research projects, covering history of arts, music, graphic design and culinary arts. The five awarded projects (three individuals and two teams) came from Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Lebanon. The committee also issued a statement commenting on the pool.

**Establishing a Working Group on "Research on the Arts":**
After concluding three cycles of the program and to reflect on this collaborative experience, AFAC and ACSS decided to put together a working group composed of six artists and academics who served previously on the different selection committees of the program, representing the arts and social science disciplines. The purpose of the working group is to investigate the relationship between arts and the social sciences by conducting first an in-depth evaluation of the RAP program and the 30 project grants awarded so far. Three members only of the working group will conduct the evaluation which will also include an assessment of the written and digital outputs produced by grantees and their (potential) impact. The evaluation results will help guide the ensuing discussions on the relationship between arts and the social sciences and allow the working group to identify gaps and research agenda/s on writing on the arts in the Arab region. We expect this exercise will result in a publication that would include articles by working group members on themes and issues to be agreed upon. The working group will be led by Chair who is also a member of the working group and whose main responsibility is to coordinate the intellectual work among members of the working group (Appendix 13 - full details of the program).

Members of the Working Group are:

- Alia Mossallam, Cultural Historian and UME-FU Fellow of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation
- Driss Ksikes, fiction and nonfiction writer, playwright and scholar;
- Ismail Nashef, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Doha Institute for Graduate Studies in Qatar
- Kirsten Scheid, associate professor of Anthropology at the American University of Beirut;
- Tarek El Ariss, professor and chair of Middle Eastern Studies at Dartmouth College
- Yazid Anani, Director of the Public Programme and Head Curator at the A. M. Qattan Foundation

**New Paradigms Factory on "Gendered Resistance"**

One of the earliest programs established at ACSS, this fellowship aims at supporting writings by Arab junior scholars and activists to turn their research into publications for a larger audience. This takes place through a 9-month mentorship program at the end of which a publication including essays of grantees is published. The program targets holders of the MA degree in the Arab region who completed their fieldwork on the essay topic.

In Cycle 4 of the program, the ACSS published the work of ten junior scholars and activists from the Arab region in its second special issue in Arabic on Gendered Resistance.

**Process for the Final Publication**:
The ACSS has been keen form the start of the program to produce the special issue in Arabic, in order to promote knowledge production in Arabic on this highly important topic. Six out of the ten articles that were written in English and French were translated to Arabic. Following the translation process that took place from February to May 2021, all ten articles were copyedited by the ACSS publications team. During the same period, the four mentors of the program got together and wrote an introduction to the publication. In their introduction mentors discussed feminist methodologies, articulated and dissected the concept of "Gendered Resistance" which is the main theme for this publication, and finally they introduced each of the ten articles by emphasizing the main argument and its relation to Gendered Resistance as a theme.

**Dissemination and Short Interviews:**
The most significant addition to the program was the carefully designed and well thought out dissemination plan of the NPF publication which for the first time introduced the chapter authors and the mentors through videos allowing them to speak about the theme of the program as well as their specific articles. Judging by the number of visits to the videos and book downloads, the NPF

publication has been a great hit. While we have not been able to organize the ACSS Fifth Conference in September as scheduled due to Covid-19, and could not therefore invite the authors and the mentors to present their work during this flagship event, we are counting on their presence at the Research Forum in June 2022. By that time the printed publication will be out and disseminated during the event. Our dissemination on social media reached 700,000 viewers combined. Photographers were hired in Egypt, Palestine, Morocco, Lebanon, Turkey, Tunisia and Germany to interview and film fellows and mentors in a short 1.5 minutes interview for each. Thirteen short videos were produced to capture the experiences of fellows and mentors in this program and one long video to announce the publication (Appendix 14 - Interviews by Mentors and Fellows).

**Cycle 5, 2022**:
We continue to capture the continued interest in the theme of Gendered Resistance and preparations are now underway for the fifth cycle of NPF under the same theme. On June 30, 2021 the ACSS announced Cycle 5 of the New Paradigm Factory Program under the title "Gendered Resistance: Ethical Practices in Oral Narratives". While the thematic focus, structure and topics of the program have remained the same (with minor adjustments), we added to the program a significant methodological tinge by encouraging applicants who have critically engaged with efforts/projects/organizations that aim to combat gender-based discrimination and violence using oral history methodologies. As it is well known, oral histories and narratives as well as documentation, digitization and archiving of oral narratives, testimonials, eye-witness accounts, and life stories, are increasingly used by feminists and researchers and activists who seek to combat gender-based violence and give voice to women and empower their stories.

In Cycle 5 – in addition to the usual training and mentoring on writing on gendered resistance – the plan is to expose the fellows to targeted training on the ethics and practices of oral narratives and invite more speakers and experts to address the theme. This cycle of NPF will be organized in collaboration with the Arab Oral History Archive: Gender, Alternative Histories, and the Production of Knowledge (GOHA) project administered by the American University of Beirut (AUB) with funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in which the ACSS is participating. GOHA aims to support and develop situated feminist studies and a feminist multidisciplinary critique of knowledge production practices and research methodologies in, from and about the region (including those related to the development and operation of archives); and create a more inclusive and critical body of new situated knowledge, and subaltern archival repositories about the region.

The new emphasis on ethics of oral narratives achieves two main objectives for the ACSS. First it further consolidates its belief in and endeavors to shine a light on the importance of ethics for solid research in the humanities and the social sciences and second, it builds bridges and areas of collaboration and synergies between the ACSS programs – in this case between NPF supported by OSF and GOHA, sub-grant from AUB with funds from Mellon Foundation.

Mentors for Cycle 5:

- Elham Manea, Yemen, Associate Professor at the Institute of Political Science, University of Zurich
- Hoda Elsadda, Egypt, Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Cairo University
- Latifa El Bouhsini, Morocco, Professor of Higher Education at Mohammad V University in Morocco
- Muzna Masri, Lebanon, Independent Researcher and Co-founding member of the ACSS Working Group on Ethnography and Knowledge in the Arab Region

**Evaluation of the ACSS work on Environmentalism, Impoverishment and Social Justice Movements**

The Grants and Fellowships unit has planned to take stock and assess the effectiveness of its programs and their contribution to building capacities and producing knowledge that is relevant to the region. It is in line with this endeavor that we have formed the working group on the arts which – as mentioned above - will initiate its activities by an evaluation of RAP with a focus on its contribution to the field of researching and writing on the arts. Similarly, we have commissioned Dr. Reem Saad, independent anthropologist, to undertake an evaluation of the research grants program on the theme of environmentalism, impoverishment and social justice movements that completed three cycles in 2018. Dr. Saad will situate the grants and their outputs within the interdisciplinary field of environmentalism by shining a light on regional thematic interests and theoretical and methodological contributions to the field. She will also examine contributions to the theme by other ACSS programs such as the Early Career Fellowships program and papers presented at the different ACSS conferences on the environment. It is our plan to publish the results of Dr. Saad's work as an ACSS Occasional Publication and use it for a larger debate on the theme of environmentalism in the region.

**Grantees and fellows participate in 10th Anniversary Webinars**

The ACSS organized ten webinars in 2021 to celebrate its 10th year anniversary (See the section on "Webinars" below). Our grantees, fellows and selection and advisory committee members as well as partner institutions were well represented in all the webinars as participants, speakers and facilitators. Three webinars: four, six and nine spoke directly to themes and issues that we grapple with in our programs. Webinar 4 on "Gendered Resistance and Activism" carried the title of our NPF program latest three cycles and included participants and mentors in the program who discussed a major theme of relevance to NPF, namely the relationship between academia and activism. Webinar 6 entitled "Fieldwork: Current Dilemmas and Future Directions" benefitted from the input and reflections of our grantees and fellows on what it means to be doing research within the current uncertainty triggered by regional upheavals and repercussions of the pandemic. Finally, Webinar 9 on "A Commitment to Tomorrow: Narratives and Imaginaries in the Face of Power", was co-conceptualized by AFAC, our partner in the RAP program, along with other culture and arts regional organizations.

**Lessons Learned and Next Steps:**

In general, across the board of our programs, we have noted the effect of Covid-19 on slowing down the research process particularly fieldwork. There may be a direct relationship between the pandemic and the small number of proposals received in some programs, especially those that require mobility. As the Covid-19 cases start to subside and vaccination coverage expands, we expect restrictions on research will ease off and we gradually regain 'normalcy' of work in our programs. Meanwhile, we have continued to organize our activities on line when face to face meetings were not possible. We are constantly seeking ways to minimize the effects of the pandemic on our work and interaction with grantees and applicants. The external evaluation undertaken by the ACSS in 2021 has attested to our success in Grants and Fellowships to battle Covid-19 and offer our programs without interruption while maintaining high quality both in terms of processes and outputs.

We have established a good practice of taking stock of our programmatic achievements, challenges and strengths by evaluating our programs both those undertaken collaboratively with other institutions such as RAP or others that we carry out independently such as RGP. Such evaluations are critical not only to provide us at the ACSS with a reality check and a sense of direction and contribution to different fields, but also as evidence that we can share with partners and donors about the timeliness and relevance of our programs to regional needs and priorities.

As we embark on a new year, we have to address the question of funding for different grants and fellowships programs. The IDRC grant to RGP on Health and Livelihoods in the Arab region is coming to an end, having enabled us to capture regional interest in a significant and relatively unexplored area of research – writing on health from a social science perspective. With the shadows of Covid-19 overlaying the entire world, the grant has enabled us to successfully put pandemics on the agenda, demonstrating where the gaps are in our knowledge of them and what we need to do in order to study and write about Covid-19 and other topics in a rigorous manner. There is still a huge room for more work on health issues that can be done through for example, a working group of selection/advisory committee members and select grantees who could continue to pursue research and publication ideas on the subject.

### D. A New Generation of Social Scientists in the Arab Region (2030) (NewGen)

In 2020 the ACSS officially launched a new and ambitious program entitled "A new generation of social scientists in the Arab region (2030) (NewGen)". The fellowship provides a two-years rich multi component journey – including training, research and networking opportunities - for students at the BA, MA and Ph.D. levels - in select Arab universities.
The aim of the program is to help create a "pipeline" of students starting with the BA and continuing on to the Ph.D. who would form a new cohort of social scientists committed to critical scholarship. It also seeks to engage Arab academic institutions and campuses to form a

network of universities that support students nationally and regionally. NewGen is now in Cycle 2 and will launch Cycle 3 in March 2022.

In the second phase of the NewGen program initiated in February 2021, we planned to target five new universities within three of the countries where NewGen has been active: In Egypt (Beni Suif University and Ein Shams University), Palestine (Bethlehem University), and Tunisia (Manouba University and Tunis Al Manar University). We also made some initial contacts to take the program to Sudan which we hope will pay off early in 2022. The result has been the successful onboarding of three new participating universities in Tunisia and Palestine as indicated below. An additional university (Tunis University) reached out to the program and is now one of the following 16 partnering universities:
Lebanese American University, American University of Beirut, Lebanese University, Saint Joseph University, University of Balamand (Lebanon), Birzeit University, Al Najah National University, Al Quds University-Abu Dis, Bethlehem University (Palestine), American University in Cairo, Cairo University, Alexandria University (Egypt), Sfax University, Manouba University, Tunis University, and Tunis-Al-Manar University (Tunisia).

**Call for applications**:
The call for new applications for cohort 2 went out on February 19, 2021, and the deadline for receiving applications was March 26, 2021. We received a total of 344 applications from the four countries, of which 93 were selected for interviews with the applicants. Applications were scored based on the evaluation criteria including for example, knowledge of social sciences, written skills, academic standing, fluency in Arabic and English and critical thinking. Bonus points were awarded for research experience, publications and awards as well as (disadvantaged) socio-economic standing.

Two committees, each comprising two ACSS staff members, conducted interviews with applicants. The 30-minute interview was a tool for ACSS to learn more about the applicant's background, interest in the social sciences, commitment to the program, and future plans and confirm fit for the program.

It is worth mentioning that of the eligible applicants 44.2% are female and 42.75% are first generation university students. Among the eligible applications, a dozen came from Algeria, Yemen, Syria, Iraq, and Morocco - students who are currently studying in Lebanon, Tunisia, and Egypt on scholarships. Opening the program to students who do not come from the four selected countries but are studying in them ensures larger representation of diverse Arab nationalities in the program.

**Fellow Onboarding**:
As a welcoming activity, an onboarding session was held for the selected fellows on between August 16 and 25, 2021. The onboarding sessions were led by the four PCs: Dr. Abaher El-Sakka (Birzeit University – Palestine), Dr. Houssem Eddine Chachia (Sfax University), Dr. Latife Reda (Lebanese American University), and Dr. Hanan Al Sabea (American University in Cairo).

**Monthly Activities**:
On September 3, 2021, four New Gen fellows from cohort 1 organized an activity to welcome cohort 2. The activity included a "meet and greet" session followed by an activity to break the ice between the two cohorts. The session was lively and ended with the fellows creating a shared excel document where each fellow included information such as academic major, hobby, and ways to contribute to the fellowship.

After the welcoming activity, the PCs at the main partner universities tailored and delivered various monthly activities for the fellows in each country. The activities were based on findings about fellows' interests and gaps from the application screening, data collected from the first cohort fellow survey, and findings from the 2020 end-of-year monitoring and evaluation sessions. The monthly activities included elements of skill development, knowledge building, career guidance, community building, academic discussions, and student-led activities.

On September 22 and 24, the fellows received a two-day training on Professional Self-Representation with Dr. Nivine Abbas, an assistant professor of public health at the University of Balamand. The training focused on designing and writing professional curriculum vitae, developing presentations, enhancing public speaking skills, and pitching concise and appealing ideas. Feedback from the participants was positive and fellows, especially from the BA level, saw great value in learning from Dr. Abbas and from the experiences of the MA and PhD fellows, as well as the opportunity to explore and exchange ideas.

In addition, between November 11 and December 15, 2021, the fellows from Palestine completed a four-session workshop conducted by the Abdul Mohsin Qattan Foundation (Ramallah, Palestine). Twenty NewGen fellows from Birzeit Univeristy, Al Najah National University, Al Quds University (Abu Dis), and Bethlehem University participated in the workshops presented by Dr. Rana Barakat, the director of the Birzeit University Museum and Dr. Abaher El Sakka, Associate Professor in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences at Birzeit University and NewGen PC in Palestine.

The workshops focused on the exhibition "Palestine from Above" and allowed participants to learn how to 'read' and understand the exhibition in the context of Palestinian history and current developments. The fellows also worked with different sociological readings related to the subject, addressing topics referred to in the exhibition. By the end of the workshops, fellows were able to produce a number of papers about the exhibition, which will be published as a booklet through the Qattan Cultural Foundation. These workshops aimed to enable fellows to interact with the exhibition and various cultural productions to learn about alternative ways for producing critical and emancipatory knowledge.

**Workshops**:

MA and PhD fellows are required to participate in several workshops during their fellowship journey.

On April 8 and 9, 2021, MA and PhD fellows received a two-day workshop on Critical Environmental Studies. This workshop presented environmental studies as an interdisciplinary field in which the natural and social sciences and the humanities intersect. The participants reflected on the pre-workshop readings with the guest speakers and were encouraged to examine their relevance to their own country settings. The discussions brought up important issues such as the impact of the political, economic, and environmental situation on Bedouins residing in Palestine, seed preservation initiatives in the region, and land monopolization by corporates in Tunisia. Fellows were encouraged to do internships in organizations related to environmental studies in the region such as the Observatoire de la Souveraineté Alimentaire et de l'Environnement (OSAE) in Tunisia.

Later, on December 16 and 17, 2021, the fellows received a two-day workshop on the Future of Work. The participants were introduced to the main debates on the future of work, both internationally and in the Arab region as well as the opportunities and challenges that have unraveled. They learned about the role of social scientists in studying and analyzing the impact of artificial intelligence and new technological developments on job opportunities and markets as well as their effect on the livelihood of particularly marginalized populations such as refugees. The workshop was divided into general thematic sessions on labor market trends, social protection, the future of women's unpaid care work as well as case studies including: the role of big data in solving transport problems in Egypt, the future of young academics, the future of work for Syrian refugees in Lebanon and the work experience of young Egyptians in call centers.

**Online Courses**:
The ACSS successfully launched four courses in 2021. One module from a series of modules under the title "Critical Methodologies" was offered to BA and MA fellows (mandatory), one topical course (Global History) was given as one of the two mandatory topical courses to BA and MA fellows, and two interdisciplinary courses (Urban Studies and Gender Studies) were given to BA fellows (mandatory) and MA fellows (optional). The fellows were provided with a description of all courses and asked to register through a Google form. Registered fellows were then enrolled in their selected courses on Moodle, the platform hosting all the ACSS online courses. In total, around 60 fellows attended and completed the abovementioned courses. The courses included readings, short lectures, discussion elements, assignments, and a 2-hour meeting with the Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) through Zoom on a weekly basis. The ACSS is currently designing a series of new online courses for the NewGen fellows to be administered starting February 2022 such as Research Methods, Research Ethics, Data Management, Oral History, and Cultural Studies to name a few.

**NewGen Fellows at ACSS Academy**:
The ACSS academy serves to bring together junior researchers for training and mentoring with a team of established scholars working on the themes of the three main working groups at the ACSS:

Critiques of Power, Critical Security Studies, and Ethnography as Knowledge. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the academy was held virtually between July 1-11, 2021. From among the participants in the academy who came from Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, Oman, and Saudi Arabia, were 18 fellows from NewGen at the MA and PhD level.

The academy hosted 55 student participants and ten faculty members from the three working groups. The program included keynote speeches, specialized lectures, working sessions on particular themes, mentoring sessions (groups, one-on-one, and peer learning), training sessions on methods and skills, digital skills sessions, and professionalization workshops on writing and publishing. After a series of general lectures and special training sessions, participants in the academy were split into three groups (based on the three working groups) for in-depth readings and discussions within each of these themes. During these sessions, students received feedback and mentoring from their respective faculty regarding their research papers. The academy was met with enthusiasm by both students and faculty members and the ACSS team organizing it received a lot of positive feedback from involved parties.

**NewGen Fellows participation in ACSS 10th Anniversary Webinar**

On August 10, 2021, eight NewGen fellows participated in the seventh Webinar organized by the ACSS on the occasion of its 10th anniversary (See Webinars below). The panel entitled "Social Sciences and the Voice of the New Generation" brought together fellows from different partnering and participating universities in a discussion on the structural limitations in the production of knowledge and opportunities for education, training, and teaching in the field of social sciences in the Arab region. In this vein, fellows shared their ideas on how to revitalize the social science landscape in the region. Prior to the webinar, each PC organized a series of preparatory sessions with fellows in the participating universities and asked them to read the three Arab Social Science Reports developed by ACSS Arab Social Science Monitor (ASSM) and answer a set of questions provided by the PCs and ACSS. Based on the three readings and personal experiences, the fellows discussed ways to deal with challenges they face in their academic research and career paths and the status of the social sciences in the region.

**Lessons Learned and Challenges:**

The NewGen fellows are making noticeable progress. Since 2021, PCs have noticed increased enthusiasm from the fellows regarding external opportunities in the social sciences. For example, in Egypt, one BA fellow applied for an internship at the Alternative Policy Solutions at the American University in Cairo (AUC). Also, Dr. Hanan Al Sabea (American University in Cairo – Egypt), was successful in giving access to two of her courses (Anthropology Theory & Anthropologies of Africa) to one BA fellow who is studying at Cairo University upon her request. In addition, Dr. Al Sabea is currently working on obtaining a membership access for the fellows to access the Dominican Institute Library for research and knowledge building purposes. In Lebanon, an MA fellow successfully obtained her degree in Psychology and landed a research assistant position at the American University Medical Center (AUBMC).

The NewGen is developing a good reputation in the countries where it is active. In the interviews we conducted for cohort 2, applicants repeatedly told us that NewGen was recommended to them by their friends from cohort 1. Also, the fact that University of Tunis and AL Mansoura University reached out to be part of the program testifies to its soundness and we anticipate that more universities will reach out to join the program next years. That said, we have been monitoring the program, learning from the challenges we have faced and assessing strengths and weaknesses.

We are working hard to keep fellows motivated and engaged particularly in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 situation as well as political instability in several of the countries involved in the program. The rate of withdrawal is within the pale (10% percent) and PCs have been communicating frequently with the fellows, demonstrating flexibility and understanding and attempting to accommodate their preferences. Reasons for withdrawal vary between leaving the country due to economic decline (Lebanon), the inability to manage time due to multiple responsibilities (Egypt, Lebanon, and Palestine), and moving to a non-partner university (Tunisia). We are working hard to understand reasons behind the withdrawal, consider ideas to reduce it and help with student retention in the future.

**Next Steps:**

**Increased Partnerships**

With the beginning of 2022, we have decided to try again to take NewGen to Sudan. We have approached Khartoum University with help from ACSS board member, Dr. Munzoul Assal and are awaiting response from its president. In addition, we were approached by Al Mansoura University (Egypt) for partnership, and are awaiting a final response from the president of the university.

**More Information Sessions**

The NewGen organizes information sessions in Arabic for interested applicants to provide information about the eligibility criteria, fellowship journey, and an overview of the application. In 2021, more virtual information sessions were held on Zoom for interested students across the 16 participating universities. This came as a response to the fact that in cohort 1, the number of information sessions was not enough, and students did not get the chance to learn enough about the program. We also increased the number of information sessions to accommodate the different university schedules and holidays. Several fellows from Cohort 1 attended the sessions to talk about their personal experience with the program. In addition, two information sessions were held on Zoom prior to the dissemination of the call for applications with the chairperson of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and the focal point at the University of Balamand and Saint Joseph University (Lebanon) to spread the word about the program and strengthen the collaboration with both universities. For cohort 3, the plan is for the PCs to play a more active role in the information sessions. They will be asked to deliver a set of information sessions across the participating universities in their countries, hopefully face-to-face as agreed initially at the beginning of the program.

**Enhancing Fellows Involvement**

For Cohort 2 and onwards, fellows will be assigned roles for better engagement within the program. Roles such as mentor, social media content creator, editor, facilitator, and PC assistant will be assigned to fellows on volunteering basis. We anticipate that such involvement will enhance the fellows' engagement and give them a sense of ownership of the program. We are also considering ideas to streamline the program and improve its efficiency. For example, we started using Moodle as the main platform for communication instead of relying on emails. We created a common course under the name "NewGen" where fellows can read about the program, learn about each other through a "meet the participants" forum, access the activities' schedule by country, and receive important announcements. The platform also includes a place for assignment submissions and links to the recorded monthly activities and any other relevant readings. This will ensure that all fellows are receiving announcements and materials related to the program in one place.

## E. Gender Programs

### Mapping the Production of Knowledge on Women and Gender in the Arab Region (MPK)

The year 2021 witnessed noticeable progress in the work of "Mapping the Production of Knowledge on Women and Gender in the Arab Region" project led by Dr. Suad Joseph (University of California, Davis - UCD) along with the following core team of five researchers: Drs. Lena Meari (Birzeit University - BZU), Zina Sawaf (Lebanese American University - LAU), Martina Rieker American University in Cairo - AUC), Sara Mourad (American University of Beirut - AUB), Nawar Golley (American University of Sharjah - AUS).

Under the title of Socialities, the researchers have made progress scoping what has been written in the six thematic areas they have chosen to focus on which are:

1. Women and religion, Dr. Nawar Ghul
2. Women and Gender and The Body and Sexuality: Dr. Sara Mourad
3. Women and Gender and Social Class, Race, Minorities, Ethnicity, Tribe, Carework, Kin, Family, Networks: Social Organizational Socialities: Dr. Lena Meari
4. Woman and Gender and Space: Dr. Martina Rieker
5. Women and Gender and Media and Popular Culture: Dr. Suad Joseph
6. Women and Gender and Social Consequence of War, Displacement, Migration, Violence, and Precarity: Dr. Zina Sawaf

The process started by training the graduate students (and faculty) on how to use search engines and in much of the technology that was needed for the mapping work of the MPK. The training lasted from March to beginning of August 2021. The scoping review (which is now near completion of one database (Sociological Abstracts), with at least half dozen more to do systematic reviews on), a

systematic qualitative review will follow and finally a critical review of the literature. Each type of review would result in publications and web-based products. The MPK team is now looking ahead to the database presentation of the scoping review and the webpage interface Both the ACSS and UCD will be the main hosts for the database.

**Gender Studies in the Middle East and North Africa**

In 2021 we launched the process for publishing the book on the Status of Gender Studies in MENA, which started with the two-day workshop held in Amman in 2019 with support from OSF and IDRC. We initiated a peer review process of the six papers that will be included in the book and reviewers' comments were sent to the authors to revise their articles. We plan to publish the book in the next few months as an ACSS Occasional Publication. The six articles are as follows:

- Dr. Hoda El Sadda on the NGOization of gender studies.
- Dr. Dalia Ghanem-Yazbeck on gender and security.
- Drs. Weeam and Doaa Hammoudeh on gender and health in conflict situations
- Dr. Zahia Jouirou on gender and law in Tunisia (in Arabic)
- Drs. Lena Meari and Nida Abu Awwad on gender and higher education in Palestine
- Drs. Lina Abu-Habib, Serena Canaan and Yara Taraboulsi on women's economic empowerment.

**The Arab Oral History Archive: Gender, Alternative Histories, and the Production of Knowledge (GOHA)**

This project is a collaboration between the ACSS and the American University of Beirut and funded through a sub-contract from AUB (from a grant made by the Mellon Foundation). The project aims at creating an oral history archive to be housed at AUB and focusing, in this phase, on collecting a number of oral history narratives as well as training and convening on different aspects of archiving, oral history and gender methodologies. The ACSS component of this project is led by a consultant, Dr. Hoda Elsadda, professor of English Literature at Cairo University. The activities in 2021 included the following: Conducting oral history interviews of Arab women from the generation of the 70s in six countries in the Mashreq. One hundred and one interviews were completed and 95 transcribed.

1- The "Gendering the Archive" working group was created and consists of 7 researchers: Ms. Maissan Hassan (Egypt); Dr. Lamia Mughnieh (Lebanon); Dr. Hana Sleiman (Palestine); Dr. Zahra Ali (Iraq); Dr. Leyla Dekhli (Tunisia); Ms. Muneira Hoballah (Lebanon); Dr. Hoda Elsadda (Egypt). Ms. Reem Joudi joined the team end of 2021 as a research assistant. The first workshop was held virtually in June 2021 while the second workshop was held virtually in September 2021 and the third workshop in January 2022.

2- Gendering the Archive Workshop is scheduled to take place in May 2022 in Beirut. A call for papers sent out in December 2021 and 52 applications were received.

3- Work is now underway in publishing the interviews in a series of country reports.

### Lessons Learned and Next Steps

The political turmoil in Lebanon, Iraq and Syria, plus the massive explosion in Beirut in August 2020 delayed the interviewing process and resulted in the modification of the time frame and a revision of the operation mode. Moreover, the global pandemic slowed down the work as it made women reluctant to meet. In addition, the research team faced many challenges including illness, caring responsibilities for members of their family, and financial constraints. Due to the limitations on mobility during the pandemic, the team decided to conduct interviews on Zoom. On the whole, the interviews went well. However, some are not perfect due to internet problems and the limited technological skills of some of the interviewees. Nine interviews were lost due to technological problems and we now have 101 interviews. Another challenge faced the researcher doing the Syrian interviews. The researcher is located in Beirut and has managed to do only six interviews so far. This is primarily due to the reluctance of many of the Syrian women we approached for interviewing on account of security reasons.

Despite the challenges, the key activities have been implemented, albeit differently, and the objectives of the project met. While human interaction was lost in the interviews via Zoom, the reach of the internet enabled interviews that would have not been possible due to distances for example. Also, with a regional research team, online meetings enabled better cooperation and discussion.

## F. Working Groups

*Funding is provided by the Carnegie Corporation for Critical Security Studies (CSS) and New Regionalisms (NR); and by the Mellon Foundation for Ethnography as Knowledge (EKWG).*

Working Groups aim at bringing scholars from across the Arab region, and globally, who are at different stages in their academic careers, to work collectively on a research theme or project. This collaborative work not only allows networking, mentorship and the sharing of academic knowledge, skills and experience, but it also encourages interdisciplinary research within the social sciences and the design of innovative and diverse outputs targeting different audiences within the region and beyond. The first working group was on Producing the Public: Space, Media, Participation. Currently the ACSS has four ongoing working groups: Critical Security Studies (CSS), New Regionalisms, and Ethnography as Knowledge.

### Ethnography and Knowledge Working Group (EKWG)

Over the last 12 months, the "Ethnography and Knowledge" working group (EKWG) regularly communicated online about the group's plans and projects. Most of the group members were finally able to meet in person at a retreat organized in the Ehden (Lebanon), which took place on August 18 and 19, 2021. During the working retreat, the group made substantial progress on the co-

authored paper on reflexivity and positionality. This reflection paper titled, "Reflexivity: Beyond Positionality" will be published by the "Commoning Ethnography" Journal.

The EKWG's main activities during the past year focused on the two subthemes: "Ethnography and Medicine in the Arab Region" and "Research in Turbulent Times". The third subtheme of this working group, "Commoning Ethnography" got off to a slow start because its focal point Dr. Samar Kanafani left Lebanon with her family. The coordinators of the ethnography and medicine subgroups (Drs. Lamia Moghnieh and Mustafa Abdulla) contacted a number of medical anthropologists working in and on the Arab world. Following an initial meeting reported on in last year's report, as well as another virtual planning meeting held on February 25, 2021, a core group of five researchers was formed, and a set of actions and recommendations were agreed upon. The subgroup decided to hold two public virtual roundtables, the first on June 3, 2021, and the second on November 18, 2021 in order to publicize and promote their reflections on the pandemic and to attempt to establish a network of medical anthropologists in the region. They also decided to task themselves with a collective writing project which will be initiated at the start of 2022 and facilitated in a writing workshop/retreat in June 2022. They also decided to embark on a collective writing project, which will begin in early 2022 and culminate in a writing workshop/retreat in June 2022.

The sub-group on "Research in Turbulent Times" began a group project entitled "Ethno-diaries". The project included bi-monthly meetings (seven were held in total), which began in November 2020 and ended in March 2021, during which 12 participating researchers met online to discuss the writing process of the weekly entries, resulted in a publication with Rusted Radishes (RR), an AUB-based publication, which was launched online in December 2021 on the RR website. This publication will also be available in print in January 2022. The diaries are written in both English and Arabic. Drs. Muzna Masri and Michelle Obeid, the project's coordinators, wrote an introduction to the diary entries' selection. The team also produced two short podcasts (one in Arabic and one in English) which will be available in January 2022.

In addition, the EKWG participated in a virtual roundtable discussion on ethnography of/in/and #Lebanon held virtually at the American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting #AAA2021Baltimore.

**Activities and Publications:**

Publications, Press and Webinars (LIST):

- مزنة المصري "تدوينة: عن لبنان وبدايات بطعم النهايات" مدى مصر
  Dr. Muzna Al Masri. "Blog: On Lebanon, Beginnings with the Taste of Endings", MadaMasr
  https://www.madamasr.com/ar/2021/04/24/opinion/%d9%85%d8%ac%d8%aa%d9%85%d8%b9/%d8%aa%d8%af%d9%88%d9%8a%d9%86%d8%a9-%d8%b9%d9%86-%d9%84%d8%a8%d9%86%d8%a7%d9%86-%d9%88%d8%a8%d8%af%d8%a7%d9%8a%d8%a7%d8%aa-

%d8%a8%d8%b7%d8%b9%d9%85-
%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%86%d9%87%d8%a7%d9%8a%d8%a7%d8%aa/

- The "Ethnography and Medicine in the Arab Region" subgroup (Lamia Moghnie and Mustafa Abdulla) organized a virtual roundtable on June 3 2021: https://www.facebook.com/theacss/videos/4012855842097249

- EKWG roundtable webinar titled "Ethnography and Knowledge Transformations: Writing the Unknown, Reading the Future" which was held on Sep 10, 2021 as part of ACSS's activities for its 10th anniversary: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5V3-br9nj78

- Publication of the "Ethnographic Diaries: Capturing the Everyday in Crisis" in Rusted Radishes: Beirut Literary and Art Journal. This is a product of the "Research in Turbulent Times" subgroup within the ACSS working group on "Ethnography and Knowledge in the Arab Region".
http://www.rustedradishes.com/مدونات-إثنوغرافية/
http://www.rustedradishes.com/ethnographic-diaries/

- Ethnography and Knowledge Collective, On Reflectivity in Ethnographic Practice and Knowledge Production, Commoning Ethnography Vol 4, no.1, 2021
https://ojs.victoria.ac.nz/ce/article/view/6516

**Critical Security Studies Working Group (CSS)**

The CSS working group is the longest-standing ACSS working group since it was established in 2016. The establishment phase of the CSS came to an end in December 2019. By that time, the CSS working group had laid out its structure and defined its main outputs and signature activities (Summer Institutes, themes, Manifesto etc). In 2021, the CSS focused on three main interventions: a) public engagement: increasing the visibility of the working group through webinars, curated roundtables, podcasts, and other fora; b) research: most importantly producing a second collectively written pieces by the working group as well as launching or completing ongoing research projects, c) pedagogy & mentorship: building on the strengths of the Summer Institute to deepen he group's pedagogical efforts.

**Partnerships and Collaborations:**

A fourth element, which runs across all three CSS interventions, is to increase partnerships and collaborations to amplify and benefit the working group or establish regional 'nodes' to serve as hubs for project activities. The group is currently focusing on partnerships and collaborations at the regional and global level (Security in Context (SiC); and the Latin East ACSS/CLACSO/SiC/NACLA Joint Working Group), and on establishing institutional nodes in

Qatar and possibly Morocco. Another aspect of partnerships, is to host a series of speakers and solicit interviews, webinars and guest blog posts from the CSS network or participants in CSS activities such as the Summer Institute, ACSS Academy and other regional activities. The core members of the group will also embark on writing the second CSS manifesto in 2022.

**Partnership with Security in Context (SiC)**

The CSS working group has officially partnered with Security in Context (SiC), an interdisciplinary research and pedagogy US-based initiative that promotes critical research and policy analysis on key questions on peace and conflict, the political economy of security and insecurity, militarism, and geopolitics particularly as they intersect with the processes of climate change, population movement, and reorganization of global powers. Also, the working group, along with SiC, assembled a virtual roundtable on "borders and the state in light of Covid-19" which resulted in three publications (here, here, and here). Another collaboration between CSS and SiC resulted in an interview with Professor Issam Nassar (here), after which a series of interviews and discussions will be modeled.

**Partnership with CLACSO, NACLA and SiC**

On December 3, 2020, ACSS organized an online closed workshop in partnership with the Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO), the North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA) and Security in Context (SiC), gathering 10 researchers from Latin America and Arab region. The aim of the workshop was to discuss the formation of a working group that would generate research around the theme of " Security Policies and Insecurity Production in Latin America and the Middle East ". This meeting was a culmination of discussions between the four institutions about ways of moving forward following the indefinite postponement of the CLACSO-ACSS sponsored Latin East conference that was scheduled to take place in Buenos Argentina in May 2020. Thus, this was the first meeting of the ACSS/CLACSO/SiC/NACLA Latin East joint Working Group which aims to comparatively analyze the development, execution and impact of security policies in both regions from a comparative, critical, historical, situated and geopolitical perspective. To achieve this, work will be carried out through bibliographic productions, workshops and joint public activities culminating in the publication of an edited volume. In addition to the main theme of security (broadly conceived) in Latin America and the Middle East, the working group will branch out into two subgroups: one on Narratives of Violence, Resistance, and Solidarity and another group on Public Policy and Political Economy. Working group members participated in publicly launching the “Security in Context” initiative in early 2021 in order to generate interest in the project broadly. Furthermore, a public launch of the Latin East working group was held in June 2021. The working group will have several public meetings throughout the year 2022, showcasing the development of their research projects.

**Events and Activities:**

A webinar titled "The Securitization of International Justice: Law, Security, and Politics" was organized on October 21, 2020 about the use and abuses of tools for international Justice. It was

moderated by Dr. Waleed Hazbun (University of Alabama), and included speakers: Drs. Samer Abboud (Villanova University), Oumar Ba (Morehouse College) and Stacey Philbrick Yadav (Hobart and William Smith Colleges). With examples from Yemen's war, the Special Tribunal of Lebanon, and the Palestinian struggle for justice, the speakers tackled the use of judicial mechanisms, such as the International Criminal Court (ICC), to prosecute genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and crimes of aggression.

Event: Launching the Northwestern University Qatar (NU-Q) HUB of the Beirut School of Critical Security Studies working group of the ACSS within the Institute for Advanced Studies of the Global South at NU-Q (IAS-NUQ), November 14, 2021

Participants: Drs. Sami Hermez (organizer and host), Omar Dahi, Marwan Kraidy (NU-Q, Dean) Imad Mansour (Doha Institute), Abdullah Al-Arian, (Georgetown Qatar), Noha Aboueldahab (Brookings Doha), Pete Moore (Sciences Po), Matteo Capasso (EUI), Sarah Parkinson (Johns Hopkins), Suhad Daher-Nashif (Qatar University), Zahra Babar (Georgetown Qatar-did not attend), Dana Olwan (HBKU-did not attend), Nadya Sbaiti (Georgetown Qatar), Torsten Menge (NU-Q), Clovis Bergere (IAS-NUQ), Ammar Shamaileh (Doha Institute), Tariq Da'na (Doha Institute), Diala Hawi (Doha Institute), Bassel Salloukh (Doha Institute).

The event marked the official (soft) launch of the IAS-NUQ and the 'hub' of the Beirut School within the IAS-NUQ. The event was divided into three activities. The first was a two-hour closed workshop which included the above participants invited from the Doha Institute, Georgetown Qatar, and NU-Q. The second was a public panel where Drs. Sami Hermez, Pete Moore, Omar Dahi, Matteo Cappaso, and Sarah Parkinson gave talks. The final activity was a closed meeting of participants of the War Economies project, which is a project of the political economy subtheme of the Beirut School.

The closed workshop was facilitated by Dr. Sami Hermez and presided over by Dr. Marwan Kraidy, the Dean of NU-Q and Director of IAS-NUQ, as well as the assistant director of IAS-NUQ, Dr. Clovis Bergere. During the meeting, Dr. Hermez introduced the rationale for the meeting to brainstorm ideas about possible activities. Hermez had initially circulated the Beirut School manifesto article as well as the introduction to the co-edited volume about Insecurity of Everyday Life that Sami co-edited with Giulia El-Dardiry. Kraidy spoke about the IAS-NUQ as a space for critical inquiry on global south issues. Dahi spoke about the work of the Beirut School and invited participants to think of themes, networks, outputs, and audiences. The other participants uniformly spoke positively about the need for such an approach and related it to their own work. They raised questions about different methodological approaches, including the need to emphasize history, social psychology, and other non-traditional disciplines in critical security studies. They also asked questions about the community the HUB will engage with, the question of visibility and impact, and the potential limits and obstacles.

In the public panel, Hermez presided over a discussion of war economies and each participant shared their approach to war economies and critical security studies. Dahi also spoke about the work of the Beirut School.

Moving forward, the CSS WG believes the HUB should feature three types of engagements: 1) monthly seminars/brown bag lunches as a community forming exercise. Participants would be invited to discuss their research and receive feedback. Some months may also feature invited guests flown to Doha and the monthly seminar event will be coupled with a public talk and possible meeting with students. 2) Each year will feature a one-day workshop that will result in published work as part of a working paper series. The year's theme would be decided in collaboration with IAS-NUQ and a scholar will be invited by the HUB to write and commission a series of 5000-word articles on a particular topic. The end of year event would feature public presentations and discussions of the working papers, 3) the HUB will host other activities of the Beirut School including potentially the Summer Institute and other events

**Lessons Learned:**

The CSS working group continues to attract and engage regional Arab scholars in its activities. The core group has been actively striving to connect with regional-based senior scholars and have remained in contact with many graduates of the CSS Summer Institutes, assigning them as research assistants, helping them out with publication prospects and soliciting short articles for the Beirut Forum. More engagement with regional researchers will be reflected in the future membership of the core and affiliate groups and in the upcoming activities planned for the next phase of the group.

The Beirut Forum now features the work of all ACSS working groups rather than the CSS working group only. ACSS and its working groups are hoping that with the stacking up of WG research and publications, development of pedagogical tools (syllabi, teaching manuals, textbooks etc…) and the building up of networks with regional universities and scholars, along with an increased visibility of their work on the Beirut Forum, there will be enough material for regional junior researchers to grapple and engage with.

**New Regionalisms Working Group**

The "New Regionalisms" working group, coordinated by Dr. Adam Hanieh and assisted by Dr. Hamza Hammouchene, organized a workshop on March 27, 2021 that was attended by 20 invited participants from the Middle East, North America, Europe, and Asia. The aim of the workshop was to discuss themes raised by Hanieh's working paper on 'Space, Scale, and Region: Thinking Through the New Dynamics of the Middle East'. The working paper was published on the ACSS working group website, The Beirut Forum, and was also presented at an international conference organized by Tsinghua University (Beijing) in August 2021. A total of 16 working papers from the March workshop are planned to be submitted for publication. Dr. Hanieh is in the process of providing

feedback to the authors for the papers received so that a selection of these working papers can be developed into one or more publications. The following journals: *Development & Change*, *Antipode*, *Politics*, and *Environment & Planning B* are being considered as possible outlets for a special issue.

A webinar on legacies of the uprisings and regional dynamics was organized in partnership with the e-zine *Jadaliyya*. In this event, panelists Drs. Seda Altug, Olfa Lamloum, Maziyar Ghiabi, Arang Keshavarzian, Rima Majed and Rafeef Ziadah discussed evolving dynamics in the region and their implications on how we understand the Middle East as a 'region' or 'area'. The speakers were involved in the March 27, 2021 workshop and are expected to contribute papers as part of the planned publication.

The New Regionalisms working group are planning to produce another working paper on New Trade and Economic Configurations. This paper has been slightly delayed due to preparations and follow-up after the March 27 workshop. However, it is expected to be completed by March 2022.

The next period will involve the publishing of the working papers from the March 27 workshop on Beirut Forum, the ACSS Working Groups website, in addition to their submission as a special issue in the journals proposed above. It will also involve seeking contributors and themes for blogs and think pieces to be published on the Beirut Forum website.

**New Working Group on "Contexts of Violence in the Arab Region"**

In 2021, FMSH approached the ACSS to establish a Working Group on Violence in the Arab region, particularly in the wake of the Arab uprisings and the Covid-19 pandemic. The working group would look into different states of violence in the Arab region that range from claims of "stability" and restoration of social and political order, to protracted conflicts and open dissent. The group would probe the structural and enduring factors behind violence such as sectarianism, gender and class divisions, increasing securitization and militarization of aspects of life as well as regional and country perspectives on strategies employed by states, societies and actors to navigate these predicaments in the Arab region. During this pilot phase of the working group - from July 2021 till July 2022 – four countries would be represented including: Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine and Tunisia. It will include up to 8-9 experienced researchers as well as students from the BA, MA and PhD levels at regional universities.

### G. Critical Humanities Initiative

Since 2020, the ACSS has been working to map and analyze the landscape of critical humanities in the Arab region. The project included soliciting essays on different aspects of humanities disciplines and fields as well as identifying the organizations, institutions, and platforms working on the humanities through a critical perspective.

The first phase of the project was conducted through the preparation of the Arab Region chapter of World Humanities Report (WHR), produced by The Consortium of Humanities Centers and Institutes (CHCI) on behalf of the International Council of Philosophy and the Human Sciences

(CIPSH) and in collaboration with UNESCO. From January - December 2021, the following activities were completed:

- The ACSS commissioned 23 rigorous, forward thinking, academic essays or think pieces on themes, research methods, pedagogies, people, modes and institutions involved in shaping and reshaping humanities knowledge in and on the region. Each of the essays written by various scholars and writers in the Arab region, addressed the relationship between criticality and the humanities from a different perspective. The essays were finalized and copy-edited over this time period, and they were categorized under four sections— Layered Hegemonies: Academic Imaginaries; Urgency and Temporality; Feminist Platforms; and Translating and Traveling Genres.
- The data from the 26 completed surveys (see previous report) was analyzed and individual case-study profiles were produced for each organization. The profiles placed the survey responses within the broader context of critical humanistic knowledge production in the Arab region.
- The English essays and surveys (case-studies) will be published by the World Humanities Report on their website. An Arabic version of the essays will be published by ACSS as Volume II of the annual publication *Qiraat*.

While the Arab Region Report is completed, in 2022, the ACSS will continue its work on Critical Humanities. New essays will be solicited and the survey will be extended to cover other institutions. A dedicated multilingual website, linked to the main ACSS website, will be built to present this work, as an ongoing archive of the Humanities in the Arab region.

### H. The Arab Social Science Monitor (ASSM)

*Funding for the ASSM is provided by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The Palestine Survey is funded by Sida and the Dataverse project is funded by a sub-grant from the University of North Carolina.*

The Arab Social Science Monitor (ASSM) is an observatory of the landscape of the social sciences and higher education in the Arab region. It documents the infrastructure of knowledge production in terms of institutions and resources and accounts for the evolving capacities and characteristics of the social science community across the region. The ASSM makes data and knowledge produced available for the public through two main mechanisms: (1) online databases and (2) publications.

A five-component framework guides ASSM research: *Individuals*, *Institutions*, *Products*, *Practices* and *Use*, with each component focusing on different units of study.

- *Individuals*: Individual researchers working in the Arab region who hold a Master's or Doctoral degree in social science from any university in the world and/or are involved in social science research.

- *Institutions*: Higher education institutions (universities), research centers and professional societies
- *Products*: Libraries, archives, publishing houses, Ph.D. directories and depositories, journals, curricula
- *Practices*: Selection committees, peer review committees, governance and resource allocation in universities and research institutions, promotion, tenure, scholarships, fellowships.
- *Uses*: Policy making, public discourses, conferences and dissemination.

**ASSM Governance and Staffing**

A 26-member Advisory Committee guides the technical and programmatic aspects of the ASSM includes current and former ACSS board of trustees' members and country focal points (for ASSM Advisory Committee members, please click here). The ASSM advisory committee meets once a year but did not meet in 2021 due to the COVID pandemic.

The ASSM team currently consists of two full-time staff: Ms. Nada Chaya, Project Leader, and Mr. Rami Ofeich, Data Analyst. The ASSM was planning to further develop its full team to better implement and expand its diverse activities. This step was delayed in 2021 due to the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic and will take place in 2022.

**Third Arab Social Science Report (ASSR3)**

The ASSR3, whose lead author is Dr. Ahmad Dallal, President of the American University in Cairo, is titled "The academic universes of social scientists in the Arab world: Career trajectories and networks in universities". The ASSR3 charts the career trajectories of social scientists and humanists within universities in the Arab world and explores the factors that enable or constrain the progress of these careers. The report is based on quantitative data collected in 2019 through an online survey of the characteristics and career trajectories of Arab social scientists and humanists as well as six qualitative background papers commissioned and prepared to provide the institutional context (http://www.theacss.org/pages/third-assm-report). Initial analysis of the quantitative data collected was done in-house and three papers were commissioned in 2020 for more in-depth analysis of the quantitative data collected. Based on these three analytical papers, the lead author wrote the first part of the report and presented the results in his keynote speech at the Fifth ACSS Conference on December 7, 2021, in Cairo, Egypt (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9u5fYBzsCE4). The second part of the report that will be based on the entire six background papers is being finalized.

There were delays in the completion of the ASSR3 by the lead author due to the COVID pandemic and a two-year long embargo on Qatar where Dr. Dallal was based, occupying the position of Dean of Georgetown University in Qatar. Dr. Dallal had to lead the switch to online learning and address the disruptions of the embargo on the university. In addition, in October 2021 he became the

president of the American University in Cairo, a transition and move that led to further delays in the finalization of the ASSR3.

**Fourth Arab Social Science Monitor Report (ASSR4)**

The fourth ASSR will focus on humanities in the Arab region. It will be based on the series of papers prepared for the World Humanities Report (WHR) 2021, the results of the survey of organizations and projects across the region conducted for the WHR, follow-up papers and surveys conducted for phase two of the initiative as well as a series of papers and reports to be commissioned specifically for the ASSR4. These papers and reports could include in-depth interviews with humanists in the region, an ACSS survey of humanists in the region, and background papers on specific disciplines or themes. The lead author of the ASSR4 is Dr. Hoda El Sadda, Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Cairo University Faculty of Arts. A productive planning meeting was held with the lead author on November 24, 2021, to identify research material needed, topics of background papers to be commissioned and implementation timeline.

**Study on the Impact of COVID-19 on Arab Social Science and Humanities Scholars**

This study titled "Academic Challenges in the Time of COVID-19: Arab Social Scientists and Humanists in Focus" and whose lead author is Dr. Caroline Krafft at St. Catherine University, examined the effects of COVID-19 on Arab social science and humanities scholars and was published in 2020 (http://www.theacss.org/pages/survey_report) and is available in Arabic, English and French languages. In 2021 it garnered media attention.

- The ACSS launched a mini campaign on June 21, 2021 about this study on the ACSS website, Facebook and Twitter. The feedback was very positive. On Facebook, we received 100 Likes, 30 Shares, more than 235 Clicks and 7200 Reach. On Twitter there were 30 Likes and Retweets. Of note is that the feedback included not only individuals but sister organization such as ACOR, Groupe Jeunes Chercheurs en Science Sociales, Groupe d'etude sur le Genre au Maroc. As a result of the mini campaign, the ACSS received a media engagement request from Al Fanar Media.

- Al Fanar Media - an independent non-profit news platform that focuses on higher education, research and culture in the Arab region – interviewed the ACSS Director General about the impact of the pandemic on social scientists and humanists in the Arab region and reported on the results of the study in an article dated July 13, 2021 (https://www.al-

fanarmedia.org/2021/07/covid-19-poses-new-challenges-for-social-scientists-survey-finds/). Their coverage is available in Arabic and English.

- On July 20, 2021, the report author did a blog on the report for the International Science Council (https://council.science/current/blog/academic-challenges-covid-19-era-for-arab-scholars/).

- A London-based science policy magazine Research Professional News interviewed the report author and published an article on July 29, 2021 (https://www.researchprofessionalnews.com/rr-news-world-2021-7-pandemic-childcare-hits-female-arab-researchers-hard/).

**Palestine Follow-up Research to Baseline Study**

As indicated in the 2020 annual report to Sida, the Applied Research Institute in Jerusalem (ARIJ) prepared a report titled "Study of Higher Education and Research in Palestine" which was a baseline study and which the ACSS later complemented by commissioning some in-depth studies to address the gaps and some emerging issues not covered by the baseline report. The follow-up research identified a new set of papers and outputs such as bibliographic reviews, analytical papers, think pieces and reports, databases and consultations.

The papers and products address the following: (1) Validating the Palestine databases already compiled by ARIJ and the ASSM; (2) Compilation of donors of higher education, science and research to create a database of international, regional and local donors; and (3) Mapping the main institutions that are part of the higher education public governance system and write a critical think piece. In July 2021, all five Palestine databases of universities, university-based research centers, non-university-based research centers, professional societies, and periodicals were validated by the ACSS Staff (Mr. Rami Ofeich) and Palestine Focal Point staff (Mr. Firas Jaber). The other two products/activities will take place in 2022.

In addition, three think pieces on gender and higher education in Palestine (Drs. Nidaa Awad and Lena Meari), on line learning in Palestine (Dr. Anies El Hroub), a critical literature review on higher education and the impact of Israeli colonialism on higher education (Dr. Rami Salameh) are currently underway.

**Iraq project: The social sciences experience in Iraqi universities**

The "Social sciences experience in Iraq universities" project stems from the mission of the ASSM to document social science knowledge production in the Arab region and its interest to learn from the richness of the Iraqi experience in social sciences. The goal of the project is to better understand the current state of social sciences in Iraqi universities and aims to achieve two objectives.

1. Obtaining a snapshot of current status of the social sciences in Iraqi universities through (a) a documentation of the social science infrastructure in six Iraq universities (Baghdad

university, Salahaddin University-Erbil, Thi-Qar university, Kufa university, Tikrit university and Mosul university), and (b) a survey of the career trajectories of social science scholars in these universities.

2. Based on the results of the survey, offering a multidisciplinary course online to about 50 students selected from the six universities.

**Communication with MOHESR in Baghdad**:
Towards the end of 2020, the ACSS got a preliminary approval from the MOHESR in Baghdad along with a request for a meeting. On January 20, 2021, the ACSS Director General, project Lead Researcher and ASSM project leader met virtually with a representative of the MOHESR and briefed him on the ACSS and the project. Following the meeting and per the representative's request, the ACSS prepared and shared with the MOHESR a project proposal (for Iraq project proposal, please click here). In the summer of 2021, they requested a virtual meeting which was welcomed by the ACSS. Unfortunately, the process was delayed due to the Iraqi parliamentary elections of October 2021.

**Communication with MOHESR in Erbil:**
Towards the end of 2020, the ACSS had a virtual meeting with an Advisor to the Minister in Erbil whom we briefed about the project and asked for the Ministry's support and facilitation of communication with the president of Salaheddine University in Erbil. In a letter from the Director General of the MOHESR in Erbil end of May 2021, the project got the full support of the MOHESR in Erbil including to work with Salaheddine University.

**Project Implementation Preparations**:
Following the preliminary approvals we received from both Ministries toward the end of 2020, we started preparations for project implementation. In February 2021, we engaged (1) Quantitative Research Consultant (Dr. Maia Sieverding) to lead quantitative survey research and write the survey report and (2) research assistant (Ms. Nidaa Al Khazali) for the project Lead Researcher (Dr. Lucine Taminian).

On June 2, 2021, a meeting was held with the project Advisory Committee with the sole purpose of identifying a Lead Researcher in each of the six universities to lead project research activities in his/her university and write an analytical report based on the research findings about social sciences in each university. As a result of this meeting, six lead researchers were engaged to work on the project (for Iraq project Advisory Committee and team, please click here).

A virtual preparatory workshop took place on August 3, 2021, to present and discuss the project's research methodology and tools developed by the ACSS with the six Lead Researchers. The workshop was attended by the full team: six University Lead Researchers, Project Advisory Committee members, project Lead Researcher, Research Assistant, Quantitative Research Consultant, ACSS Director General, ASSM Project Leader and ASSM Data Analyst (for Iraq

preparatory workshop agenda, please click here). Unfortunately, the parliamentary elections of October 2021 stood in the way of moving forward with the project after the August workshop. Another workshop is now planned for February 7 and 8, 2022 during which the research team and advisory committee will delve into the tools and implementation modalities.

**ASSM Databases Updated, Expanded and Validated**

One of the core functions of the ASSM is to document the infrastructure of social science and humanities knowledge production in the Arab region and make it public through online databases.

In 2021, the ASSM continuously updated the existing higher education institutions (universities), university-based research centers, non-university-based research centers and periodicals databases whenever new information became available. Additionally, the professional / scientific societies database underwent a major update in February/March, resulting in a total of 319 entries (up from 68 in the first version of 2015) and this update included adding fields such as membership type/membership category. In March/April, a social sciences / humanities publishers database was also created (482 entries).

In the second half of the year, five of the six databases (the publishers database has not been validated yet) were validated by country-level experts in four countries: Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Palestine (for Databases validators, please click here). For each database, the validators were requested to review the completeness of the lists and to check information entered for each indicator. Databases submitted by validators as well as the additional resources they provided were reviewed by the ASSM Data Analyst (Mr. Rami Ofeich). The databases interface was also refined (made more compact with some fields added/removed...) based on ASSM assessment and recommendations from the validators.

The latest versions of the ASSM Databases are available at https://dataverse.theacss.org/dataverse/assm and comprise:

- 636 higher education institutions that offer degree programs in social sciences and/or humanities and 741 that do not
- 862 university-based research centers
- 427 non-university-based research centers
- 328 professional / scientific societies
- 1,806 periodicals
- 482 publishers

In 2022, a database of Libraries with social science collections will be created. The existing databases will be continuously updated as relevant and will be validated in additional countries per lesson learned from the 2021 validation round.

**Standard Summary Tables**

The ASSM Standard Tables include summary measures of the ASSM Databases and periodically present data compiled by the ASSM in a standardized way. They were developed and populated in late 2020 and were updated in April 2021 and, following the ASSM Databases validation results, in December 2021. (http://www.theacss.org/pages/third-assm-report).

The ASSM Databases and ASSM Standard Tables are key inputs to the ACSS flagship report, the ASSR. Going forward, along with the ASSR dissemination, we aim to highlight the ASSM Databases and ASSM Standard Tables through targeted dissemination.

**Arab Public Data Initiative**

The Arab Public Data Initiative, launched in June 2018, is implemented in collaboration with the Odum Institute for Research in Social Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The Initiative aims to promote the norm and practice of data management and data sharing among social scientists and research institutions in the Arab region within the concept of knowledge as a public good. The two objectives of this Initiative are (1) Preserving and facilitating access to social science research data on and in the Arab region, and (2) Capacity building in managing data and making it open.

The work of this Initiative is guided by an active and engaged advisory committee (for Dataverse Advisory Committee and project team, please click here). The full committee met on November 17, 2021, and the discussions led to practical recommendations on how to increase the number of datasets deposited in the ACSS Dataverse and how the regional training workshops should evolve (for Dataverse Advisory Committee mtg agenda, please click here).

For the first objective, over one hundred and twenty datasets have been deposited into the ACSS Dataverse – www.dataverse.theacss.org – since it went live in June 2019. The ACSS Dataverse, jointly managed by the ACSS and ODUM, is the first interdisciplinary open-access social science data hub in the Arab region and is available to both individuals and institutions. Datasets that are deposited in the ACSS Dataverse are de-identified and processed in keeping with global data archiving standards. The ACSS aims to reach out to more potential depositors of datasets.

**Events/dissemination**:

As part of a webinar series to commemorate its 10th anniversary (See 10th Anniversary Webinars below) a webinar titled "Knowledge for the Public Good" was jointly organized on April 10, 2021 with the Economic Research Forum (ERF) based in Cairo, the Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO) based in Buenos Aires and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The Webinar discussed the timely issue of knowledge as a public good and presented principles and applications of open social science and data management. The issues were covered from different

regional perspectives and highlighted some relevant initiatives in the Arab region including by the ASSM.
http://www.theacss.org/pages/webinar_three
https://www.facebook.com/theacss/videos/2049646981877782/
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=btvhwtCigXE

The ACSS was part of the International Science Council (ISC) delegation to the UNESCO special Committee meeting on Open Science (held virtually from May 6 to 12, 2021) during which country delegations discussed a draft of "UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science" (https://en.unesco.org/science-sustainable-future/open-science/recommendation). In observer status at the meeting, the ISC delegation made a short statement on May 6, 2021, (for ISC statement, please click here) to which the ACSS contributed (for ACSS contribution, please click here). After the meeting, the ACSS signed up to a joint statement on *Open Science and the UNESCO Initiative* dated July 1, 2021 (https://council.science/current/news/open-science-and-the-unesco-initiative/).

On October 20, 2021, the ACSS participated in the 2nd Arab Open Access Week (https://alecso.org/openaccessweek/topics.php), a regional conference on open access co-organized by the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO - http://www.alecso.org/nsite/en/ - working under the umbrella of the Arab League and based in Tunis) and the Arab Community for Open Access (ACOA – a community of volunteers across the region working to promote open access) (for Arab Open Access Week ACSS session agenda, please click here). The ACSS panel highlighted what the ACSS and two other organizations in Algeria and Jordan are doing in the area of open access and data management as they relate to social sciences and humanities. In addition, participation in this conference was an opportunity for the ACSS to reach out to new audiences working on open access in the region.

To increase the visibility and use of the ACSS, Dataverse was registered in the Registry of Research Data Repositories (re3data.org), a global registry that lists existing research data repositories from all academic disciplines.

**Looking Forward and Lessons learned**

The ASSM continues to fill a gap of documenting/tracking the institutional landscape of social science and humanities research and higher education in the Arab region. It also continues to address the unmet need for social science data management and sharing in the region – a niche for the ASSM in the Arab region. Planning and implementation of ASSM activities in 2021 in settings of conflict and instability (e.g. Iraq) and in the context of the pandemic has not been easy and has led to long delays which we have sought to deal with and compensate for.

In 2022, the ASSM databases will be validated in additional countries taking into account the lessons learned from the 2021 round of validation and at least one more database will be created. We will do

targeted dissemination of the ASSM Databases and ASSM Standard Tables. We will also be working on finalizing ASSR3 and on developing ASSR4. The ASSM team has realized that the amount of time it takes to develop the various inputs into the ASSRs and the writing and production of the report is currently underestimated and will therefore be revised. The ASSM will continue its work on social sciences data management and sharing. The capacity building on social sciences data management and sharing will be offered as a training of trainers (TOT) and in a more targeted way (offered at country-level or in specific institutions) in order to help create communities of practice on this important and timely issue.

The Iraq study will hopefully move forward through a revised implementation modality. Planning for this project and getting official approvals in a setting of conflict and instability is facing a variety of hurdles to its launch. The periodic survey that has been conducted at the regional level will be applied at the country-level through the Iraq study. The ASSM will develop its full team to better implement and expand its activities.

## I. Training

ACSS started developing its training programs in 2015 many of which have been co-funded with other organizations thus fulfilling one of the targets of the ACSS 5-year Strategy, namely developing a number of long-term co-funded programs and partnerships. In 2018, ACSS redesigned its training offerings to further emphasize interdisciplinarity and field building as well as the promotion of academic networks that create opportunities for cross-national research as well as foster regional collaborations for local knowledge production.

### Data Sharing for the Public Good

Through open calls for applications, the fifth and sixth, in the 'Data management and sharing for the social sciences' training series were conducted virtually in 2021. The training workshops were attended by researchers, administrators, librarians and archivists from diverse sectors (public, private, academia, NGOs, UN, etc). Training material that introduce the participants to the principles and global best practices and tools of data management and sharing, were made available to workshop participants on the ACSS Moodle.

- Fifth training: May 30-June 1 and June 6 & 7, 2021, Virtual: 24 participants (out 63 applicants). (For Fifth Data management training call for applications, please click here)
- Sixth training: November 28-30, 2021, Virtual: 14 participants (out of 32 applicants). (For sixth Data management training call for applications, please click here)

We conducted three evaluations of each "Data Management and Sharing for the Social Sciences" workshop: (1) a pre-workshop evaluation about knowledge and expectations of workshop

participants, (2) a post-evaluation to assess learning outcomes, and (3) an evaluation about process (pace of the workshop, trainers, etc.). The evaluations are generally positive and the feedback of the workshop participants is helping us fine-tune successive trainings. In 2022, the trainings, and as part of their aim to create communities of practice, will be offered as a training of trainers (TOT) and will be more targeted (offered at country-level or in specific institutions). Finally, the training material will be translated into Arabic.

**ACSS Academy July 2021**

The ACSS organized its inaugural ACSS Academy from July 1 to 11, 2021. Originally planned as an in-person event in Beirut, Lebanon, the Academy took place virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Academy is planned as a biennial event to provide an opportunity for junior researchers in the Arab region to engage with critical theory and analysis, advanced writing, professionalization skills and networking.

The goals of the Academy are:

- Preparing junior researchers for cross-disciplinary research that critically interrogates social and humanistic research questions through:
    - Exploring guiding concepts in Arab critical thought
    - Understanding genealogies and canons of leading theories and frameworks relevant to the region
    - Constructively evaluating academic research and writing
    - Collaborating with peers from across the Arab region
    - Incorporating learnings from the academy into research
    - Providing a space for participants to present their research and receive verbal and written feedback from the faculty members as well as from other participants
    - Bringing participants and faculty members together in order to discuss issues around publishing, teaching and other professional concerns

In 2021, the themes of the first Academy revolved around the ACSS three working groups:

1. Critiques of Power
2. Critical Security Studies
3. Ethnography and Knowledge

Fifty participants from nine countries (selected after a 2-step application process) attended keynote lectures by the working group faculty members, professionalization/ training sessions as well as mentoring sessions on their research papers.

The Academy program adopted complementary teaching strategies:

- Working Groups: participants were divided between the three working groups, which gave them the opportunity to work and network within smaller groups
- Thematic sessions: This involved lectures by core faculty and guest lecturers to introduce participants to the above-mentioned themes and the ways in which critical research within these themes can be conducted. Faculty members also presented their contribution to these themes and their ongoing work.
- Mentoring and writing sessions: The purpose of these sessions was for participants to present their research within smaller groups and to receive written and verbal feedback from faculty members as well as their peers.

The program also included keynote lectures and professionalization/professional development sessions that brought together the students from across the working groups:

- Keynote lectures: Two keynote sessions were organized on the themes: "What is the Arab Region?" and "Criticality in the Social Sciences". The prominent social scientists presenting were Mohammed Bamyeh and Adam Hanieh for the first session and Ghassan Hage and Sara Mourad for the second session
- Trainings: Given by experts in their fields, these included "Professional Self Presentation", "Publishing in the Social Sciences", "Writing for Diverse Audiences and Digital Media Skills", "Research Ethics in the Social Sciences".
- Professionalization/professional development sessions: Participants and faculty members came together to discuss issues around publishing, fieldwork, teaching, and other professional concerns.

### J. Research Ethics Initiative

The ACSS launched a pilot project in 2016 to promote regional collaboration on relevant research ethics guidelines, practices and structures. The Initiative aims to:

- Strengthen research ethics infrastructures in the Arab region;
- Build a network of individuals and institutions that can contribute to the development of a culture of research ethics in the region (research institutions, think tanks and NGOs…);
- Strengthen the capacity of the ACSS to mentor and train its grantees on research ethics principles and issues.

**New Consultant**:

In 2021, the ACSS hired a consultant, Dr. Lana Salman to provide substantive expertise and programmatic leadership for the ACSS research ethics initiative. Dr. Salman has been tasked with a number of things. She is now revising the guidelines for research ethics and will be developing a training manual and real-life case studies as well as an interactive discussion board/blog/essays

including outputs from grantees and others. The next step will be for Dr. Salman to develop 'model' guidelines for other types of institutions (universities, NGOs, grant-making institutions etc.) and helping us plan and conduct training sessions for various constituents including a "Training the Trainer" workshop.

**Research Ethics in Social Sciences – Small Grants Program Cycle 2-2021:**

As indicated under the Small Grants Program above, in 2021 we refined the call for proposals to expound the theme and make it clearer to readers. We also revised the three modalities to include writing a reflection piece, organizing a dissemination event and conducting additional field work. Finally, we left open the types of activities that applicants can engage in. We also launched a call for the Cycle 2 of the program and selections will take place in February.

**Trainings**

The four grantees selected in Cycle 1 of the Research Ethics Small Grants Program – received training in July 2021 in an on-line workshop wherein they presented their projects to each other in a plenary session, followed by individual mentoring, training and specific comments on their ethical conundrum by members of the selection/advisory committee of the Research Ethics Initiative.

- In April-May 2021, grantees of the RGP on Health and Livelihoods in the Arab region received training on research ethics based on their responses to the questionnaire that they received, asking them to elaborate their ethical procedures. On the basis of these responses, Dr. Jamil Mouawad - ACSS Consultant designed one-on-one sessions focused on ethics and gave comments to grantees on their ethical questions and approaches.

**Lessons Learned:**

This remains a significant but challenging initiative for the ACSS. On one hand, it is clearly an area where no other academic institution or organization is taking the lead on and where ACSS can play an important role to fill the void. Also, the more we work with grantees on the theme of ethics, the more we discover the depth of lack of knowledge and need for capacity building. On the other hand, the interest in the theme is visible and the desire to learn about research ethics is clear. In some of our programs, like the RGP on health and livelihoods in the Arab region, and given the nature of the theme and its focus on health and vulnerabilities, the selection/advisory committee is wary of the need to ensure that research procedures are ethical and we have made the discussion of research ethics a requirement in the proposal. Other than that, we have faced a major challenge in 2021 to find the caliber of researchers and ethics specialists who can help us steer the program and take it to higher levels. We need to continue to find the competencies needed for the program who can connect the dots in the different components of the initiative.

## K. Regional, South-South and Global Collaborations

From inception, the ACSS has given importance to South-south, cross-regional and global collaborations as part of its identity and mission. The ACSS seeks to be an entity through which Arab researchers will engage in robust Arab region collaborations and networking but also become integrated into cross-regional and global research projects and social science convening.

In 2021, the ACSS seized opportunities to promote collaboration with sister organization in the Global South as indicated below.

### The Right to Education: Perspectives from the Global South: South-to-South Collaboration (ACSS, CODESRIA and CLACSO)

In 2021 CLACSO approached the ACSS and CODESRIA to launch a new research program on the right to education in Latin America, the Arab region and East and Southern Africa. With funding from the OSF, CLACSO is spearheading this south-to-south collaboration to build a network from thought leaders, researchers, activists, teachers, students as well as members of communities that advocate for the right to education from the Global South. The project would present new paradigms, perspectives and realities emerging from the Global South as well as de-colonial approaches based on diversity, inclusion and equality. In its pilot phase, the project will form working groups of researchers who will undertake research on two stages. The first stage seeks to provide a statistical overview of the regions as well as country analysis of the right to higher education focusing on: transition (from secondary to higher education, enrolment, retention and completion. This will be followed by a second stage of qualitative studies and analysis of government policies, civil society initiatives as well as other issues that arise and call for further research in the statistical part. Dr. Ray Langsten, research professor at the American University in Cairo, is taking the lead in the first stage of research on behalf of the ACSS.

### InterAsia

For more than a decade, the ACSS served as a core partner in an international, inter-institutional consortium of InterAsia Partners: Duke University, Göttingen University, the Hong Kong Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences, the National University of Singapore, the Social Science Research Council and Yale University, with the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) serving as Secretariat. An MoU between the ACSS and the SSRC signed in 2013 governed this relationship.

The consortium developed InterAsia as a concept, paradigm, and empirical framework that re-envisioned the Asian expanse as an interconnected geographical formation that transcends conventional academic and geopolitical labels and divisions. Over the years, the InterAsia Partners and the SSRC's InterAsia Program supported individual fellows, networked researchers through workshops, summer schools and academies, and organized a large, international conference series. As of April 1, 2021, funding and institutional support from the SSRC reached an end. However, with the institutional and intellectual objectives of InterAsia as important and urgent as ever, a majority of partners elected to continue their joint efforts, voting to shift Secretariat duties to the ACSS for an initial interim period of up to two-years (April 2021-April 2023).

Since April 1, 2021, the ACSS has coordinated the InterAsia Partnership (IAP). In this new capacity, the ACSS has prioritized building on the modalities, networks and accomplishments of the original InterAsia Program, while also working to forge new connections in the Global South, expand the reach of the IAP and address an evolving set of issues that interconnect the region. The ACSS remains committed to nurturing the development of scholarship that centers connections and continuities, as well as divergences and differences, while remaining grounded in a robust knowledge of contexts and spaces that overlap, merge and disconnect as outcomes of historical and contemporary processes and forces.

To date, the IAP has held consultation meetings with members of the four current partner institutions, collaborating on the development of a joint mission statement and new institutional logo. In addition, it has held a number of direct conversations with individual partner institutions, prospective partners and donors, leading to a number of key developments. These include:

- Development of New Research Directions and Core Projects
  - Developing Research Capacities on East Asia in West Asia – working closely with colleagues at the University of Exeter, and in coordination with Dr. Adam Hanieh and his project on "China and Contemporary Development in the Middle East," the IAP will plan an intensive Academy intended to increase and develop research capacities on East Asia within West Asia, and to network West Asian scholars with others within the larger IAP networks.
  - Authoritarian Populist Regimes and the Rise of Civilizational Discourse – working closely with Dr. Srirupa Roy at the University of Göttingen (an IAP partner), the IAP will help to form a collaborative working group that will investigate and document discourses, agents and institutional infrastructures of civilizational power, with particular focus on how the trope of civilization mainstreams, normalizes and obfuscates authoritarian and enthnomajoritarian commitments of "strongmen" regimes.

- Growth of IAP Network – New potential partners include: University of Exeter, Max-Planck-Halle, Princeton University, University of Northwestern Qatar, and Arizona State University.

- Possibilities of New Funding
  - Letter of Inquiry submitted to Chiang Ching Kuo Foundation to fund series of training workshops that explore how research capacities on history, culture, development and geopolitics on East Asia can be built within West Asia (and vice versa)
  - Letter of Inquiry submitted to Carnegie Corporation of New York, jointly with Global Asia Institute at Duke University (an IAP partner), to fund research project focused on Asia beyond Bipolarity. This project seeks to explore range of critical interdependencies and security issues across Asian expanse outside of the US-China bi-polar configuration

**Next Steps**

Looking ahead, the IAP under ACSS leadership will follow-up on these pending partnership and funding opportunities and pursue additional funding opportunities, all while building on the dense, scholarly networks that the IAP brings to these projects. Prospective activities will complement activities planned for the 2022-2023 academic years, which include a partners' Webinar Series and a workshop focused on InterAsian Legalities (a follow-up to the inaugural 2021 InterAsia Academy).

The IAP will also focus on the enhancement of transregional and transnational knowledge production and networking opportunities, building this priority into all future activities.

**Middle East Institute at Columbia University, in collaboration with the Columbia Global Centers: Special Commission on Social Science Research in the Middle East and North Africa**

This project is a collaboration between the Middle East Institute at Columbia University, the Political Science Department of the American University of Cairo, the Rabat Social Studies Institute, and the Arab Council for the Social Sciences. The project aims to improve the quality of social science research on, and in, the Middle East and North Africa (with a particular focus on the Arab Region) by establishing a Special Commission on Social Science Research in the Middle East and North Africa tasked with:

(a) identifying impediments—institutional, economic, political, sociological—to the conduct of social science research in the region today;

(b) proposing long-term strategies for addressing such impediments

(c) recommending mechanisms for greater co-operation among social science communities within and beyond the Arab Middle East and North Africa

(d) developing guidelines for the ethical conduct of research in and on communities under duress and in circumstances of disparate power relations;

(e) fostering shared perceptions of the value of social science research and of the circumstances that advance it, within the region and beyond.

Given the timing of the project, it has also devoted special attention to challenges of conducting ethical research under the extraordinary restrictions on mobility imposed by COVID-19.

The Principal Investigators on the project are Dr. Lisa Anderson, dean emerita, School of International and Public Affairs, and Faculty Associate, Middle East Institute, Columbia University https://www.mei.columbia.edu/ and Dr. Saloua Zerhouni, professor of political science at Mohammed V University and president of the Rabat Social Studies Institute (RSSI), Rabat http://www.rssi-rabat.ma/rssi/. The Steering Committee consists of Dr. Lila Abu Lughod (Columbia University); Dr. Rabab El Mahdi (AUC); Dr. Sari Hanafi (AUB); Dr. Stéphane Lacroix (CERI/Sciences Po) and Dr. Seteney Shami (ACSS).

Over 2021, four Working groups were established as follows:

1. The Economics of Social Science in the Middle East and North Africa - Convened by Dima Toukan and Ellen Lust. This group will analyze funding for social sciences research in the Middle East and North Africa.

2. Ethics of Publishing in the Middle East Social Sciences - Convened by Sari Hanafi and Rich Nielsen. This working group's discussions focused particularly on the lack of dialogue

between scholars in the region and outside of it. The Working Group is examining publications to discern who's citing whom, what type of scholarship journals look for, etc. and how research is disseminated today.

3. Methods of Inquiry - Convened by Jillian Schwedler and Laryssa Chomiak. The group decided to develop a draft or "essential readings" for advisors and junior researchers, particularly doctoral students. The group is preparing a number of individual and joint publications, including work on the outsourcing of knowledge production, the relation between interviewer and interviewee, and on fixers, research assistants, and translators.

4. Career Development - Convened by Sarah Parkinson and Dina Zayed. The group is writing a rubric/guide on what a conversation on ethics between student and advisor would look like and what core questions need to be asked.

5. The Ethics and Politics of Research Questions - Convened by Lila Abu-Lughod and Rabab El-Mahdi. The group has developed abstracts and is holding several workshops to discuss the interventions and decide on how best to disseminate them.

In addition, through a collaboration between Sari Hanafi (AUB) and the Grants and Fellowships Unit at the ACSS, research is being conducted on the life-cycle of researchers in the region. This should provide insight into patterns of institutional strength and weakness as well as the career trajectories of individual researchers, and means of enhancing visibility of publications resulting from ACSS projects. A survey was sent to a sample of ACSS grantees and interviews around these issues were organized with them. In addition, a battery of questions was also added to the interview in which grantees were asked about their knowledge of research ethics, training received in this area as well as ethical practices in undertaking research. Dr. Hanafi is currently finalizing the analysis of his study.

## IV. OUTPUTS, DISSEMINATION AND ELECTRONIC PLATFORM

Through all the following activities, the number of outputs enabled by the ACSS or produced directly by it has been steadily growing as indicated in the following sections:

### A. Online Activities

#### Website

As the ACSS programs continued to grow in 2021, we are now in the process of revamping our website to reflect our expanding offerings. New pages for programs, projects and other new activities) have been added, and grantees will be are regularly uploaded to the website. The new website will be active in February 2022.

We also continued to implement our strategic plan for the ACSS blog known as the Digest, which is the most dynamic part of our website. Over 2021, we continued to diversify the type of content featured, and increased our coverage of our own events and activities, especially in Arabic. Calls for

applications and job opportunities have become regular posts, as more and more organizations continue to contact us to circulate their calls. This has made the roundups of social science calls for the Arab region (published once a month) a regular staple on our blog, shared on social media and with our mailing list. We also added a section under Events for our 10th anniversary webinar series that included the YouTube links to all the webinars. The expanded offerings of the Council have also led to more digital exposure: the ACSS website received on average over 6,000 visitors per month in the year 2021, an increase of 14 percent compared to the previous year's monthly average.
**Website**: www.theacss.org

**Social Media**

As our content has become more diversified (including coverage of activities, calls for job vacancies in the region, interviews with partners and grantees, and curated posts), we have been able to increase and diversify our social media posts, thus increasing our online presence and profile. In 2021, our Facebook followers grew by 24 percent (jumping from 33,300 in January 2021 to 42,700 by the end of December 2021). Worth noting here is that this spike has been organic for the most part, since we have not engaged in any direct online advertisements for the ACSS, except for very few ads to promote existing calls for applications or proposals for specific programs.
**Facebook**: The Arab Council for the Social Sciences

With respect to Twitter, our followers have continued to grow. The year 2021 saw a 22 percent increase, from roughly 3,300 in January 2021 to 3,900 by December 2021. This means that more and more people are finding value in our tweets and following our account. The growth in followers on Twitter was helped in part by the live tweeting we did for a series of webinars that took place in 2021.
**Twitter**: Acss_org

We are also increasing our presence on YouTube, as we currently have 39 videos (up from 26 in 2020) on the platform. The videos include lectures, panel discussions, webinars, interviews and short documentaries.
YouTube: Arab Council for the Social Sciences

**Newsletter**

In 2021, we released one issue of our newsletter in Arabic, English and French - the three working languages of the ACSS and are planning on an "ACSS in 2021" issue to be released at the end of January 2022. Designed to help us keep our community of researchers updated on our activities and the ways in which they can take part in them, the newsletter highlights the major activities of the preceding period, including grantee selections and publications by grantees and members as well as open calls and events to look forward to in the following months. Much like our blog and social media posts, the newsletter resulted in several mailing list subscribers contacting us for help to circulate calls.

**Webinars**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic that turned the world of in-person events upside down and put all sorts of restrictions on mobility, the ACSS witnessed a smooth shift to virtual activities. Although this shift created new challenges in terms of managing remote speakers and keeping the audience engaged, it helped us enhance our presence on multiple virtual platforms and reach a wider audience in the Arab region and across the world, as evidenced by the ACSS 10th Anniversary webinars.

ACSS 10th Anniversary Webinars:

The ACSS celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2021. On this occasion, we launched a series of webinars beginning in February and ending in December 2021. These webinars took place on Zoom on the 10th of every month from 5:00-7:00pm (Beirut time). They received significant feedback and interaction on "zoom" and "Facebook" where they were broadcast live.

List of Webinars:

1. Webinar 1: Knowledge in Times of Mass Mobilization
2. Webinar2: 2020 in Retrospect
3. Webinar 3: Knowledge for the Public Good (co-organized with the Economic Research Forum/ERF, the Latin American Council of Social Sciences/CLACSO and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill).
4. Webinar 4: Gendered Resistance: Academia and Activism
5. Webinar 5: Collaborative Research: Transgressing Divides; Building Bridges (co-organized with CODESRIA and InterAsia Partnership)
6. Webinar 6: Fieldwork: Current Dilemmas and Future Directions
7. Webinar 7: Social Science: Voices of the New Generation (co-organized with the Lebanese American University - Lebanon, Birzeit University – Palestine, University of Sfax – Tunisia and the American University in Cairo – Egypt)
8. Webinar 8: Ethnographic Knowledge: Writing the Unknown; Reading the Future
9. Webinar 9 (part 1): A Commitment to Tomorrow: Narratives and Imaginaries in the Face of Power (co-organized with the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture – AFAC, Culture Resource and Ettijahat- Independent Culture).
   Webinar 9 (part 2): A Commitment to Tomorrow: Narratives and Imaginaries in the Face of Power (co-organized with the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture – AFAC, Culture Resource and Ettijahat- Independent Culture).
10. Webinar 10: Interrogating the Social Sciences in the Vortex of Crises: Waves of Discontent and Demands for Change (during the fifth conference).

The ACSS webinars have received wide coverage in local and regional media platforms. (Appendix 15: Media coverage)

In addition to the 10th anniversary webinars:

- The ACSS Focal Point in Algeria organized on January 14, 2021 a webinar titled: "Anthropology in the Maghreb: Practices and Theories".
- The ACSS Ethnography and Knowledge in the Arab Region working group organized two webinars on "Ethnography and Medicine". The first webinar was held on June 3, 2021, and the second one was held on November 18, 2021 (webinar 1, webinar 2).
- The ACSS co-organized a webinar with the Constantine Zurayk Cultural Foundation and the AUB Department of History and Archeology titled: "Arab Historians and the Production of Modern Historical Thought, 1890s - 1970s". This webinar was held on June 15, 2021.
- The ACSS co-organized a two-day virtual forum (April 6-7, 2021) with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Center for Human Sciences (CISH), titled "Re-centering the Humanities: The Arab Regional Forum on Humanities". The ACSS Director General participated in the opening and closing sessions and chaired the first session (Session 1, Session 2, Session 3, Session 4).

In addition, ACSS staff and BoT members were particularly active in several non-ACSS organized webinars in 2021. They participated in numerous virtual panels and conferences organized by partners and sister organizations spanning different continents.

## B. Print Activities and E-Publications

### Working Papers

Our call for Working Paper submissions remained open throughout 2021. Further to a decision by the Board of Trustees Publications Committee and the Secretariat to make the submission of a working paper a grant requirement for grantees in the Early Career Fellows Program and the ACSS-FMSH Short-Term Postdoctoral Mobility Fellowships, grantees started submitting their works as they completed their grants. To enhance the quality and reputation of the working papers, another round of internal review was added before publishing. In 2021, eight papers were submitted and four were published: 1 paper in Arabic; 1 paper in English, and two papers in French (paper 1, paper 2).

**Occasional Publication**

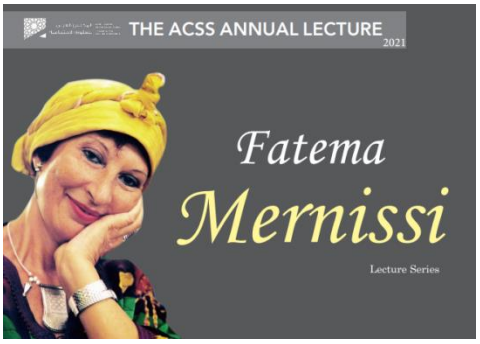
Occasional Publication from the ACSS Fourth Conference

Centered on Dr. Jala Makhzoumi's keynote titled "Borders, Ecology and landscape: Sustainable Development and Specificity of Space" at the Fourth Conference in 2019, this Arabic publication included Dr. Makhzoumi's paper, and four commentaries by four different scholars reflecting different disciplinary approaches and countries/regions, namely Dr. Rami Daher (Jordan), Dr. Galila El Kadi (Egypt), Dr. Mohamed Ait Hamza (Morocco) and Dr. Ala'a Shehabi (Bahrain). This publication has been published and disseminated in December 2021 during the ACSS Fifth Conference in Morocco, Egypt and Beirut.

Booklet on the third Annual Lecture in the Fatema Mernissi Lecture Series

(Arabic, English and French)

The third lecture titled "Transformations of Feminist and Queer Movements in the Arab Region: Storytelling and Societal Change" was held on November 30, 2021 on "Zoom", and was presented by Dr. Zeina Zaatari (the Director of the Arab American Cultural Center and adjunct faculty in Anthropology at the University of Illinois at Chicago).




"Gendered Resistance" Second Publication

This publication is the result of the New Paradigms Factory (NPF) Program, a writing fellowship targeting activists and junior researchers in Arab countries, to train them on writing for a diverse audience, in the academic and non-academic fields, such as policy makers, the civil society and the general public.

Over the course of two cycles dedicated to the theme of "Gendered Resistance", experienced academic mentors, specialized in the field of gender, have mentored and guided the fellows to write and publish articles that present new alternative paradigms for thinking about the topic of gendered resistance. This publication includes ten essays reflecting different disciplinary approaches, narratives and countries in the Arab region.

**E-Publications**

**Ethnographic Diaries:**

In December 2021, the ACSS published a new E-publication in collaboration with *Rusted Radishes: Beirut Literary and Art Journal*. This publication titled "Ethnographic Diaries: Capturing the Everyday in Crisis" is produced by the ACSS working group on "Ethnography and Knowledge in the Arab Region".

"Ethnographic Diaries" is a true embodiment of ACSS mission as an institution. It is a collaborative project that did not only allow the researchers to network effectively and share knowledge, skills and experience, but also encouraged interdisciplinary research and built a community of 12 researchers from different disciplinary backgrounds (contributors to the publication included anthropologists,

journalists, urbanists and artists among others). The space the authors created provided an opportunity to reflect and write about living and doing research during turbulent and highly charged times. Not only so, but the diaries also reflected the importance of ethnography in our times as a writing style and a methodology that allows researchers to better analyze knowledge transformations and foresee a better future, especially during crises and uncertainty. To read the full Diaries: Ethnographic Diaries | مدونات إثنوغرافية - Rusted Radishes

**Lessons Learned and Looking Forward**

Last year saw an intensified shift to the virtual format the world over as a result of the pandemic. Like other institutions, we too have implemented most of our activities on line, but have also started to gradually experiment with blended forms of meetings that combine in-person interaction with on-line events (e.g. the Fifth Conference in December 2021). However, when appropriate, we will continue with webinars and online activities since these can be done more frequently while reaching a wider audience.

The number of followers of our social media platforms has been increasing over the years along with the number of visitors to our website. In 2021, we used our social media platforms, not just for promoting our activities, but also for live broadcasting: from our 10th anniversary webinars to the opening sessions of the Fifth Conference. Our efforts have been reciprocated by our audience's visible expression of the growing interest in our work and the value they attach to the high-quality content that we provide. This is evidenced by the positive responses we have been receiving through our online communications tools. This in turn is helping strengthen the position of the ACSS as a reference and resource for the social scientists in the Arab region.

## V. FINAL REMARKS AND LOOKING FORWARD

Last year, 2021, was a critical year for the ACSS. While Covid-19 persisted and new variants continued to emerge, we resiliently continued to do our work. Unless not vaccinated yet, all staff returned to work from the office while respecting social distancing. We filled two key positions – financial and HR – and ensured a productive transition from the previous to the current incumbents. We delivered on all our scheduled activities online and in person when appropriate. Our programs witnessed a noticeable expansion in the last few years and our list of "Current Programs and Activities" now has more than 30 activities.

Our 10th anniversary webinars were a great success, as attested by the large number and variety of participants and their engagement in the discussions. We deliberately chose not to focus narrowly on the ACSS programs but rather on broad and timely topics, relevant to social sciences and humanities across the board, as well as political and economic developments in the region. We also selected

topics that engaged the interest and priorities of other sister organizations with which we collaborate on the regional and south to south fronts. Our choice of different panelists and speakers who are associated with the ACSS in different capacities, contributed to rich debates from a variety of disciplinary and generational perspectives as well as geographical backgrounds. The webinars have proved that the ACSS speaks to and engages a wide network and community of researchers, something that we are very adamant to continue to do.

Despite logistic challenges principally of restrictions on mobility and visa issues, we managed to convene our flagship conference and in a new and exciting format, no less. Organizing the conference in three Arab cities with the physical presence of the participants, was a novel innovation that respected Covid-19 rules of social distancing while allowing physical convening, which is central to our raison d'etre as an organization that strongly believes in the value of face-to-face networking and interaction. Organizing the conference and other key meetings in more than one venue has now emerged as an option that we can use to reach out to our community in different places.

The external evaluation we commissioned was another proof of the immense value of the work ACSS does and the continuous regional need for our programs. While our network of researchers highly appreciates our programs and the culture of our organization, they have more expectations from the ACSS and many good ideas for how to fine tune, improve and expand our work. An appreciated sense of belonging to, identification with and ownership of ACSS is noticeably growing that the ACSS staff cannot but reciprocate and seek to galvanize. The interim strategy that has now been approved by the BoT has gone into enforcement. It has been widely informed by the important recommendations made by the evaluation as well as our own understanding of what needs to be done in this moment of extended and protracted crisis in our region. The interim strategy will prepare and position us to articulate a longer work plan for 2022-2030.

Last year ended with a good note in that our endeavors to establish a branch office in Amman have finally yielded fruits and we are starting this year 2022 to finalize our branch office and banking procedures. We are also pursuing the 501 C 3 non-profit organization in the US which will greatly facilitate our work in North America. We are very hopeful that the new entities we are opening and our new banking arrangements will ensure a smooth sailing in the future.

All along we have relied in delivering our programs on a select group of avant-garde and loyal donor organizations who believe in the importance of the work ACSS does and its value in our challenging regional context. As elaborated above, this context has not deterred us in any major way from continuing to fulfil our mission and expanding our work. However, as we add new programs in response to persistent and emerging regional needs, and as we diversify structurally by opening new entities and recruiting new staff, our financial needs will grow and our running costs will also be on the upsurge. Most of our grants, especially those that provide flexible core funds, are coming to an end in 2022 and it is of utmost necessity that we work with our donors to ensure both a smooth running of our operations and support to our ideas for new programs and institutional growth.

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