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للعلوم الاجتماعية

Arab Council
for the Social Sciences
Conseil Arabe
pour les Sciences Sociales

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- Organization Name: Arab Council for the Social Sciences (ACSS)
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- Reporting Period: January 1, 2023 - December 31, 2023
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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
- AMEWS: Association for Middle East Women's Studies
- AUB: American University of Beirut
- AUC: American University in Cairo
- 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
- CPC: Country Program Coordinator
- CSS: Critical Security Studies
- CREAD: Center of Research for Applied Economics
- ECFP: Early Career Fellows Program
- EKWG: Ethnography and Knowledge Working Group
- ERF: Economic Research Forum
- F&A: Finance and Administration
- FPOS: Foundation to Promote Open Society (a member of Open Society Foundations – OSF)
- GAWG: Gendering the Archive Working Group
- GMS: Grants Management System
- GOHA: Gender Oral History Archive
- IDRC: International Development Research Centre
- IFA: Institute of Financial Analysts
- IFDO: International Federation of Data Organizations
- IAP: InterAsia Partnership (IAP)
- IDI: In depth interviews

- ISC: International Science Council
- IRS: Internal Revenue Service
- LAU: Lebanese American University
- LPR: Lead Project Researcher
- LU: Lebanese University
- LoA: Letter of Agreement
- MoU: Memorandum of Understanding
- MPK: Mapping the Production of Knowledge
- NCP: New Civilizationalisms Project
- NewGen: New Generation of Social Scientists in the Arab Region
- NPF: New Paradigms Factory
- OSF: Open Society Foundations
- 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
- SME: Subject Matter Experts
- BSCSS: Beirut School for Critical Security Studies
- ToC: Table of Contents
- ToR: Terms of Reference
- WHR: World Humanities Report
- WDS: World Data System

II. PROJECT ENVIRONMENT AND INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGY

The year 2023 witnessed continuous political and economic instability in the Arab region in addition to a series of natural disasters in a number of Arab countries resulting in thousands of deaths and casualties. Those ranged from a devastating earthquake in Western Morocco in September killing more than 2,900 people and injuring 5500, to torrential floods in the eastern regions of Libya also in September causing the collapse of two dams, the disappearance of 25% of the city of Derna, killing more than 4000 persons and displacing more than 43,000. Earlier in February 2023, one of the deadliest earthquakes in the history of Turkey and Syria hit the two countries resulting in a death toll that stood at more than 59000 in Turkey and 8000 in Syria. Apart from natural disasters, the year ended with the Gaza war on October 7 that continues till the present day and has acquired new dimensions as South Africa filed a case against Israel at the International Court of Justice in the Hague. All these natural and man-made calamities have triggered debates on the flagrant environmental, social, political and economic inequalities within and across Arab countries, resulting as well in, intellectual and ethical discussions that questioned the relationship between the West and the Arab region and between the Global North and the Global South.

Amid these regional and global currents, the ACSS continued to weather the storm resulting from the Lebanese banking crisis which led to 1.3 million US dollars of ACSS funding being blocked in the bank and the coming to an end of six grants (by the closure of 2022). In 2023, ACSS was able to renew two of the closed grants with no funding gaps (from Sida and Carnegie Corporation). Also, during the course of the year, the ACSS received a generous core support grant from OSF all made in one payment, and was able to re-attract the attention of the Ford Foundation after several years without financial support. Ford promised the ACSS a general and core support grant in 2024. In a nutshell, the ACSS started 2023 with adequate programmatic funds, but a deficit in running and personnel costs and less flexibility (due to loss of some of its core funding).

While the ACSS financial situation is stable at least for 2024, the overall future funding situation is not reassuring. Major donors such as Sida are themselves facing tumultuous changes within their organizations as their governments drastically reduced financial allocations. Other organizations, such as Carnegie has experienced a leadership change while OSF reduced the number of offices around the world and are currently undergoing major restructuring of programs and activities. Such developments and funding uncertainties pose new challenges for the ACSS as it implements its 2030 strategy that will guide the second decade of ACSS operations and charts the way in 'uncertain times'.

Given the above situation, the 2030 strategy has deliberately been cautious - particularly in its first two years - to heed the lingering financial difficulties and uncertain future funding. Also, while the strategy includes a balance between continuing the existing modalities and activities and building new programs, it was written to be a dynamic document, meant to be reviewed periodically to reflect any emerging changes. The ACSS 2030 vision assumes full institutional growth by 2030 while programmatic elements would continue to be consolidated, improved and expanded (Appendix 1 – ACSS 2030 Strategy). Tables 1 and 2 of the Strategy are key components as they summarize the programmatic way forward. Table 1 includes a list of all the "Main Pillars" of the

ACSS indicating continuous as well as new and planned programs, while Table 2 lists the programs by year and shows years where programs would experience a gap time to be used for planning, evaluation and streamlining.

In 2023 the ACSS also embarked on revamping internal financial operations and strategic budgeting. A contract was signed with a financial consultancy firm – Alnawa – to help the ACSS not only with the overall financial management, but also operating models especially after the addition of the Jordan branch and the US office (in the form of a 501c3 sister organization, the North American Arab Council for the Social Sciences).

The ACSS work on institutional strengthening has continued with completing the establishment of the new branch in Jordan and an office in the US. The latter, especially, and the US bank account, has noticeably improved the situation of transfers to ACSS grantees and other payments and minimized the amount of funds kept in the Lebanese bank. Also internally, 2023 witnessed a significant enhancement of the ACSS HR policies and procedures, a major push for the ACSS website as well as the recruitment of new staff to fill positions that remained vacant after their incumbents left, or were needed to bring more vitality and enhance work.

There were several programmatic highlights in 2023. In May the ACSS organized its Sixth Conference entitled "Producing Critical Knowledge in the Arab Region" hosting the largest number of participants in the history of the ACSS conferences to date, published its third Arab Social Science report under the title "The Academic Universes and Career Trajectories of Social Scientists in the Arab world" and is finalizing the fourth report on "Knowledge Production in the Humanities in the Arab World" and made strides with its South-South collaborations and the NewGen program.

In the following sections we review the progress we made on the institutional and programmatic fronts in 2023, address the challenges we faced in each program as well as the measures we adopted in the face of surrounding events and changes.

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 specific objectives of the institution (Appendix 2- Logframe).

However, in 2023, and in consultation with Sida, the ACSS decided to revisit the Logframe used in light of a comprehensive revamping of its Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework to align it with the objectives of the 2030 vision. Steps have already been taken to solicit the assistance of a consultant in this area to help the ACSS rethink the ways it is impacting the social sciences in the region by underscoring the learning it has acquired, as an institution, over the years, and the growing understanding of what works well and what can be improved. The consultant would also assist the ACSS in incorporating new tools and methodologies for that purpose to enhance the accuracy, efficiency, and depth of its impact assessments. While this is expected to take place in the first half of 2024, we have in the meantime - for 2023 - introduced some modifications to the current RBM Logframe to measure more accurately the results of the year. Overall, the results

displayed in the Logframe were satisfactory. Below are the objectives and reflections from the application of the current Logframe.

Overall Objective

To identify and address the needs of social science communities in the Arab region, increase production of high-quality social science and humanities research as well as engage in regional, cross-regional, and global collaborations and networking.

Specific Objectives

1. To improve and expand production and uptake of social science research to address regional issues;
2. To empower a new generation of social scientists integrated into regional and global networks;
3. To achieve institutionalization of ACSS as a credible recognized network of researchers and research institutions.

Significant reflections from the Logframe

- Major increase in the number of applicants for the Sixth Conference compared to the Fifth Conference: 121.23% increase
- Decrease of 33.55% in the NewGen applications in 2023 from 2022; increase in the number of social science courses developed for NewGen: from 5 to 7 courses; increase in the number of NewGen graduates: 40 graduates in 2023 as compared to 20 in 2022
- Increase in Social Media engagement: Compared to 2022, ACSS had 4000 new followers on Facebook, 550 on Twitter, 300 on Instagram, and 600 new subscribers on YouTube
- Increase in number of individual members of the ACSS from 809 in 2022 to 850 in 2023; increase of ACSS members in the 'students' category from 102 in 2002 to 113 in 2023;
- Maintaining gender balance in applications to the Grants and Fellowships programs as well as the Sixth Conference (52% female and 48% male); balanced gender representation among BoT is 50% female and 50% male.
- Increase in number of publications resulting from funded research projects of grantees and fellows from 17 in 2022 to 35 in 2023.

III. ACTIVITIES AND DEVELOPMENTS IN 2023

A. Institutional Development

Board of Trustees

The 2021-2023 BoT met virtually via Zoom on January 18, 19, and 24, 2023. As usual in the January meeting, the BoT reviewed and ratified the finances of the previous year (2022) and approved the upcoming year's (2023) budget. The BoT also discussed the focal points plans for 2023 and preparations for the ACSS Sixth Conference. They decided that Samir Amin, Egyptian/French economist and political scientist, would be the scholar to be honored in the Next Annual Lecture Series. The BoT reviewed the ACSS Strategy 2030 and discussed the upcoming BoT elections in March 2023. The BoT meeting was preceded by the BoT subcommittee meetings: Membership, Administration and Finance and Publications.

On March 9 and 10, 2023 the General Assembly members elected electronically six members of the BoT, three of whom were new and three - who had the right to run for a second term – were re-elected. The electronic voting resulted in the election of the following members (listed alphabetically):

Fadma Ait Mous – Hassan II University, Morocco
Abaher Elsakka – Birzeit University, Palestine
Suad Joseph – University of California Davis, USA
Dina Khoury – George Washington University, USA (new)
Rima Majed – American University of Beirut, Lebanon (new)
Mounir Saidani – Doha Institute, Qatar (new)

Thus, the current composition of the new ACSS BoT is as follows (listed alphabetically): Fadma Ait Mous (Morocco), Mabrouk Boutagouga (Algeria), Amina El Mekaoui (Morocco), Abaher Elsakka (Palestine), Mona Fawaz (Lebanon), Hussam Hussein (Jordan), Suad Joseph (Lebanon/USA), Elizabeth Kassab (Lebanon), Mary Kawar (Jordan), Dina Khoury (Lebanon/USA), Rima Majed (Lebanon), and Mounir Saidani (Tunisia).

On March 29, 2023 the new BoT held a meeting via Zoom that was attended by all members of the Board, as well as ACSS staff, and the ACSS lawyer, Ziad Ghorly. The meeting was dedicated to appointing a new chairperson for the BoT, a vice-chair, a treasurer and a secretary, and the formation of sub-committees. The meeting concluded with the appointment of:

- Elizabeth Suzanne Kassab, Chair of the Board of Trustees
-Abaher Elsakka, Vice-chair
-Mary Kawar, Treasurer
-Fadma Ait Mous, Secretary

The current composition of the Subcommittees is as follows:

Membership Subcommittee:
1) Amina el Mekaoui (chair)
2) Mabrouk Boutagouga
3) Rima Majed
4) Mounir Saidani
5) Dina Khoury
6) Fadma Ait Mous

Administration and Finance Subcommittee:

1) Mary Kawar (chair)
2) Amina el Mekaoui
3) Mabrouk Boutagouga
4) Elizabeth Suzanne Kassab
5) Suad Joseph

Publications Subcommittee:

1) Abaher Elsakka (chair)
2) Fadma Ait Mous
3) Hussam Hussein
4) Mounir Saidani

Academic Freedom, Rights & Societal Responsibility Subcommittee:

1) Abaher Elsakka (chair)
2) Dina Khoury
3) Mounir Saidani
4) Mary Kawar
5) Mona Fawaz

On May 25, 2023 the BoT met in-person at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Beirut in conjunction with the ACSS Fifth Conference. They reviewed and ratified the recommendations from the four subcommittees (Membership, Administration and Finance, Publications, and Academic Freedom, Rights and Societal Responsibility) that had met earlier, some over Zoom and others in-person. This session also included an update from the Director General, Seteney Shami, about Arab Council North America Office "NAACSS".

ACSS Jordan Branch and office in NY

The ACSS now has a branch in Jordan that was officially established in 2021; it has a bank account and a virtual office space in Amman. The office also has a professional license and has recruited an auditing firm in addition to a legal firm. Moreover, the ACSS has established a 501c3 office in New York under the name of the North America Arab Council for the Social Sciences (NAACSS), with a legal address and a tax file. ACSS has already started receiving grants – a grant from Carnegie Corporation and a grant from Open Society Foundation - to the US account and a Board of Directors has been formed from current and previous ACSS BoT members including: Mohammed Bamyeh (chair), Abaher Elsakka, Amina el-Mekaoui, Driss Maghraoui, Elizabeth Suzanne Kassab, Fadma Ait Mous, Hussam Hussein, Mabrouk Boutagouga, Mary Kawar, Mona Fawaz, Mounir Saidani, Rima Majed, Dina Khoury and Suad Joseph. Seteney Shami, ACSS Director General, has been appointed Executive Director of NAACSS.

A decision has been reached for the Boards of both the ACSS and NAACSS to meet at the same time (Bamyeh and Maghraoui would join the ACSS BoT meeting) to maintain close coordination between the two entities. A consultative meeting took place in NY in November 2023 including Mohammed Bamyeh and Dina Khoury and Seteney Shami as well as Omar Dahi, Craig Calhoun, Mary McDonnell and Lisa Anderson. The meeting addressed the identity and potential activities of NAACSS, in the long-term and also in light of the tense relations between USA and the Arab region during the current crisis. NAACSS activities will be discussed in more detail during the BoT meeting which will take place in conjunction with the Research Forum in Tunisia in April 2024.

Administrative and Financial Systems and Processes

Financial consultancy – Alnawa

An integral part of the ACSS 2030 strategy included an assessment and strengthening of financial operations and strategic budgeting at the ACSS as well as putting in place new fundraising plans.

To achieve this goal, ACSS contracted Alnawa Inc. - run by Amany Al Hadka an Egyptian Canadian based in Ottawa, Canada and introduced to the ACSS by the Ford Foundation through the BUILD training - to support the finance team and senior management in late 2022 and early

2023. Alnawa helped the ACSS with assessing the financial status at the end of 2023 and preparing a budget for 2024 as well as responding to some funding opportunities that presented themselves with tight deadlines. In this first stage, Alnawa produced a report with critical financial recommendations and a thorough plan to improve internal operations and strategic budgeting - which in many ways - constitute the ACSS financial operations strategy moving forward.

In August 2023, and upon the departure of the Head of Operations, Rami El Husseini from his position, ACSS signed a contract with Alnawa for a second stage of the consultancy to address immediate financial needs, develop a longer-term financial plan, as well as scenarios for a multi-year organizational budget. The following tasks were also included in the consultancy agreement:
- Business Process Mapping: thorough analysis of key financial processes such as Accounts Payable, Procurement, and Contract Management among others to identify bottlenecks, gaps, and areas for improvements.
- Job review process: where different jobs are analyzed, reviewed, and assessed against staff competencies, skills, and tasks performed/required. The result of this along with the result of the process mapping should inform the future organizational structure for the finance and operations functions, and these roles within the program teams as well.
- Risk mitigation: Examining risks associated with the operating environment; conduct an organizational restructuring and assessment concerning the presence of ACSS in Jordan and the USA to leverage the potential opportunities, especially in fundraising and optimum operations.

Most of the second half of 2023 involved intensive meetings between Alnawa team and the finance unit to help streamline the financial process. Alnawa also met with staff of the ACSS to obtain an accurate understanding of the different staff roles and come up with viable recommendations for the way forward. The consultancy will end in April 2024 and will have established a secure operational footing and financial strategy for the ACSS.

Database and Information Systems

As indicated in the2022 report, the ACSS started the process of harmonizing the ACSS information systems including the website, the central database system and the GMS. 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, applications to conferences and workshops and surveys.

Each application created on the GMS is being synchronized with Salesforce database (the ultimate database for all ACSS information systems). This is done by integrating Salesforce into Good Grants and creating special rules allowing an application field to mirror its value to a relevant Salesforce custom field. The second phase of the Salesforce project is underway and includes importing the legacy data from the different ACSS platform databases. As of now, the old GMS data and the membership data has been imported.

The revamping of the ACSS website is well under way. The final look is ready and content is being uploaded to the website. As described in the earlier report, the synchronization will be done with Salesforce and the database will be feeding the website with information about the grantees, members, etc. In addition, a new website www.naacss.org has been developed for the ACSS office in the USA that would help ACSS reach out to more funders and stakeholders. Moreover, ACSS is working on designing and building several "satellite websites" such as the Beirut Forum website

and the Mapping the Production of Knowledge (MPK) project. It is also seeking to develop or consolidate other websites that are offshoots from current ACSS programs such as the Research Ethics Platform and the NewGen blog. As the work related to website development is growing at the ACSS, a web developer, Tamara Tell has been hired and will be responsible for many of the website related tasks. On the other hand, the ACSS IT Officer Wassim Allam, will take charge of managing, configuring and maintaining all these platforms after their successful implementation.

Finally, ACSS upgraded its internet facilities and a dedicated connection with high upload/download speed has been implemented to satisfy the daily internet needs of staff and guarantee a smooth flow of operations.

Staffing and Consultants

New staff members joined the ACSS in 2023:

Joanne Boustany, started on January 15, 2023 as a full-time Research Coordinator.

Rouba Khoury, started on October 1, 2023 as a full-time Events and Administrative Assistant.

Tamara Tell, started on October 9, 2023 for a short-term consultancy as web developer and has been recruited for a full-time consultancy as Web Developer and Communications Assistant starting on January 2, 2024.

As we welcomed new staff members, we said good-bye to:

Rami El Husseini who left his role as full-time Head of Operations, having joined the ACSS in September 20, 2021.

By end of 2023, the office included 19 employees as follows: 14 Lebanese, one Egyptian, 2 Jordanian, and two Bangladeshis, out of whom 12 are female and 7 are male.

In addition to the Beirut-based staff and the ACSS focal points in Palestine and Algeria who work on a part-time basis, the ACSS continued to rely on part-time consultants for programmatic work, made necessary sometimes due to the absence of appropriate full-time staff or due to the specialized nature of the tasks. We appointed or retained:

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

Reem Joudi, research coordinator for the Arab Oral History Archive: Gender, Alternative Histories, and the Production of Knowledge, (Gender Oral History Archive – GOHA) as well as for the Critical Humanities Initiative

Holly Danzeisen, senior consultant for the InterAsia Partnership

Zeina Jallad, Lead Project Researcher, Safeguarding Knowledge Production in the Arab Region and Research Ethics. (January 2023-July 2023)

For the strategic planning component of the ACSS work that involves institutional consolidation and strengthening and financial planning, we recruited the following consultants:

Grid International (Tania Khalaf), consultants for Human Resources

Alnawa (Amany Alhadka) business, financial advisors, business and consulting services

Career and Pay Progression

In 2023, the ACSS reshuffled its Career Management and Pay Progression Practice in order to meet the developmental needs of the staff and gear its pay system into a performance-based progression.

The aim of the Career Management System is to:

- Guide employees and provide them with opportunities for growth.
- Structure the support ACSS offers its employees, to help them achieve their potential.
- Provide a system based on equity in pay progression

In 2023, the following steps were taken:

- Job Mappings: A complete job analysis was undertaken to create Role Profiles clearly documenting the accountabilities and job specifications at the level of each Job.
- Job Evaluation: A full job evaluation and revision of grading and scaling was carried out, to update and confirm/adjust the grading in view of the evolution of the organization.
- Job Grades: Role (jobs), as described in the Role Profiles were evaluated in terms of their related contribution to the organization and ranked according to their relative weight. This allowed the ACSS to assign them to their related grade levels.
- Salary Banding: Based on the above, the Grading System across roles was adjusted, and echoed by salary bands for equity across the organization.
- Career Ladder: Movement within the organization was structured around a Career Ladder and related Paths. Moreover, a structure of progression of skills, knowledge and competencies that can lead to mastery of employees' current job, promotions and transfers to new or different positions was laid out.
- Career Development: Career Development meetings with employees were organized so they can express their aspirations. Competencies are now evaluated and compared to organizational opportunities, and Individual Career Plans are designed and implemented.
- Pay Progression: In line with the progression in roles and responsibilities, a system for pay progression was set up to reflect evolution and ensure equity in financial growth. Hence, change in personal contribution to the organization is reflected in pay progression. This new system of Pay Progression came to cancel the previous "Step System" whereby employees were given an automatic step every two years

Staff Professional Development (PD)

ACSS is invested in the professional development of its staff and encourages them to use the generous funding available for Professional Development (PD) for further education and enrichment of competence.

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

In 2023 few staff members enrolled in educational and training programs as follows:

- As part of her professional development plan, the ACSS covered the membership fees for Nada Chaya, ASSM Program Leader, with the Population Association of America and the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP), as well as her enrolment in an online course for "Executive Data Science Specialization" at Johns Hopkins University through Coursera.
- Jamil Bazzi, Program Assistant, completed a four-day workshop with Non- Governmental Organizations Initiative (NGOi) at AUB, for "Proposal Writing and Business Development for NGOs".

Office Green Committee

ACSS acknowledges responsibility towards the environment and understands that the actions of its staff, including paper usage, energy consumption, and water usage can affect it in various ways. The ACSS is committed to reducing any negative impact caused by its operations by implementing efficient resource management and monitoring practices. This includes the implementation of a recycling program, conservation measures to reduce energy consumption, and encouraging sustainable practices among employees. It also continues to implement a non-smoking rule in the office.

Several years ago, the green committee at the ACSS installed recycling bins with signage for proper sorting and recycling. The program has been a success and colleagues have been supportive and exerted concerted efforts to properly separate their waste. For recycling, the ACSS is resorting to the company Live Love Recycle, which is a local NGO that provides pick-up services for recyclables in return for a symbolic donation every month. Of note is that there is a strong recycling industry in Lebanon.

The ACSS is also implementing other green practices to lower the carbon footprint of the institution. Where possible, the ACSS is purchasing pantry items (coffee, creamers, ...) in bulk and storing them in refillable containers (e.g. glass containers) to reduce waste packaging. Employees are encouraged to use reusable cutlery, mugs and utensils, as well as print less to help reduce paper use.

Finally, ACSS is committed to having an aesthetically pleasing space while maintaining its sustainability. To that end, the staff started planting some local herbs and medicinal plants over the summer and will add more plants in the spring. The idea is the plants serve as an aesthetic and for the staff to make use of the variety of local plants found in the country.

Next step is to reduce the use of cleaning chemicals.

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

For the fourth year in a row, public life in the West Bank and Gaza Strip was disrupted due to the escalation of violence. Strikes took place in different sectors including trade unions, public education and universities and the Arab Workers Union. Several Palestinian cities, including the Jenin camp, witnessed multiple confrontations with the occupation forces along with mounting military raids and attacks. Events have reached un-precedented levels of atrocities and destruction following the attacks of October 7. Those have been accompanied by sharp decline in levels of academic freedoms and freedom of expression, as well as increased pressure on universities and researchers.

Academic Guidance Committee for the ACSS Focal Point - Palestine:

The committee met three times during the year to review plans, propose activities, and review some publications. In its current formation, the committee is chaired by Eileen Kuttab, and its members include Lena Meari - Birzeit University, Firdous Abd Rabbo - Bethlehem University, Samer Raddad - Al-Quds University, and Issam Younis - director and researcher at the Al-Mezan Center in Gaza. During 2023 Iyad Al-Karnaz, an academic and civil society activist from Gaza Strip was added to the committee.

Introducing the importance of social sciences into schools and universities:

Two meetings were held with secondary school students to introduce and discuss the importance of social sciences, the first at Bethlehem University, and the second at Al-Quds University (Abu Dis). The meetings were facilitated by Basil Rayyan of the Palestine focal point office. Other meetings in six schools were scheduled but did not take place due to strikes. In fact, since the end of 2022 the attempts to organize two meetings at Birzeit University and three other universities and colleges (the Arab American University - Ramallah, Al-Quds Open University, and the Modern College) failed for the same reasons.

Training Courses:

A training course under the title “Critical Research Writing” was organized to train students and researchers at the bachelor’s and master’s levels on critical research writing. Six meetings took place at the Khalil Sakakini Center between May 13 and June 17, 2023, and the number of attendees ranged between 14 to 17 participants in each meeting. Rami Salama, Professor of Philosophy and Cultural Studies at Birzeit University gave the training which addressed a set of basic topics and concepts such as violence, the body, lived experience, space and time, colonialism and neoliberal policies. Critical theories and their development across multiple cognitive contexts and their relationship to thinking and critical engagement with various social and cultural issues were also discussed. The training focused as well on theories from the Global South and critique of grand narratives.

Training course in the Gaza Strip:

Work began during September 2023 on preparing for a training course in the Gaza Strip, directed at young researchers, with a focus on critical writing skills but the outbreak of the war on Gaza led to its postponement.

Fourth Study Day:

The focal point office organized a study day entitled "Critical Knowledge as a Mechanism for Change and Confrontation," on Saturday July 22, 2023, at the Caesars Hotel – Ramallah during which recipients of ACSS grants and fellowships presented their ongoing research projects. The day included three sessions. The first session entitled "Considerations of Research Ethics in the Colonial Context of Palestine," which was facilitated by Lena Meari. The second session titled "Knowledge Beyond Imperialism," was moderated by Eileen Kuttab and included four presentations: "Critical Documentary Knowledge," was presented by Wissam Rafidi; "Slow Environmental Violence and Settler Colonialism in Salfit", by Saad Amira; "Recovering the concept and values of *hakoura* from Palestinian memory and popular heritage in support of urban agriculture and sustainability in Palestine" by Samer Raddad and finally, "Youth Agricultural Cooperatives as Resistant Agricultural Knowledge in Palestine" by Ahmed Heneiti.

The third session included papers from the collective research project implemented by the ACSS Palestine Focal Point under the title "Fragmented Identities" and was facilitated by Firas Jaber. Basil Rayan presented a paper on "Control through Classification: Imperialist Methods and Fragmented Identities"; Saeed Abu Mualla presented on "Palestinian Virtual Public Spheres: What "Rhizomatic Identities"?" The presentations continued into the third session, with Hamdi Hussein presenting on "The Social Incubator of Resistance in the West Bank after Oslo: The Struggle of Fragmented Identities and the Context of Transformation." Finally, Anmar Rafidi presented her research paper entitled "Fragmented Struggle Identities: The Middle Class and Social Mobility/Demands".

The day concluded with a short statement by Eileen Kuttab in which she encouraged researchers to engage in the activities of the ACSS Palestine Focal Point, and to suggest issues that they feel are important for the Focal Point to work on in the future.

Fragmented Identities Project:

Within the framework of the "Colony and Borders" project, a conceptual vision was developed for the third phase of the project, under the title of Fragmented Identities. A call for proposals was disseminated in October 2021 and nine proposals were approved. Throughout 2023, the Palestine Focal Point worked with researchers to develop research papers and drafts of five papers were developed and presented at a roundtable at the ACSS sixth conference in May 2023 (see below).

Participation in the ACSS Sixth Conference:

The Palestine focal point organized a roundtable within the ACSS Sixth Conference from May 25 to 28, 2023 in Beirut, under the title "Producing Critical Knowledge in the Arab Region." The roundtable focused on research production within the Fragmented Identities project (see above), and four presentations were made as follows:

- Palestinian Virtual Public Spheres: What "Rhizomatic Identities?" by Saeed Abu Mualla
- The social incubator for resistance in the West Bank after "Oslo": The struggle of fragmented identities and the context of transformation by Hamdi Hussein

- Fragmented militant identities: the middle class and the social/demand movement by Anmar Rafidi
- Control through classification: Imperialist methods and fragmented identities by Basil Rayan

It is noteworthy that the Palestine focal point consultant Eileen Kuttab was unable to travel to Beirut due to an unscheduled closure by the Israelis of the bridge crossing between Palestine and Jordan and the session was moderated by Abaher Elsakka, BoT member from Palestine.

Seminars:

The Palestine Focal Point planned two symposiums in October, the first under the title "Higher Education in Palestine: Institutional, Cognitive, and Trade Union Transformations and Challenges," and the second entitled "Development under Colonialism." Both events were cancelled due to the war on Gaza.

Algeria Focal Point

In 2023, the Algeria Focal Point headed by Nacer Djabi undertook the following activities:

Virtual Lectures on Anthropology in the Maghreb Region:

The Algeria focal point organized three virtual lectures during 2023 on the topic of anthropology in the Maghreb region. The first lecture held on May 5, 2023 was presented by Moussawi Abdel Rahman, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Lyons 2 France on the topic of "Anthropology in a state of violence: The Algerian case". On April 7, 2023 the second lecture was presented by Imad Al-Maliti and Muhammad Krou, University of Tunis, about the "Return of Anthropology in the Maghreb region". On April 21, 2023, the third lecture took place and was presented by Khalid Mouna, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Meknes, Morocco, about "Cinema and Anthropology: The Case of Morocco".

Participation in the ACSS Sixth Conference:

The Algeria focal point organized a roundtable at the ACSS Sixth Conference which was held in Beirut from May 25- 28, 2023 under the title "Producing Critical Knowledge in the Arab Region."

The roundtable was titled "The Algerian University: Paths and challenges facing the qualitative cognitive role". The roundtable was chaired by Nacer Djabi, ACSS Algeria Focal Point Consultant and included the three following panelists:

- Khaoula Taleb-Ibrahimi (Algeria 2 University)
- Mariam Bou Zid (National Center for Prehistoric, Anthropological and Historical Research)
- Cherif Driss (National Higher School of Journalism and Media Sciences)

Participation in the 16th CODESRIA General Assembly:

The ACSS Focal Point in Algeria organized a panel at the 16th CODESRIA General Assembly which was held in Dakar, Senegal from December 4 to 8, 2023 under the title "The Social Sciences

and "Pandemics" in Africa". The session focused on the Algerian experience in dealing with the pandemic. Below is the list of researchers who participated in the panel:

- Abdel Rahman Moussaoui, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Lyons 2
- Mohammed Mebtoul, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Oran 2.
- Raziqa Medjoub, Researcher, the Informal Economy research team at the Research Center for Applied Economics for Development- CREAD.
- Amel Bouzid, Head of the Agricultural Economics Team at the Research Center for Applied Economics for Development- CREAD.

Membership

By December 2023, ACSS members represented the following categories: 113 active (voting) members; 626 associate (non-voting) members, 113 students (non-voting) and 15 institutional members (non-voting).

Last year also witnessed a sustained interest in the ACSS travel grants to members. An amount of up to $3000 is offered to members who wish to attend professional social science conferences. For eligibility, applicants must be ACSS members, in good academic standing (for students) and should provide proof of acceptance of the paper by the conference. Members are eligible for a travel grant every two years. During the course of 2023, and over four cycles of application, 15 ACSS members received travel grants.

The Membership Subcommittee also agreed to organize three country meetings in 2023 for members in Mauritania, Oman and Libya where ACSS is not adequately represented. The aim of the meetings is to present ACSS activities and enhance its visibility in the three countries. However, due to the current situation in Gaza, the meetings were postponed to 2024.

Funding

For current and future projects, the ACSS was able to secure grants from the following funders in 2023:

- The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency - SEK 27,000,000 - as core support for the period July 1, 2023 – December 31, 2026.

- The Foundation to Promote Open Society – USD 1,100,000 – to provide general support, for the period January 1, 2023 – December 31, 2025

- The University of North Carolina – USD 244,272 – to support the project "Arab Public Initiative" for the period January 1, 2023 – December 31, 2025

- The University of Wisconsin – USD 46,300 – to support the project "CHCI Africa Initiative" for the period February 20, 2023 – June 15, 2023.

- The University of Wisconsin – USD 15,000 – to support the project "Setting Up A Framework for The World Humanities Report" for the period January 1, 2023 – April 15, 2023.

B. Convenings

The ACSS organizes a biennial Conference and a biennial Research Forum on alternate years, in addition to the Annual Lecture Series and other public events.

Support for these convenings is drawn from core grants provided to the ACSS from Sida and OSF while grantees' participation expenses are covered by their respective programs, including, IDRC and Carnegie Corporation

Sixth Conference of the Arab Council for the Social Sciences: "Producing Critical Knowledge in the Arab Region"

The ACSS biennial conference is a public event held in Beirut, Lebanon. It is an important opportunity to welcome a large number of researchers in the fields of social sciences and humanities from the Arab region and around the world, to present their papers, promote discussions and networking, and open new theoretical and methodological horizons.

The ACSS organized the following six conferences:

"Arab Transformations: Interrogating the Social Sciences", 2013
"Questioning Social Inequality and Difference in the Arab Region", 2015
"State, Sovereignty and Social Space in the Arab Region: Emerging Historical and Theoretical Approaches", 2017
"Power, Borders and Ecologies in Arab Societies: Practices and Imaginaries" 2019.
"Interrogating the Social Sciences in the Vortex of Crises: Waves of Discontent and Demands for Change" 2021
"Producing Critical Knowledge in the Arab Region", 2023

The Arab Council for the Social Sciences (ACSS) held its Sixth Conference, titled "Producing Critical Knowledge in the Arab Region" in Beirut, Lebanon on May 25-28, 2023.

The conference brought together close to 400 researchers from the Arab region and the world, as well as the ACSS Board of Trustees, representatives of donor organizations, university presidents, deans, and faculty members in prominent universities around the region.

Papers presented at the conference were organized around four main themes as follows:

- Legacies of Critical Knowledge(s);
- Dismantling Colonialist Epistemological Structures;
- Memories and Popular Culture; and
- Locations of Thought Production.

The conference featured eight roundtables and 64 panels during which researchers presented their research papers.

The keynote was delivered by Syrian writer Yassin Al Haj Saleh, and was titled "The Undeniable and the Unbelievable: Ideology and the Trinity of the Exceptional, the Impossible and the Horrible". The session was moderated by Mohammed Bamyeh (Former ACSS BoT Chair) and Elizabeth Suzanne Kassab (Current ACSS BoT Chair). The Conference also featured a plenary on "Theorizing from the South: Transregional Perspectives" which included Godwin Murunga (Executive Secretary of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa/CODESRIA), Karina Batthyány (Executive Director of the Latin American Council of Social Sciences/CLACSO), Driss Ksikes (HEM – LCI Morocco, and member of the Conference Organizing Committee) and Fadi Bardawil (Duke University, also member of the conference organizing committee). The conference concluded with a closing session of the ACSS Annual Lecture Series honoring late Moroccan writer and sociologist Fatema Mernissi, during which the three lecturers of the series, Asmae Benadada (Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fes, Morocco), Omaima Abou-Bakr (Cairo University) and Zeina Zaatari (Arab American Center for Culture and Arts, University of Illinois, Chicago) presented summaries of their main lectures.

The conference also included other activities, such as poster sessions by the ACSS New Generation of Social Scientists Program fellows, workshops, book exhibits, archives of prestigious Arab periodicals by "Alfurat for Publishing & Distributing", "Meet the Author" sessions featuring Pascale Ghazaleh's book "Journey in Search of May", Ali Abdellatif Hamida's book "The Libya we Don't Know", Zahra Ali's book "Women and Gender in Iraq" and Abdel Ahad Sebti's book "From the Year of the Elephant to the Year of the Americans: Oral Memory and Historiography".

A booth was dedicated to the ACSS publications which are free and open access for all and constitute important knowledge resources for researchers.

To view the conference program: http://www.theacss.org/uploads/cke_documents/Sixth-Conference-schedule-English-Website.pdf

Research Forum: Preparations for Fifth Forum

The Arab Council for the Social Sciences organizes a research forum for its grantees and fellows once every two years. The Research Forum is a closed event for grantees and fellows only, that is held rotationally in countries of the Arab region. In the past years, the ACSS organized research forums in Tunisia (2014), Algeria (2016), Jordan (2018), and Beirut (2022). Bringing together ACSS grantees, fellows, trustees and selection committee members, the Research Forum is an opportunity for grantees/fellows to present, discuss, and receive feedback on their ongoing research, get to know other researchers in the region, thicken their networks and create new networks. It is also an intensive learning experience for general academic issues such as research methodologies, writing and publishing, research ethics, career opportunities and so on.

The Grants and Fellowships team started preparations for the Fifth Research Forum towards the end of 2023 by extending invitations to the event - which will take place in Tunisia on April 15-17, 2024 - to grantees and fellows from the current programs: Early Career Fellows cycles 9 & 10, ACSS-FMSH Short-Term Postdoctoral Mobility Fellowship Program in the Social Sciences and

Humanities cycle 6, and Small Grants Program on the Ethics of Social Research cycle 3. The selection committee members of the programs, members of the Board of Trustees, and New Gen fellows (cohorts 3 & 4) are also invited to participate in the Forum. This time, ACSS has also invited members of the working groups on the Arab Oral History Archive and Safeguarding Knowledge Production. The latter are organizing a roundtable (title not firmed yet) on issues related to sensitivities and constraints of knowledge production in the Arab region and how researchers navigate them (see below).

We are expecting to have seven panels, 14 presentations, a public event to present the Arab Social Sciences Monitor (ASSM) Fourth Report on Humanities in the Arab Region, Data Management Training, and three roundtables. The latter will address the following topics: "Safeguarding Knowledge Production", "Artificial Intelligence and the Social Sciences", and "How can you be part of the ACSS?". The aim of the last roundtable which we hold in every Research Forum, is to inform grantees and fellows of how they can be part of the ACSS network and different ways that the ACSS can continue to support them. The session will include brief presentations about different units and structures within the ACSS, such as Membership, Code of Ethics and Conduct, and Communications & Publications. It will also include presentations from different ACSS programs such as the Arab Social Sciences Monitor (ASSM) and the New Generation of Social Scientists in the Arab Region (NewGen).

The ACSS Annual Lecture Series

In 2015 the ACSS inaugurated its Annual Lecture event. Each series of four lectures is named after a prominent social scientist from the Arab region. 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, Hanna Batatu. The second series, ending in 2023, celebrates the Moroccan sociologist and activist, Fatema Mernissi.

Fatema Mernissi Annual Lecture Series

In 2019 ACSS inaugurated the Fatema Mernissi Lecture Series in Beirut. The first lecture was presented by Asmae Benadada (Professor at the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University of Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah, Morocco). In 2020, the second lecture by Omaima Abou-Bakr, (professor of English and Comparative Literature at Cairo University) was held on Zoom. In 2021, the third lecture by Zeina Zaatari (Director of the Arab American Cultural Center and adjunct faculty in Anthropology at the University of Illinois at Chicago) was also held on Zoom.

On May 28, 2023, the closing lecture took place at the ACSS Sixth Conference. In this special session, Benadada, Abou-Bakr and Zaatari presented summaries of their lectures and interacted with in-person and virtual audience. The session also included two colleagues and friends of Fatema Mernissi namely, Driss Ksikes as a discussant and Fadma Ait Mous (ACSS BoT member) as chair and moderator.

An exceptional publication reflecting the whole series was distributed during the session (More details about this publication in the Publications section below).

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)

In 2024, a new lecture series will be launched commemorating the work of the late Egyptian-French economist and political scientist Samir Amin.

C. Grants and Fellowships Programs

Research Grants Program (RGP)

RGP is based on an 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 senior and junior researchers from the region.
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 address the theme of "health and livelihoods in the Arab region: wellbeing and vulnerability in conflict"

The last three cycles of RGP were funded by IDRC and Sida

Grantees from Cycle 9 on "Health and Livelihoods in the Arab region: Wellbeing and Vulnerability in Conflict" participated in the Sixth ACSS conference that was held in May 2023 in Beirut while grantees from Cycles 7, 8 and 9 were invited to attend a training on "Data Management and Sharing for the Social Sciences" organized by the ACSS and the Odum Institute. The training was held in November 2023.

Researchers who received grants from the third round of the "Health and Livelihoods" theme were working on their research during 2023, and are scheduled to finalize their projects by the end of the year. The ACSS did not announce a new call in late 2023 and has opted instead, and according to its 2030 strategy to use the period from late 2023 to late 2024 as a period to pause and reflect on program performance, achievements and weaknesses. An external evaluator will be contracted during 2024 and a new call will be launched in August of 2024 under a new theme, following discussions with the BoT in early 2024.

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.

ECFP is currently funded by CCNY

Cycle 10, 2023

Cycle 10 was launched on February 16, 2023 and closed on May 25, 2023. For this cycle Grants and Fellowships received 29 applications from 10 Arab countries. The Selection Committee composed of three members from Lebanon and Palestine met on July 6, 2023 (Appendix 3 – Members of Selection Committees). They reviewed all applications and selected five fellows from Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan, Tunisia and Morocco. The applicant from Morocco who received a "conditional acceptance" decision, was ultimately rejected as her addendum responding to the queries of the committee was found unsatisfactory.

Selected fellows represented different disciplinary backgrounds in the social sciences including anthropology, sociology and history. Click here to access ECFP9 Fellows, titles of their projects and selection committee's biographies.

Fellows of Cycle 9 participated in the Sixth ACSS conference that was held in May 2023 in Beirut while fellows from cycle 10 will participate in the Fifth Research forum that will be held in April 2024 in Tunis.

The next cycle of the program will be announced in February 2024.

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.

ACSS-FMSH Postdoctoral Mobility Program is co-funded by FMSH and core ACSS funds (Sida and OSF)

Cycle 6, 2023

The call for Cycle 6 of the ACSS-FMSH Short-Term Postdoctoral Mobility Fellowship Program was announced on September 19, 2022 and closed on December 9, 2022. For this cycle we received 27 applications from five Arab countries. The selection committee composed of three members from Tunisia, Lebanon and France met virtually on February 8, 2023 to discuss and select fellows (Appendix 3 – Members of Selection Committees). They selected four fellows from Algeria, Mauritania, and Morocco. Click here to access Fellows and titles of their projects.

Fellows from this cycle will participate in the Fifth Research Forum that will be held in April 2024.

Cycle 7, 2024

The call for Cycle 7 of the ACSS-FMSH Short-Term Postdoctoral Mobility Fellowship Program was announced on September 18, 2023 and closed on December 4, 2023. For this cycle Grants and Fellowships received 18 applications from three Arab countries. The selection committee composed of three members from Tunisia, Morocco and France will meet virtually on February 5, 2024 to discuss and select fellows.

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 nine-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.

NPF is funded by OSF

Cycle 5, 2022

The third and final workshop for Cycle 5 fellows was held on May 25, 2023, in conjunction with the first day of the ACSS Sixth Conference (May 25-28) in Beirut, Lebanon. The full day workshop was an opportunity for the fellows to rehearse the presentation of their projects under the supervision of the four mentors, to benefit from the latter's comments and feedback. Two out of the 63 panels at the conference were designated to the NPF program Cycle 5. In addition to their panels, the NPF fellows had the chance to meet other grantees from other programs as well as researchers from the ACSS community.

Publications and Dissemination

In 2023 the third Arabic publication related to the Gendered Resistance theme entitled was published in hard copies and posted on the ACSS website. After the evident success achieved by the dissemination campaign of the second NPF publication executed for Cycle 4, Grants and Fellowships decided to apply the same strategy for the wide dissemination of Cycle 5 publication. Photographers and videographers in the fellows' places of residence were hired, and produced a series of short interviews with each fellow and mentor during which they presented and discussed their topics and comments on the different elements of the program. The questions posed in the videos were specifically designed to capture a wide range of insights from fellows and mentors alike. The fellows reacted to how gendered resistance featured in their articles, and commented on the training on ethics of oral narratives (which was newly introduced in Cycle 5), as well as the audience they sought to reach out to beyond academia. Similarly, the mentors addressed the same questions and also commented on the relationship between academia and activism and their general experience with the program. The campaign on the social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) started 12 days prior to launching the book and the videos were posted on a daily basis in order to reach a wide audience across the Arab region and beyond.

Click here to access the short videos on the Instagram page.

On May 4, 2023, the publication was launched and widely disseminated at the ACSS Sixth conference. More than 400 scholars from the region and beyond who participated in the event received a hard copy of the latest issue of the book.

Dissemination on social media reached 1 million viewers and the number of downloads exceeded 1,000. Click here to access the book.

Evaluation of the New Paradigms Factory on "Gendered Resistance"

In the fall of 2023 Azza Chararah Baydoun, independent researcher and gender consultant was commissioned to undertake an evaluation of the three cycles of the NPF program on the theme of Gendered Resistance. The evaluation will address the following:

- The soundness of the rationale of the fellowship in terms of focus on junior (MA) fellows, researchers/activists, and openness to different ways of writing and reaching different audiences.
- The effectiveness of the fellowship process with a focus on whether the ACSS has successfully elaborated the theme and purpose of the grant and reached its target audience of applicants as well as the effectiveness of the fellows' selection process.
- The effectiveness of the components of the fellowship including the workshops, lectures and mentorship process.
- The outputs produced by fellows in terms of quality and their impact on the grantee, her/his audience, and the academic/policy/activist communities.
- The value of the dissemination activities undertaken by the ACSS to the fellows and their effectiveness in reaching different audiences. These include print publications/video clip and conference presentations.

The evaluator has already conducted many interviews with the fellows and mentors from the three different cycles as well as the ACSS staff who work on this program. The evaluation is due in early 2024.

Small Grants Program (SGP): Ethics of Social Research

The Small Grants Program (SGP) was initiated in November 2016. It is a thematic program with themes changing periodically. Its main purpose is to provide junior researchers in the region with access to small and flexible funding to undertake an activity related to the specified theme of the program that included pilot studies, fieldwork, consultations, participation in conferences and organization of workshops and dissemination events. The first two cycles of the program addressed "Youth" and "Urban Spatial Inequalities", the third cycle was on "Ethical dilemmas in social science research" and the fourth on "Ethics of Social Research: Institutional Protocols and Practices"

SGP program on "Youth" and "Spatial Inequalities" was funded by Ford Foundation while the "Ethical Dilemmas" and "Ethics of Social Research" is funded by IDRC.

Under the SGP program and as indicated in the 2022 annual report, the ACSS experimented with two rounds of small grants to individual researchers to enable them to examine ethical dilemmas of their research projects. The two rounds generated several important lessons that the ACSS used

to rethink the individual grants modality. In consultation with IDRC, the donor organization supporting the ACSS research ethics grant program, the ACSS decided it would be more efficacious to work on the level of institutions in order to ensure that knowledge and good practices of research ethics are instilled within institutions and would have a wider impact that goes beyond individual researchers. Thus, the ACSS decided to experiment with training and grant-making to institutions in a select Arab country and the country of choice was Jordan, where the ACSS had just opened a new branch office. The ACSS first training workshop on ethics of social research took place in Amman in the spring of 2023.

The Amman workshop: Institutional Protocols and Practices

A training workshop entitled 'Ethics in Social Research: Institutional Protocols and Practices' took place in Amman on March 18-20, 2023 and its objective was to help participants - representing Jordanian and Palestinian institutions - to think of projects that would help enhance ethical protocols and practices in their institutions, which covered a wide array of academic, development, and civil society organizations (click here for list of participants).

To help participants fully grasp the importance of research ethics, the ACSS provided a comprehensive three-day training that included a mix of conceptual and practical sessions addressing ethical principles, protocols, and tools for research practices as well as breakout groups divided by type of institution and by theme of project of interest. The aim was to expand potential areas of discussion, learning and exchange among participants (click here for the workshop agenda).

On the last day, the ACSS shared with participants a draft call for project proposals which invited them to come up with an independent or collaborative project to help establish (or consolidate already existing) ethical practices within their institutions.

On April 5, the ACSS launched a call for proposals for the third cycle of the Small Grants Program (SGP-Cycle 3) on 'Ethics in Social Research: Institutional Protocols and Practices' which specifically targeted the Jordanian and Palestinian institutions that participated in the Amman training workshop in March (click here for the final call). On July 7, 2023, a meeting of the Selection Committee (Appendix 3 – Members of Selection Committees) took place, during which they reviewed eight project proposals, chose seven for funding and rejected one (from the Institute for Palestine Studies) for incompleteness. The accepted proposals included two Jordanian institutions: The Royal Scientific Society and the Jordan University of Science and Technology and five institutions from Palestine: Insaniyyat: Society of Palestinian Anthropologists, An-Najah National University, Jerusalem Center for Women, the Arab American University, and Al-Quds University.

Grants and Fellowships staff sent letters to all successful applicants to convey comments by the selection committee in which they suggested areas for further refinements and development. Out of the seven successful applications, one institution (Arab American University) withdrew, resulting in a total of six proposals ready for funding after having provided satisfactory answers to the questions of the committee.

On January 24-25 the ACSS is organizing a work-in-progress workshop in Amman for the successful grantees of the SGP - Cycle 3. Members of the selection committee will attend the

meeting and provide detailed feedback on the participants' progress and development of their projects. It is worth noting that the original date for this workshop was December 10, 2023. However, due to the ongoing war in Gaza and the prevailing regional circumstances, the schedule had to be adjusted.

Roundtable on "Research Ethics: Approaches and Implementation" at the ACSS Sixth Conference

To foster learning and knowledge sharing, a roundtable was organized on May 26 as part of the ACSS Sixth Conference. Associate director, Moushira Elgeziri, facilitated the event, where the three partner institutions recipients of the IDRC ethics grant "Research Ethics Discourses, Practices and Leadership in MENA" – AUB, Birzeit University and the ACSS - shared reflections related to their projects' findings. Additionally, the IDRC shared its vision for promoting the culture and practice of research ethics in the Arab region.

To conclude, it is noteworthy that the very first activities of the ACSS upon establishment were one grants and one fellowship program. Since then, the Grants and Fellowships unit has continued to grow, adding new components and consolidating older ones. In this process, some programs have been exclusively administered by the ACSS while others were implemented in partnership with sister organizations – an effective way for enhancing regional collaboration and establishing synergies between institutions. With the variety of programs Grants and Fellowships offer, its programs truly became the backbone of the ACSS and a branching point from where grantees and fellows have been moving on to join other ACSS programs and activities and becoming members of selection committees, working groups and BoT.

In 2023, three calls were put out: for SGP, ACSS/FMSH and ECFP and the Grants and Fellowships team continued to interact in 2023 with grantees who had running grants, following up on the projects findings and plans for publications. However, no new calls were announced for three programs: RGP, RAP and NPF as their funding had come to an end after three cycles (exceptionally four for RAP). The pause in cycles for the three programs gives the opportunity for external evaluations and for the Grants and Fellowships staff to evaluate and reflect: what did we learn? And where do we go from here? This reflection process has been thoughtfully included in the ACSS 2030 strategy for all the programs and further, as the ACSS moves out of the financial crunch it is now experiencing, and starting from 2025, ideas for new grants and fellowship programs will be seriously explored and implemented.

Appendix 4 provides a list of outputs of grantees and fellows since the last 2022 report.

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 preparing to launch its fourth cycle.

NewGen is funded by core funding from Sida and OSF

University Partnerships

Fellowship Cohort 4 Partnerships

In May 2023, the ACSS, represented by Seteney Shami, Moushira Elgeziri, Lubna Maaliki, Jamil Bazzi, and Carol Abi Ghanem, attended a ceremony at Notre Dame University (NDU) where ACSS Director-General, Seteney Shami and NDU's Vice President for Academic Affairs Michel El Hayek signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the two institutions to formalize the induction of NDU as a participating university in the NewGen program.

Country Program Coordinators (CPCs) Meeting

On May 27, 2023 and in parallel with the Sixth ACSS conference, the ACSS invited the NewGen Country Program Coordinators (CPCs) to take stock of program achievements as well as areas of improvement and plans moving forward. The CPCs in attendance were Hanan Sabea (Egypt) from the American University in Cairo (AUC), Abaher Elsakka (Palestine) from Birzeit University, Carol Abi Ghanem (Lebanon) from the Lebanese American University (LAU), and Houssem Eddine Chachia (Tunisia) from Sfax University. Associate Director Moushira Elgeziri, NewGen Program Coordinator Lubna Maaliki, and Program Assistant Jamil Bazzi represented the ACSS.

During the meeting, the attendees discussed fellows' engagement with the program, the format of online courses and activities and the application process, in addition to the activities and steps to be taken to encourage the collaboration between the main partner universities and the participating universities, especially in Lebanon.

NewGen Cohort 4 Applicants

The call for Cohort 4 applications (accessible here) was launched on April 25th 2023, and the deadline was on June 4, 2023, later postponed to June 20. The call was disseminated across all partner and participating universities through their social media and communication networks as well as the ACSS social media platforms. The applications were built and submitted on the ACSS Grants Management System (GMS).

During the application window period, the NewGen team organized 15 information sessions about the program across the four participating countries. Alongside the virtual sessions, on-campus and in-person information sessions were organized in the participating countries.

In 2023, NewGen received a total of 101 complete applications, 86 of which were eligible (e.g. confirming that applicants are enrolled in a study program and in a partnering or participating university). Each completed application was first screened by ACSS staff for eligibility. Each eligible application was then reviewed by two reviewers: an internal ACSS reviewer and the Country Program Coordinator. After the 86 eligible applications were scored, 62 applicants were interviewed – out of whom 43 were accepted. CPSs along with ACSS staff including the ACSS Associate Director, the NewGen Program Coordinator, and NewGen Program Assistant interviewed the shortlisted applicants.

The table below shows the selection funnel.

It is worth mentioning that of the completed applications, 64% came from women.

Country	Complete Applications	Complete & Eligible Applications	Applications Shortlisted for the interview stage	Final Selected Fellows
Lebanon	15	13	10	**7**
Tunisia	22	21	14	**9**
Palestine	17	9	7	**6**
Egypt	47	43	31	**21**
TOTAL	**101**	**86**	**62**	**43**

Fellows' Journey

Cohort 4 Onboarding

As a welcoming activity, an onboarding session was held for the selected fellows of Cohort 4 in each participating country during October 2023. The onboarding sessions were led by the four CPCs: Abaher Elsakka, Houssem Eddine Chachia, Carol Abi Ghanem, and Hanan Al Sabea. During these sessions, fellows were further acquainted with the fellowship's rules and regulations, the expected level of commitment, and the monthly activities agenda. They also met with the fellows of Cohorts 2 and 3.

After the welcoming activity, the CPCs at the main partner universities devised plans for the various monthly activities for the fellows in each country. The activities are based on findings about fellows' interests and training and knowledge gaps as discerned from the application screening and conversations between the CPCs and the fellows. The monthly activities include elements of skill development, knowledge building, career guidance, community building, and academic discussions.

NewGen at the Sixth ACSS Conference

During the Sixth ACSS conference in May 2023, ten NewGen fellows from Cohorts 1, 2 and 3 at the MA and PhD levels were invited to present academic posters showcasing their research during designated sessions on the first and last day of the conference (May 25 and May 28, 2023). As they

shared their work with attendees, fellows also had the chance to network with colleagues and senior scholars.

Prior to the conference, the ACSS provided the fellows with academic poster guidelines. The NewGen team also met with the ten fellows via Zoom several times to further explain the ACSS guidelines for academic posters and to train them in presenting their posters.

In parallel with the conference, fellows also participated in a field trip with Associate Professor of Anthropology at Fordham University, Aseel Sawalha, who is teaching the NewGen online course on Urban Studies. The field trip focused on the historical importance and urban landscape of Ain El Mreisseh - an area located along Beirut's coastal Corniche- and allowed fellows to apply concepts they learned during the online course with Dr. Sawalha.

Mental Wellbeing Sessions

In light of the growing concern about NewGen fellows' mental health and wellbeing, especially during the dire times the Arab region has faced since the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic alsong with economic uncertainty and political instability, the NewGen team offered optional mental wellbeing awareness sessions (Appendix 5 – Mental Wellbeing Awareness Session Agenda 2023) on Zoom, led by Lebanon CPC Carol Abi Ghanem who is a social psychologist. The content of the sessions was organized by country as the context, resources, and challenges to the status of mental wellbeing services differ from one country to another. The first session that took place in November 2023, targeted NewGen fellows in Lebanon, and had seven fellows in attendance. The second session took place in December 2023, targeted NewGen fellows in Egypt, and had eight fellows in attendance. The NewGen team is currently working with Carol Abi Ghanem in order to organize sessions for the fellows in Palestine and Tunisia in the upcoming months.

Online Courses

In 2023, the NewGen program offered to its fellows three online modules (one of which was offered twice) and four online courses. Among those, one module and three courses were offered for the first time in 2023 (Appendix 6 – NewGen Online Courses).

As part of the "Critical Methodologies" course, NewGen launched a module entitled "Feminist Perspectives" that is mandatory for BA and MA fellows. Additionally, NewGen developed and launched three elective courses in 2023: "Social Movements" that falls under the category of advanced courses that target MA and PhD fellows; "Cultural Studies" under the category of interdisciplinary courses; and "Oral History" under the category of special topics courses. The new modules and courses include readings, short lectures, in-class and forum discussions, assignments, and two-hour meetings with the Subject Matter Expert (SME) via Zoom on a weekly basis.

NewGen Promotional Reel

October 2023 witnessed the launch of "The New Generation of Social Scientists in the Arab Region" promotional reel which invites viewers to learn more about NewGen dynamically through

vibrant snapshots. From interactions with the ACSS team to glimpses of NewGen fellows, CPCs, and instructors, the reel serves as a compelling introduction to the unique blend of talent, expertise, and passion that defines the NewGen program. The reel is available in Arabic and English through the ACSS YouTube Channel and has been disseminated on the ACSS social media platforms and website.

The NewGen program has been growing stronger and more solid over the years as a program of study and a set of activities that foreground critical pedagogies and interdisciplinary training, and responds to the priorities it had identified at the launch of the program. In four years, the NewGen fellowship managed to bring together 241 fellows from four countries and there is clearly a strong interest and demand for implementing the program in other countries and universities.

Realizing the importance of bringing NewGen fellows together beyond the digital classroom, NewGen staff is now involving fellows in activities of different formats and exposing them to various opportunities and academics in the field. For instance, fellows from the PhD levels and NewGen graduates who have completed their PhD were invited to apply for the Sixth ACSS conference. Additionally, fellows who hold an MA degree and those at the PhD level are invited to apply for the ACSS Fifth Summer Institute on Critical Security Studies in the Arab Region which will take place in Lebanon between June 4-9, 2024. Similarly, last year, a select number of NewGen fellows served as research assistants to principal investigators in the "Contexts of Violence" Working Group.

Towards the end of 2023, the NewGen team started a discussion on how best to implement the monitoring and evaluation (M+E) of the program in order to better understand its achievements and areas where improvements are needed. Major steps will be taken in this direction by first consulting with individuals and organizations who have expertise in this area. This step is of paramount importance as the program considers expansion into other universities and countries when the funding situation makes that possible.

D. Gender Programs

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

Mapping the Production of Knowledge on Women and Gender in the Arab Region (MPK) is a project of the University of California Davis Arab Region Consortium (UCDAR https://sjoseph.ucdavis.edu/ucdar), in partnership with the ACSS. The goal of the MPK project has been to identify all the research carried out on women and gender in the Arab region from 1970 to the present under the organizing topic of "socialities." The project is, in the first instance, descriptive – laying out and mapping the work that has been done: what was the work, who did it, when did they do it, on what topics did they do it, where did they do it, where did they publish the results and so forth. In the second instance, the project is analytical – critically evaluating what has been produced within the socio/political historical contexts in which the research was produced in order to lay the foundation for training early career scholars for more pioneering work. Thus, the goal of the project is a large-scale mapping of all the published scholarly research, followed by qualitative critical review of the literature.

In 2023, the searches and coding of Sociological Abstracts (Proquest management) with data from 6,000+ journals yielding 4000 references) was completed and a decision was reached to search five more databases under Proquest management: ERIC, Gender Watch, Index Islamicus,

Language/Linguistics, and PsychInfo. All searches were completed in 2023 which means that along with Sociological Abstracts, MPK now has six Proquest databases.

At the same time, progress was made in 2023 on the MPK webpage and the team selected a small group of faculty and graduate students to test the webpage and database over a two-week period in January/February of 2023. The reviewers gave constructive feedback and their comments and suggestions especially for editing the webpage were all included.

Two "soft" launches of the project took place on February 20, 2023. The first at the American University of Beirut (noon) and the second at the Lebanese American University (4pm). The AUB launch was co-hosted by the Anthropology/Sociology/Media Studies Department and Center for Arab and Middle East Studies (CAMES) and the LAU launch was hosted by the Arab Institute for Women (AiW).

ACSS has hosted the webpage up to now. However, steps are underway for the MPK webpage to be set up as a "satellite" of the ACSS page, with its own domain name. The MPK team chose the domain name as: https://mpkgender-arabregion.org/. The MPK page on the ACSS website was: http://18.192.62.71/mpk-database/page/2/. Next steps will include moving the MPK database to the MPK domain, testing it, and launching it publicly.

Gender Studies in the Arab Region: New Research Directions

In June 2023, the ACSS published on its website an e-book titled *Gender Studies in the Arab Region: New Research Directions* (accessible here) that consists of six articles, five of which are in English and one in Arabic. The ACSS team disseminated it via our mailing lists and across all social media platforms. The peer-reviewed publication uncovers research gaps and tackles different topics within the interdisciplinary field of gender studies, such as the non-governmental organization phenomenon within women's and gender studies in the Arab region; an introduction to feminist security studies; the status of research on gender, health, and displacement in the Arab region; women's economic empowerment in the Middle East and North Africa, gender and higher education in Palestine; and gender and law in the Tunisian context. Below is the list of articles and their authors:

- Women's and Gender Studies in the Arab Region: An NGO Phenomenon by Hoda Elsadda (Cairo University)
- Feminist Security Studies: An Introduction by Dalia Ghanem (European Union Institute for Security Studies)
- Research on Gender, Health, and Displacement in the Arab Region: Lessons Learned by Doaa Hammoudeh (Oxford University) and Weeam Hammoudeh (Birzeit University)
- Women's Economic Empowerment in the MENA Region: Context, Barriers, and Interventions by Serena Canaan (Simon Fraser University) and Yara Tarabulsi (National Women's Institute of Mexico)
- Gender and Higher Education: The Case of Palestine by Nida Abu Awwad (Birzeit University) and Lena Meari (Birzeit University)
- Gender and Law: The Tunisian Context (in Arabic) by Zahia Jouirou (Manouba University)

The e-book resulted from a two-day workshop that the ACSS organized with the support of OSF and IDRC in Amman in 2019, titled "The Status of Gender Studies in Middle East and North

Africa (MENA)." The workshop brought together forty-three academics residing in MENA to attempt to answer questions about the types of gender knowledge production in the region, the research gaps in that production, and the ways in which gender can be viewed as a core concept within the current landscape of actors, among others.

It is expected that the ACSS will use the results of the discussions in the workshops and research gaps indicated in the publication to chart the way for a new agenda on gender that the ACSS would pursue in the coming years in line with its 2030 Strategy

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

Oral History of Arab Women of the Generation of the 70s

This historical moment – the 70s - marked by the rise of state feminism and buttressed by the legacies of independent women's movements has been of particular importance in the Arab region. A research team from Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq, Palestine, Jordan and Syria has been formed to conduct interviews with professional and activist women who were socially and politically active during the 70s. One hundred and ten interviews were conducted, each approximately two hours long. The interviews document the experiences of women who lived through and contributed to these transformations, creating an inclusive, critical, and situated body of archival knowledge. While each of the six countries had different sociopolitical and cultural experiences, the overarching structural changes sweeping the region at the time impacted the future(s) of feminist activism and solidarity in the Arab world. In 2023, and before handing over the interviews to the AUB library for archiving purposes, the metadata and transcripts were revised.

The research team for this pilot project consists of Hoda Elsadda (principal researcher and coordinator) and six researchers, all except one located in the countries included in the study. The project also led to the creation of the "Gendering the Archive Working Group (GAWG)" described in the next section.

E. Working Groups

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.

Funding for CSS and NR is provided by CCNY; for Contexts of Violence by FMSH; for Safeguarding Knowledge by IDRC and for GAWG by a subaward from AUB.

The Beirut Forum

The ACSS decided to create one satellite website for all its working groups with a specific vision in mind: the consolidation of WG research and publications, development of pedagogical tools such as syllabi and text books, and increased online visibility of the work of the WG members.

Thus, the Beirut Forum, a satellite ACSS website designated for the Working Groups was redesigned and updated in October 2023. The website contains information on both the closed and running working groups, in addition to the outputs resulting from each of the projects – and can be accessed via this link.

Ethnography as Knowledge Working Group (EKWG)

The Ethnography as Knowledge Working Group, which was launched in 2019, has been engaged in a collaborative exploration of the critical knowledge that can be generated from attention to embodied, emotional and cognitive aspects of the ethnographic endeavor and from the methodological adaptations that the ethnography makes as a result. The group is interested in understanding how ethnography can counter dominant regimes of knowledge about the Arab countries and produce a more nuanced ethnographic understanding of the Arab region today.

Due to shortage of funding, the EKWG has not been able to carry out a full-fledged set of activities in 2023. However, the group organized a retreat in August 2023 and began preparing a number of podcasts, continuing the series on Anthropology in the Arab region that they had started earlier. Moreover, the Ethnography and Medicine sub-group of the EKWG (Lamieh Moghnieh point person) is now finalizing their book on "Living and Dying in times of Corona: Approaches in Medical Anthropology in the Arab Region" for publication later this year.

Critical Security Studies Working Group (CSS)

Launched in 2016, this interdisciplinary network of scholars is pursuing research that challenges the dominant understanding of the Arab region as a threat to global security and is also providing training and professional mentorship to junior scholars based in the Arab region. It seeks to achieve these goals in a number of ways:

- Drawing theoretical backgrounds from scholarship predominantly produced by Arab and other scholars from the Global South
- Turning attention to the idea of a "region" - in this case the Arab region - as an object of study
- Focusing on the production of insecurity, rather than security and is developing approaches, methods, and concepts in line with this.

In 2023, the CSS undertook the following activities:

The Qatar Hub

A. Memorandum of Understanding with Northwestern University in Qatar
   In March 2023, the ACSS signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Northwestern University in Qatar (NU-Q) to finalize the co-creation of a Critical Security Studies (CSS) hub within the Institute for Advanced Studies of the Global South at NU-Q (IAS-NUQ), henceforth referred to as the Qatar Hub. The MoU details the shared and separate responsibilities of both parties regarding the organization and funding of activities,

convenings, and research. The CSS working group under the ACSS remains active as its own entity, however the establishment of the Qatar Hub manifests as part of the working group's vision to develop activity hubs that promote critical security scholarship in the Arab region. More information about the Qatar Hub and its members can be found here.

B. Qatar Hub Activities

In January 2023, CSS WG co-coordinator and Qatar Hub coordinator Sami Hermez (NU-Q) organized a roundtable for Qatar Hub members titled "What is Critical Security?" – with Ammar Shmeileh (Doha Institute for Graduate Studies), Clovis Bergère (NU-Q), Diala Hawi (Doha Institute for Graduate Studies), Torsten Menge (NU-Q), Noha Aboueldahab (Georgetown University in Qatar), and Zahra Babar (Georgetown University in Qatar) in attendance. The Qatar Hub and the CSS WG at the ACSS will co-publish a virtual roundtable as an output of this event in early 2024.

The Hub organized informal meetings where members convened and discussed their research and potential future projects. In June 2023, Qatar Hub members organized a reading group on the theme of Time and Violence. In August 2023, Sami Hermez delivered to the Hub members a lecture titled "Against Normalization with Israel: Seeing Warscapes Beyond Methodological Nationalism."

Additionally, in October 2023, the Qatar Hub and the CSS WG co-funded a public talk at NU-Q by Noora Lori (Boston University) under the theme of Time and Violence, titled "How States Maximize Passport Power." The public talk was followed by a closed discussion with Lori and NU-Q scholars with similar research interests.

CSS Working Group at the Sixth ACSS Conference

In May 2023, the CSS working group organized a panel at the sixth ACSS biannual conference titled "New Approaches to Critical Security" with panelists Omar Dahi (Hampshire College), Clovis Bergère (NU-Qatar), and Zahra Babar (Georgetown University in Qatar), and session moderator Sami Hermez (NU-Qatar). During the panel, scholars working from different disciplinary backgrounds discussed their emerging ideas around meanings of security—its discourses, affects, experiences, and economies. The topics of security and insecurity were explored from an inter-regional perspective, bringing the Arab region into conversation with Africa and engaging in a South-South dialogue.

Furthermore, and in parallel to the conference, the CSS working group organized two side meetings to discuss the WG's upcoming plans and potential partnerships. First, ACSS staff met with CSS WG co-coordinators Omar Dahi and Sami Hermez to plan for the upcoming year and brainstorm potential activities. In the second meeting, ACSS staff, along with ACSS board member Fadma Ait Mous (Hassan II University of Casablanca) and the CSS working group co-coordinators, convened with representatives from the American University in Cairo (AUC) and AUC Press – namely the dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences John Meloy, Editor-in-Chief of Cairo Papers in Social Science Hanan Sabea, in addition to the university press Director of Editorial Acquisitions Nadia Naqib, and Senior Acquisitions Editor Anne Routon. The discussion in the meeting revolved around the co-creation of a CSS series with AUC Press, among other avenues of publications collaboration between the university press and the ACSS. As a result of this discussion, the ACSS and AUC Press will finalize an MoU in early 2024.

Writing Retreat

CSS working group members Zaynab El-Bernoussi (NYU Abu Dhabi) and Bashir Saade (University of Stirling) convened with Adriana Garriga-Lopez (Florida Atlantic University) and Guiliano Martinello (Université Internationale de Rabat) in a writing retreat in Aaqoura, Lebanon - hosted and organized by the ACSS - from May 27-31, 2023. During the retreat, the four co-authors finalized a draft of their Routledge book project titled *International Political Economy in Context: Perspectives from Africa, Asia, Middle East, and Latin America.* The book is currently under revision and is set for publication in 2024.

Responsibility to Protect (R2P) Republished

In October 2023, and in light of the current events in Gaza, Palestine, the CSS working group re-published one of its earlier roundtables titled "Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and Palestine" on the Beirut Forum (see above). The re-published roundtable (accessible here) includes an updated introduction written by roundtable editor Coralie Pison Hindawi (PRISME Initiative) and the WG co-coordinators Omar Dahi and Sami Hermez.

Moving forward, there are several projects under the CSS WG that are currently in the planning phase and are expected to take place in 2024. For instance, the working group has agreed to fund a small grant for a project on Arab Women and Immigration, led by Suhad Daher-Nashif (Keele University) who is a member of the Qatar Hub. The ACSS has approved Daher-Nashif's proposal, budget, and timeline and the project will commence in early 2024. The working group has also agreed to co-fund, along with the Qatar Hub at NU-Q and New York University Abu Dhabi, a workshop titled "Territories, Peoples, Nations: Decolonial Approaches to Foundational Concepts in Political Theory" that is set to take place in January 2024 (Call for Papers accessible via this link). Also, in November 2023, the ACSS launched a Call for Applications (accessible here) for the CSS WG's Fifth Summer Institute on Critical Security Studies in the Arab Region, scheduled to take place June 4-9, 2024 in Lebanon.

In 2023, the CSS WG focused on establishing partnerships such as the development of the Qatar Hub and its activities with NU-Q and the upcoming MoU with AUC Press. In the upcoming year, the WG will hone in on organizing the Summer Institute and developing new in-house projects involving more outputs and activities engaging regional academics.

New Regionalisms Working Group

The New Regionalisms working group addressed the continually emergent, inter-connected, inter-penetrated and overlapping nature of regions, with a focus on the Middle East and North Africa region. The aim of the group was to challenge conventional ways of thinking about the Middle East and North Africa as representing a state of exceptionalism and to explore the region as part and parcel of the global system.

This working group closed its activities by mid-2023 with the work in the last phase focusing on publications and essays emerging out of previous convenings, 25 of which are featured on the ACSS working groups website, the Beirut Forum (link).

Working Group on Contexts of Violence in the Arab Region

This working group was funded in 2022 by a small grant from FMSH within their broader program on "Exiting Violence" funded by CCNY. The ACSS working group explored new questions about the states of violence in the Arab region giving equal attention to open conflict and political dissent as well as structural and enduring types of violence. The working group

focused on regional and country perspectives on the strategies employed by states, societies and actors to navigate these predicaments in the Arab region.

The Working Group included four lead researchers and four research assistants representing Lebanon, Palestine, Egypt and Tunisia. They prepared background bibliographic papers surveying the state of the art and documenting relevant digital and print resources on the specific topic of the paper as per the following: Amirah Silmi assisted by Fairouz Salameh focusing on Palestine on the topic of political repression, Ali Kassem assisted by Ziad El Jbeily focusing on Lebanon on the topic of (Where) should 'Violence' Go? On Modern 'Respectable' Politics and Alternative Imaginaries, , Choukri Hmed assisted by Ahmed Bilel Kotti focusing on Tunisia on the topic of Economic Foundations of Violence, and Youssef El Chazli assisted by Fatma Mosaad focusing on Egypt on the topic of Violence Against Nature.

In 2023, the members of the working group finalized their papers and presented them in two panels at the ACSS 6th Conference in May 2023. Work is now progressing on preparing the papers for an ACSS publication.

Working Group on "Research on the Arts"

As indicated in earlier reports, at the end of the RAP grants program comprising four cycles, ACSS and AFAC formed a working group comprising select members of the RAP selection committee to first carry out a reflection exercise on the RAP experiment of bringing together artists and social scientists to write about the arts, and come up with a research agenda for the future. The following step would be to encourage the larger group of committee members to write articles that would build on the initial reflection exercise.

In 2023, ACSS and AFAC received the main reflection piece from selection committee member, Tarek El Ariss. Although it contained some useful insights, the ACSS and AFAC teams decided that it somewhat fell short of expectations, and have together decided to commission another reflection piece that would adopt a broader and more profound scope to help the two institutions better understand the contribution of the RAP program to the field and how to move forward. It is expected that AFAC and the ACSS will select a scholar early in 2024 to undertake this evaluation.

Working Group on Safeguarding Knowledge Production in the Arab Region

Early Phase and Background Research

In 2023, the ACSS continued its work on the IDRC-funded Safeguarding Knowledge Production Project (SKPP) which is currently in its two-year pilot phase and seeks to identify critical and sensitive issues that lead to academic silencing in the Arab region. The ACSS had proposed to explore the contexts of knowledge production in the Arab region through a scoping study with a focus on the three themes of "gender and sexuality", "pandemic preparedness and response", and "environmental risks and climate change". The three areas of inquiry provide examples of differing 'sensitivities' and risks that then are articulated differently in different countries and settings. The main countries of focus include Palestine, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia.

In April 2023, Zeina Jallad, the project leader, put together a working group of seven members representing the three themes and country focus mentioned above: Hind Ahmed Zaki (University of Connecticut), Omar Tesdell (Birzeit University), Sara Mourad (The American University of Beirut), Soha Bayoumi (Harvard University), Soraya al-Kahlaoui (Ghent University), and Suhad Daher-Nashif (Keele University). One member, Youssef El Chazli (Université Paris 8) withdrew from the group due to scheduling conflicts.

ACSS staff members Joanne Boustany and Jamil Bazzi started conducting background research for the pilot phase of the project. Boustany initiated her research with a database of Arabic and English sources on academic freedom in the Arab region. The database includes academic references, advocacy resources, and guidelines for safeguarding academic freedom. Boustany also compiled a lexicon of terms related to academic freedom, safeguarding, and silencing in both English and Arabic. Additionally, she wrote a bibliographic essay that explores academic freedom in the region and examines research on the three key project themes. The essay delves into how academic freedom is violated in different countries and how existing challenges impede efforts to protect it. It also raises questions about the terminology used to describe violations and protections of academic freedom, as well as the research agendas and local conditions of knowledge production.

Bazzi's background research started with mapping different violations of academic freedom in the Arab region after 2011. After creating the database, he pinpointed patterns in terms of the types of violations occurring in the region, who/which entities commit them, and who reports on what violations, in addition to the type of support available to individuals, groups, or institutions facing academic freedom transgressions. Additionally, he created another database where he compiled a list of institutions that work to support academic freedom in the Arab region, and information on each of the institutions including where they operate from, their geographical focus, and the type of work they do under the umbrella of academic freedom. Bazzi also identified trends in the types of work different institutions carry when it comes to academic freedom, especially regarding the effectiveness and longevity of some of the programs targeted towards scholars in exile. He later synthesized the patterns observed in both databases in an essay.

Along with the background research, Jallad conducted seven interviews and two groups of consultations with a diverse group of academics and practitioners to explore the issue of silencing knowledge production in the Arab region.

Working Group Meetings and Other Convenings

The ACSS team organized four SKPP working group meetings in 2023. On April 12, 2023, the first working group meeting was organized via Zoom and attended by the working group members and ACSS staff including Director-General Seteney Shami, Associate Director Moushira Elgeziri, Project Leader Zeina Jallad, Research Coordinator Joanne Boustany, and Program Assistant Jamil Bazzi. During the introductory meeting, Jallad briefed the group members on the background and objectives of the project, as well as expected research outcomes, and working group members presented their initial brainstorming on their proposed research projects. The second working group meeting was held on May 9, 2023, also via Zoom, and working group members were invited to present and discuss preliminary titles and research summaries of their projects. The third working group meeting was held on May 24, 2023, in conjunction with the Sixth ACSS conference, where a closed full-day workshop took place during which they provided final summaries and outlines of their research projects. Each member provided insights about data collection methods, sources and initial findings. They also shared their individual experiences and perspectives on research conditions, challenges, and opportunities in the Arab region, and the way these affect conditions of academic freedom. During the closed workshop, Bazzi and Boustany also presented their revised background research. A fourth working group meeting was held on September 28, 2023 during which members of the working group presented the latest developments in their research projects.

Aside from the meetings with the working group members, on May 28, 2023, the SKPP team participated in a roundtable titled "Academic Freedom and Societal Responsibility" at the Sixth ACSS conference along with speakers Maha Shuayb (Centre for Lebanese Studies), Denis Mathieu (International Science Council), and Dina Khoury (George Washington University). During the session, which was chaired by Abaher Elsakka (Birzeit University), speakers discussed the contexts of academic freedom — or lack thereof — in the region, and the societal responsibilities institutions and academics have vis-à-vis violations of academic freedom. The SKPP team presented the SKPP project and its updates: Jallad introduced the project background and rationale, and Joanne Boustani and Jamil Bazzi discussed their background research and insights.

Research in Progress and Next Steps

Based on the meetings and feedback provided by the ACSS, working group members are currently conducting their research and writing their papers - which are due in April 2024. We include below the final list of papers with tentative titles and authors:

- Hind Ahmed Zaki: Against the Grain: The Challenges Facing the Production of Critical Feminist Knowledge in Egypt
- Omar Tesdell: Environmental Data Custodianship in Palestine
- Sara Mourad: Producing and Disseminating Knowledge on Non-Normative Genders and Sexualities in Lebanon
- Soha Bayoumi: Shaping the Narrative: Social Science Knowledge Production About the COVID-19 Pandemic in Egypt
- Soraya al-Kahlaoui: Multimodal Anthropology in a Postcolonial Context: A Critical Examination of Digital Tools and Participatory Observation
- Suhad Daher-Nashif: Blurring Sexual Functioning from Research on Women's Reproductive Health

Additionally, the upcoming stages of the project will expand to include more interviews and consultations to complement the background research with personal accounts of academic silencing. Interviews will be conducted locally, regionally, and internationally, with individuals and institutions, to broaden the scope of understanding academic freedom and learn from best practices that seek to protect it. The ultimate goal is to understand how Arab regional organizations like the ACSS can further develop their existing safeguards to support researchers and protect critical knowledge production in the Arab region.

ACSS has hired Reem Joudi as a project consultant to conduct the remaining individual and institutional interviews. Reem Joudi will replace Zeina Jallad, who has left to the US to pursue her postdoctoral studies at Harvard University.

Gendering the Archive Working Group

The "Gendering the Archive" working group (GAWG) was created as part of the oral history project entitled: "The Arab oral History Archive: Gender, Alternative, Histories, and the Production of Knowledge (GOHA)". This project is a collaboration between ACSS and the American University of Beirut (AUB) funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The

ambitious project aims to create new collections of oral history that support feminist critique, as well as encourage critical knowledge production around the archives across the Arab region. The working group cross-cuts two of the GOHA project's main axes: knowledge production around oral history and the archive, as well as networking to increase institutional collaborations and build sustainable, multidisciplinary networks that work within and across gender, archival knowledges, archival methodologies and practices in the Arab region.

The working group consists of six researchers: Lamieh Moghnieh (Lebanon); Hana Sleiman (Palestine); Zahra Ali (Iraq); Leyla Dekhli (Tunisia); Reem Joudi (Lebanon) and Hoda Elsadda, member and coordinator (Egypt).

Below are the working group activities in 2023:

a. The working group's fourth workshop was held in person in May 2023. Participants reviewed submissions to the GAWG publication, which includes a selection of essays contributed by academics, scholars, and activists who had participated in GAWG's 2022 closed workshop, held in Beirut. Members divided the in-depth review assignments amongst themselves and discussed the content and division of the collective introduction for the publication. Potential dates for a retreat later in 2023 were discussed as well.

b. GAWG held a roundtable at the ACSS Sixth Conference on May 27, 2023 during which they discussed the topic of gendering the Arab archive and three members of the working group (Hana Sleiman, Zahra Ali, Reem Joudi) presented papers around the topic. Hoda Elsadda chaired the discussion.

c. A GAWG retreat was held in December 2023 in France, which four of the members attended in person and two online. During the retreat, three of the members finalized the essays they are contributing to the GAWG publication and all members co-wrote the publication's collaborative introduction. The retreat was also used to come up with future plans for the working group and its activities.

d. An exhibition on gendering the archive is tentatively planned for October 2024 at the American University of Beirut. The exhibition would introduce the publication and the working group, with the possibility of holding a roundtable alongside the exhibition. It would have four main cornerstones: conceptual (what is gendering the Arab archive); methodological (reflections on why and how we work with archives); thematic; and imagination (potential histories and futures for gender archives in the Arab world).

F. Critical Humanities Initiative

The Critical Humanities Initiative (CHI) is a continuation of work that began with the World Humanities Report (WHR) in 2020. In this first phase, the ACSS authored the WHR-Arab Region Chapter which was officially launched online in June 2023. The work included a series of commissioned scholarly essays, an in-depth survey completed by 26 organizations, and individual case study profiles highlighting key findings from the surveys.

Funding for the Critical Humanities Initiative is provided by subawards from the University of Wisconsin as well as small grants from UNESCO (Beirut and Cairo)

In its second phase, the CHI aims at mapping the critical humanities landscape in the Arab region, highlighting the work of platforms, collectives, and institutions that are working within or across the humanities field. Learning from the WHR lessons, the current phase is leveraging in-depth interviews (IDIs) with relevant organizations across the region that integrate and build on the survey instrument developed in the first phase of the project. Below are the activities undertaken in 2023.

a. From January to June 2023, the ACSS and the WHR team finalized the essays, case studies, and introduction that were published as part of the Arab Region chapter of the WHR.

b. Following the official launch of the WHR in June 2023, the ACSS team worked on setting the groundwork for the second phase of the CHI. This included:

- Finalizing a list of the organizations that will be interviewed.
- Developing the IDI instrument.
- Piloting the instrument then refining it based on feedback given by interviews.
- Developing a draft coding framework for analysis, which will be updated and refined once the interviews are completed.
- Finalizing the interview invite and translating it, along with the instrument, into Arabic.

c. Upcoming steps in the coming two months include sending out the invitations, scheduling interviews, carrying out then transcribing the interviews.

After the conclusion of the second phase, ACSS plans to set up a specialized website that focuses on the significance of humanities, as well as the broader domains of arts, culture, and heritage. This website will maintain a strong connection with the ACSS primary website and will be accessible in both Arabic and English languages.

G. The Arab Social Science Monitor (ASSM)

The Arab Social Science Monitor (ASSM) is an observatory of the social sciences and higher education in the Arab region. It seeks to understand the context of social science knowledge production through the documentation and analysis of the infrastructures of knowledge production and dissemination as well as the career trajectories of the social science community across the region.

Funding for the ASSM and the Iraq project is provided by Carnegie Corporation, NY (CCNY). The Dataverse project is funded by a sub-grant from the University of North Carolina with funding from CCNY.

ASSM Governance and Staffing

A 26-member Advisory Committee guides the technical and programmatic aspects of the ASSM and includes current and former ACSS board of trustees' members and country focal points (for ASSM Advisory Committee members, please click here).

The ASSM team currently consists of two full-time staff: Nada Chaya, Program Leader, and Rami Ofeich, Data Analyst. Additionally, the ASSM works with many consultants for the various ASSM activities as stated in the following sections.

Third Arab Social Science Report (ASSR3)

The ASSR3, whose lead author is Ahmad Dallal, President of the American University in Cairo, is titled "The Academic Universes and Career Trajectories of Social Scientists in the Arab world". The report 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 their careers. In December 2022, the lead author had submitted the final version of the ASSR3 (in English) that was revised, copy-edited and translated into Arabic and French. The Arabic and English versions of the ASSR3 are available on the ACSS website (for a copy of the ASSR3 in English and Arabic, please click here). The ASSM team is reviewing the French translation of the ASSR3 and it will be available online by early February 2024.

Fourth Arab Social Science Report (ASSR4)

The title of the ASSR4 is "Knowledge Production in the Humanities in the Arab World" and its lead author is Hoda El Sadda, Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Cairo University Faculty of Arts.

On February 22, a meeting was held with the lead author to discuss the results of data analysis conducted by Rami Ofeich, Data Analyst, in 2022 on the humanities infrastructure derived from the ASSM Databases. The analysis focused on history, literature and philosophy and involved the compilation of data on languages and translation degrees offered in universities to complement the data on literature available in the ASSM Databases.

A first draft of the ASSR4 (in Arabic) was submitted beginning of September and a meeting was held with lead author on September 21 in Beirut to discuss it. The final draft was submitted by the lead author in December. The report will be reviewed internally by two external reviewers as well as the authors of the ten background papers that were commissioned. The Arabic version will be issued in Spring 2024. It will be translated to English and French and issued in these two languages in Fall 2024.

Iraq Project: The Social Sciences Experience in Six Iraqi Universities

The aim of this project is to monitor and analyze the current state of social sciences in Iraqi universities through (a) a documentation of the social science infrastructure in six universities in different regions in Iraq (Baghdad university, Kufa university, Salahaddin University-Erbil, Thi-Qar university, Tikrit university and Mosul university), and (b) a survey of the career trajectories of social science scholars in these universities conducted in 2021. The lead author of the report, Lucine Taminian, synthesized the study results and submitted in September the final draft of the report (in Arabic). The report titled "The Social Science Experience in Iraqi Universities" will be reviewed, edited and issued in spring or summer 2024.

ASSM Databases Updated

In 2023, the ASSM developed a database of social sciences and/or humanities libraries in the region which brings the total number of ASSM databases on the social science infrastructure in the region to seven. This database covers physical as well as electronic/digital libraries containing academic social sciences/humanities collections in the Arab region. It also includes a listing of

available unified catalogs in the region (at country level, Arab region level or other) as well as of thematic bibliographies/indexes.

As in previous years, Rami Ofeich, Data Analyst, continuously updated existing databases (higher education institutions, university-based research centers, non-university-based research centers, periodicals and professional societies databases) whenever new information became available (for access to the ASSM Databases, please click here).

The ASSM databases were downloaded 249 times to-date and the latest versions list:
- 1,542 universities (692 offer and 850 do not offer degrees in social sciences and/or humanities)
- 769 university-based research centers
- 424 non-university-based research centers
- 261 professional / scientific societies
- 1,703 periodicals
- 1,377 libraries
- 482 publishers

These databases are an important and unique resource on the social science infrastructure in the region. Within the ACSS, they have been a key source of data for various studies/reports (ASSR3, ASSR4, and Iraq report). They were also the basis for an editorial article written (in Arabic) by the ACSS DG in the May 2023 edition of *AlQuds Journal for Academic Research/ Humanities and Social Sciences*. The title of the article is "The Reality of Knowledge Production and its Challenges in the Social Sciences and Humanities in the Arab region" (for a link to the May 2023 edition, please click here). In addition, in a keynote address for a conference on Iraq organized by Rutgers University in May, the ACSS DG discussed trends in higher education in Iraq and region based on data from the databases.

Arab Public Data Initiative

The Arab Public Data Initiative, launched in June 2018 aims to promote the norm and practices of data management and sharing among social scientists and research institutions in the Arab region within the concept of knowledge as a public good. Its two main objectives 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 initiative is implemented through a sub-grant from and in partnership with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Under the renewed grant for the Initiative (2023-2025), Oxford University became a partner and will help broaden access to data through the collection of additional forms such as historic and contemporary geographic information and newspapers. With this, Neil Ketchley from Oxford University became the third co-chair of the Advisory Committee (for the Initiative's advisory committee and project team, please click here).

In terms of preserving and facilitating access to research data (objective 1), 25 datasets were added to the ACSS Dataverse in 2023, bringing the total number of datasets in the repository to 149. Thirteen of the 25 added datasets are in an ERF sub-Dataverse with links to ERF's OAMDI portal. In parallel, 12 datasets from the ACSS Dataverse are linked to the ERF OAMDI. The linking of the ACSS Dataverse to the ERF OAMDI portal is one of the objectives of the MoU the ACSS signed with the Economic Research Forum (ERF) in mid-November 2022 under this Initiative (please click here for the ERF sub-Dataverse and ACSS page on the ERF OAMDI.

For capacity building (objective 2), please see the section on Training in this report.

The ACSS remains a member of the following data organizations: World Data System (WDS) which is an International Science Council (ISC) affiliated body. The ACSS Dataverse is also registered in the Registry of Research Data Repositories which is a global registry that lists existing research data repositories from all academic disciplines. The ACSS is also a member of the Comité Sociologique International du Numérique whose other members are the following regional associations: the International Sociological Association (ISA), l'Association Internationale des Sociologues de Langue Française (AISLF), the European Sociological Association (ESA).

In 2023, the ACSS was engaged in a number of dissemination events/activities in relation to its work on social science data management and training:

- The three co-chairs of the Arab Public Data Initiative (Neil Ketchley, Charles Kurzman, and Seteney Shami) wrote an article titled *Introducing the ACSS Dataverse* in the Spring 2023 Newsletter of the American Political Science Association-Middle East and North Africa (APSA MENA) to promote the Initiative and the concept of social science data management and sharing (for the Spring 2023 Newsletter, please click here).

- On May 28, the ASSM held a roundtable at the sixth ACSS conference that discussed social science research data management and sharing in the context of Open Science and the benefits and challenges to data management implementation in the region (please click here for the ASSM roundtable abstract click here and photo).

- The ASSM Program Leader (Nada Chaya) participated in the Dataverse Community Meeting, which is organized annually by Harvard University and which - in 2023- was sponsored by the University of Minho and held in between June 5 and 7 in Braga, Portugal. On June 6 and through a poster presentation, the ASSM presented the activities and achievements of the Arab Public Data Initiative (please click here for the poster presentation, program, and photo; the ACSS presentation is number 2 in the Minute Madness on June 6 in the program).

- The ACSS held a special panel during the conference entitled 'Assessing and Producing Knowledge as a Public Good: From Theory and Practice' jointly organized by the ACSS and the Arab Reform Initiative (ARI) on September 11 in Beirut (for the conference agenda, please click here). As part of the 'ACSS Special Panel: Lessons from the ACSS', Nada Chaya, ASSM Program Leader, presented its experience in knowledge production and research data management.

- The ASSM Program Leader Nada Chaya participated virtually in the annual conference 'International Data Week' which this year was sponsored by the University of Salzburg and held from 23 to 26 October in Salzburg, Austria. The conference was organized by the International Science Council's Committee on Data (CODATA), the World Data System (WDS) and the Research Data Alliance (RDA). Through a poster presentation, Nada Chaya shared ASSM experience in data management with data professionals from around the world (for the list of poster presentations, please click here; the ACSS poster is number 55).

Following are some of the comments of the reviewers of the ASSM abstract submission:

"*The authors present the work of the Arab Council for the Social Sciences (ACSS) and its partners in the Arab Public Data Initiative to meet the need for social science research data management in the Arab region and to expand research data management into new fields and languages. This is extremely important work. Experience reports like these are most welcomed.*"

"The poster presents a groundbreaking project led by the Arab Council for the Social Sciences (ACSS) that created a platform that improved access to social science research data and also provided training. The platform is worth exploring and benchmarking, especially as it relates to the Arab Region and the translation to Arabic."

- On October 23, the ACSS DG participated virtually in the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Sciences in the Arab States regional strategy session, during the 2nd Annual Forum for Open Research in MENA (FORM) (https://forumforopenresearch.com/). The event was sponsored this year by Khalifa University in collaboration with Knowledge E Foundation and held in Abu Dhabi between October 23 and 25 in partnership with the UNESCO Regional Office. The title of the Forum was 'Democratizing Knowledge: The Evolution of Open Science Ecosystems and Communities in the Arab World'. The DG participated also in a closed session titled 'A new non-governmental Arab Association for Open Sciences in Higher Education: Strategy and Establishment'. Participants discussed the establishment of an Arab association to develop open science in higher education and among research communities in the region (please click here for the Forum program and speakers). The ACSS is in discussion with FORM about potential areas of collaboration.

These last two events were part of the many events that were organized worldwide to mark the yearly October Open Access Week.

H. Training

ACSS started developing its training activities and programs in 2015, many of which have been co-funded with other organizations thus fulfilling one of the objectives of the ACSS, 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.

Funding for training activities is provided by specific grants which include training components, for example, training on Data Sharing for Public Good is provided by a sub-grant from University of North Carolina with funding from CCNY.

Data Sharing for the Public Good

In 2023 the ASSM conducted five workshops in its series of trainings on 'Data management and sharing for the social sciences', bringing the number of such trainings to 16 since the launch of

the Arab Public Data Initiative in June 2018. This year, capacity building targeted specific institutions or groups and like previous trainings, the workshops introduced the participants to the principles and global best practices and tools of data management and sharing. All five trainings were delivered in Arabic using training material that the ACSS had translated from English to Arabic in 2022.

Following is a list of the training workshops.

- Twelfth training (January 17 to 19, Cairo, jointly organized with the ERF and the first activity under the MoU ACSS has with the ERF): Attended by 23 participants (out of 37 applicants) from seven national statistical offices in the region (Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia). Please click here for training call for applications, agenda, and photo.
- Thirteenth training (March 28 and 29, Virtual, jointly organized with Ibn Zohr University in Morocco): Attended by 18 doctoral students and junior faculty at the Faculty of Languages, Arts and Human Sciences at the University of Ibn Zohr in Ait Melloul in Morocco. Click here for training call for applications, agenda, and photo.
- Fourteenth training (July 4 to 6, Beirut): Attended by 20 social science students and junior professors from six Iraqi universities (Baghdad University, Kufa University, Mosul University, Salaheddine-Erbil University, Thi Qar University, Tikrit University). Please click here for training call for application, agenda, and photo.
- Fifteenth training (August 24, Tunisia, jointly organized with Fa'aloun Center in in Algeria): A short version of the training was conducted on the margins of the eighth summer university in Tunisia organized annually by *Fa'aloun* Center. Eighteen doctoral students, post-doctoral fellows and junior faculty participated out of 24 applicants. Please click here for the call for applications.
- Sixteenth training (November 14, Virtual): A short version of the training was conducted to 11 ACSS fellows of the ACSS Research Grant Program Cycle 7 (2022), Cycle 8 (2023) and Cycle 9 (2024) and Early Career Fellows Program Cycle 7 (please click here for the invitation to the training).

This year, three of the five trainings took place jointly with other organizations. Additionally, a number of trainees in workshops held in past years were involved in several data management activities in 2023, and as such, the trainings are slowly but steadily creating data management networks in institutions and countries in the region.

- Nesma Amer (Senior statistician at the Economic Research Forum in Egypt) was a co-trainer in ERF/ACSS training in Cairo in January.
- Maryeme Ouchen (Assistant professor of cultural studies in the Faculty of Languages, Arts and Social Sciences at Ibn Zohr University-Agadir Morocco) was a co-trainer of the ACSS/IbnZohr University joint training in March.
- Mabrouk Boutagouga (Professor, University of Batna 1 in Algeria), was the only trainer in the joint ACSS/*Fa'aloun* Center training in Tunis in August.
- Cryine Ghannouchi (Research programs planning and development specialist at the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights in Tunisia) was a co-trainer in the July training in Beirut and the only trainer in the virtual November training to ACSS fellows.
- Abdel Rahman Farrag (Professor of library and archival sciences at the department of information sciences at Beni-Suef University in Egypt) and Mohamed Salah Eldin Mudawi

(Senior specialist in the Data Analysis, Research & Studies Department at Dubai Health Authority) were panelists in the roundtable on Open Science the ASSM organized during the ACSS Sixth Conference in May.

To sum up, the ASSM has created its own niche through the robust work it has been doing since its establishment in 2013, namely through the signature periodic report that analyzes the state of social sciences in the region; its mapping of the infrastructure of social sciences and humanities in the region in its databases; its groundbreaking work on social science research data management; and finally, through the various research tools it developed and refined and employs in three languages. In 2024, the ACSS will begin planning for the expansion of the ASSM in order for it to become a regional resource center of information and data on the state of higher education and social science research starting 2026.

The ASSM continues to fill a gap in mapping the institutional landscape of social science and humanities research and higher education in the Arab region. It has also been expanding to include new databases of relevance to its endeavors. In 2023, the ASSM developed a new database on academic libraries in the region and will continue in 2024 to update and refine the seven existing databases. It is worthy to note that the ASSM is currently widely recognized as a unique regional resource for social scientists that needs better promotion and wider dissemination.

The ASSM also continues to address the unmet need for social science data management and sharing in the region. Through the training it offers, journal and magazine articles as well as through the engagement of its staff in different fora, the ASSM is raising awareness about the importance of proper research data management in the field of social sciences and humanities fields. Moreover, it is contributing to multilingual research data management (through the translation of terms and training material to Arabic), and creating social science data management communities. Increasingly, the ASSM has been implementing its activities in a targeted way (on the level of institutions and/or special groups), jointly with other institutions, and in Arabic language for increased effectiveness and relevance at the local level. Finally, the ACSS is more and more represented in international fora on data and is recognized as one of the few, if not the only, institutions from the Arab region engaged in this area.

Two challenges still face the ASSM. The first is the dearth of trainers who can offer the data management training in Arabic. The ASSM is working on enlarging the circle of trainees who can become trainers. The second is the delay encountered in delivering/publishing the ASSM reports - ASSR3 and Iraq Report which took a long time to be finalized in 2023. These reports should be better planned given the time it takes to develop their research inputs (commissioning background papers, conducting a survey etc.) as well as the long process of synthesis and writing by the lead author, review, translation, and production. Thankfully, ASSR4 is on schedule and well-underway.

I. Research Ethics Initiative

The ACSS interest in research ethics goes back to 2015 when it noticed the clear dearth of knowledge and training on this subject. Consequently, steps were taken to introduce ethics training in ACSS programs particularly grants and fellowships, and drafting guidelines for ethics of social science research. Also, the ACSS is working on the establishment of an electronic platform dedicated to research ethics in the social sciences and design an interactive website that

would include manuals and materials for training, case studies, bibliographies, resources and guidelines specific to different institutions (e.g. universities, NGOs etc.).

The Research Ethics Initiative is currently supported by IDRC

Work on the platform and website has been delayed mainly due to absence of staff who would take on responsibility for them. In 2023 the staffing situation improved with the recruitment of Joanne Boustany, research coordinator who took charge of some aspects of the ACSS ethics work (the institutional grants program) and the Safeguarding the Production of Knowledge program. Towards the end of the year, Tamara Tell was recruited as web developer in charge, among other things, of the ACSS website. With assistance from Boustany and Tell, we expect to make headway with developing the platform and posting material on it in 2024. Meanwhile, Boustany continues to collect various training materials, articles, and case studies in Arabic and English and will work towards incorporating some visual elements (in the form of infographics or visual reports) to animate the platform. Moreover, the ACSS has successfully concluded all necessary revisions to the Research Ethics Guidelines, both the Arabic and English versions and they are ready to be posted and disseminated.

For more information about ACSS programs and activities on research ethics, see Small Grants Program (SGP) above.

The ACSS as a Training Resource on Research Ethics

Towards the end of 2023, Ettijahat, a non-profit organization engaged in empowering local artists towards supporting cultural and social development and change, approached the ACSS to provide training on research ethics for the successful recipients of its capacity-building program, titled Research: "Strengthening the Culture of Knowledge". The event is scheduled to take place on January 31, 2024, and will be held at ACSS offices in Beirut. The workshop will be geared towards the arts and culture sector, with a focus on conducting research in fragile, marginalized, and conflict settings. Jamil Moawad, the ACSS ethics consultant, will offer the training.

J. Regional, South-South and Global Collaborations

ACSS/CODESRIA Collaborations

In July 2023, the ACSS hosted a delegation from CODESRIA in Brumana, Lebanon, to discuss areas of South-South cooperation between the two organizations. Over two days, July 18 and 19, the ACSS team comprising Seteney Shami, Director General, Moushira Elgeziri, Associate Director, Vera Zeidan, Assistant to the Director and Rebecca Daher, Grants and Fellowships Coordinator met with Godwin Murunga, CODESRIA Executive Secretary, Amy Niang, Senior Program Officer of Research and Gladys Michele Nkengne, controller.

The main discussions during the meeting revolved around ways of keeping ideas for collaboration flowing especially given the inability of the two organizations to secure funding for the Sahel project. The discussions resulted in a long-term 12-year program of collaboration and strategy of work under the tentative title of "Afro-Arab perspectives on State Society and Development". The collaboration would include the formation of four thematic working groups on economy and

development, state-civil society, higher education and migration, each focusing on a particular spatiality, for example: Sahel/Sahara, Red Sea and Nilotic Africa. Activities of each working group would last four years and include joint activities such as: Afro-Arab dialogue, Afro-Arab methodology school, open access publications and small grants program for faculty. This strategic alliance between ACSS and CODESRIA for the strengthening of the social sciences in Africa and the Arab region would be open for expansion in the future to possibly include CLACSO and hopefully put these south-based organizations in a good position for fundraising for the long-run.

CLACSO and ACSS also discussed the participation of the latter in the former's 16th General Assembly in Dakar, Senegal in December. An agreement was reached for the ACSS to form five panels during which grantees, members of ACSS working groups and other researchers associated with the ACSS would present their research.

ACSS participation in CODESRIA's 16th General Assembly – December 4-8, 2023

CODESRIA organized its 16th General Assembly under the title "The Social Sciences and "Pandemics in Africa" and extended an invitation to the ACSS to participate in and organize panels on the subject. Director General, Seteney Shami and Associate Director, Moushira Elgeziri flew to Dakar to participate in the meetings. The five ACSS organized panels included grantees, members of the ACSS working groups and Algeria focal point, whose work is of relevance to the conference topic. Following are the titles of the sessions:

1) Anthropology, Covid-19, and Lived Experiences: Examples from Morocco
2) Interroger les méthodes et l'éthique des Sciences sociales en temps de pandémie de COVID 19
   (Interrogating the methods and ethics of the social sciences during Covid 19 pandemic)
3) L'expérience algérienne face à la pandémie Covid 19
   (The Algerian experience in confronting Covid 19 pandemic)
4) COVID-19 Beyond the Biomedical: Health Workers, Gender and Religion in the Arab Pandemic
5) Décoloniser les savoirs / décloisonner les disciplines, en temps de crise
   (Decolonizing knowledges/decolonizing the disciplines during times of crisis)

Shami also represented the ACSS and was a main speaker in the Conference's inaugural session, voicing a "message of support" to CODESRIA whose 16th General Assembly also coincided with its 50th anniversary. She also chaired and was the discussant of session 4 above. Elgeziri chaired and was the discussant of session 1 above.

Collaboration with CLACSO: The Right to Higher Education in the Global South

In 2023, the collaborative project between ACSS and CLACSO entitled "The Right to Higher Education: Perspectives from the Global South" came to an end. The final project activity was a Summer School organized in Mozambique that Moushira Elgeziri, associate director and member of the project Steering Committee representing the ACSS, could not attend due to visa issues. The ACSS had contributed two reports from the Arab region on the right to higher education by AbdelKader Djeflat and Ray Langsten, and both the Director General Seteney Shami, Associate Director Moushira Elgeziri as well as one of the two report authors, Ray Langsten participated in the CLACSO 9th conference on the social sciences that was held in Mexico last year (See details in

Annual report – 2022). Shami was a main speaker in a panel on the Global South and also participated in another panel on cooperation among countries of the Global South. Additionally, Elgeziri participated in two events. In the first one the project teams from CLACSO, ACSS and Sub-Saharan Africa presented their work in progress and discussed next steps. In the second event, she gave a presentation on the concept of right to education between definitions of international organizations and practices of governments in the Arab region.

This collaborative project sought 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 aimed to present new paradigms, perspectives and realities emerging from the Global South as well as de-colonial approaches based on diversity, inclusion and equality. The project has contributed to ongoing debates on equity and social justice in higher education. If more funding can be secured, a larger and more expansive project to study the right to education in all its stages would be a significant next step.

CODESRIA and CLACSO Participation in ACSS Sixth Conference

Gudwin Murunga, Executive Director of CODESRIA and Karina Batthyány, Executive Director of CLACSO were two of four panelists in one of the main sessions at the ACSS Sixth Conference on "Theorizing from the South: Transregional Perspectives". The panel also included Fadi Bardawil, Duke University and Driss Ksikes, Economia – HEM Research Center.

InterAsia

For more than a decade, the ACSS served as a core partner in an international, inter-institutional consortium of InterAsia Partners, with the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) serving as Secretariat. A MoU between the ACSS and the SSRC 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 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.

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. In May 2023, the InterAsia partners held a hybrid meeting in conjunction with the ACSS Sixth Conference, with many partners gathering in person and others joining virtually to discuss future plans and partnership activities.

Key developments in 2023, and looking forward to 2024 include:

- Development of Core Projects
  - Developing Research Capacities on East Asia in West Asia. The IAP has worked closely with colleagues at the University of Exeter and in coordination with Adam Hanieh and his project team. Many of these scholars also participated in a panel at the ACSS' Sixth Conference (May 2023).
  - New Civilizationalisms Project (NCP). The IAP has worked closely with Srirupa Roy at the University of Göttingen (an IAP partner), to help 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 enthno-majoritarian commitments of "strongmen" regimes. Members of the group have met many times (virtually) throughout 2022-2023, with plans to meet in-person in spring 2024 in Beirut, hosted by the ACSS/IAP, and again in fall 2024 at Stanford University (US). Ultimately, members of the working group plan to produce a number of publications and a resource website.
  - InterAsian Digitalities. The IAP has worked with partners at the University of Northwestern Qatar (NU-Q) to organize and co-host a conference on "InterAsian Digitalities," currently planned for spring 2024.
- Growth of IAP Network – New partners include: Institute for Advanced Study in the Global South at the University of Northwestern Qatar (MOU signed in April 2023) and The Centre for Indonesian Law, Islam and Society, Melbourne Law School & Western Sydney University School of Law, collectively working to form an InterAsian Legalities Cluster. (MOU pending).
- Possibilities of New Funding
  - The "Mapping Connections" proposal for a funding renewal, which is to be submitted to the Carnegie Corporation of NY in early-2024, includes specific mention of the ACSS/IAP linkages and requests funds for a sub-contract to the ACSS for jointly organized activities to be hosted in Beirut, including an Academy aimed at pedagogy and training.
- Future Activities. Planned activities for 2024 include:
  - IAP participation in a "Mapping Connections" conference at Tsinghua University, January 2024 (Beijing, China)
  - "InterAsia Week," which will feature multiple InterAsian activities that are to be planned separately, but held at the same time so as to allow for ample networking opportunities. In addition to closed workshop/conference activities, the IAP will organize 1-2 open, public events to bring in broader audiences and engage with local audiences. Activities include:
    - NCP workshop
    - Mapping Connections Academy
    - InterAsian Digitalities Conference
    - "Figures of the (un)bearable life" workshop organized and co-hosted by the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology and AUB
  - An InterAsia Partners' Webinar Series that will feature work emerging from various partner institutions and working groups.

Middle East Institute at Columbia University in Collaboration with the Columbia Global Center: 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) through:

(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.

The Principal Investigators on the project are Lisa Anderson, dean emerita, School of International and Public Affairs, and faculty associate, Middle East Institute, Columbia University https://www.mei.columbia.edu/ and 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 Lila Abu Lughod (Columbia University); Rabab El Mahdi (AUC); Sari Hanafi (AUB); Stéphane Lacroix (CERI/Sciences Po) and Seteney Shami (ACSS).

Over 2021 and 2022 the ACSS collaborated with a number of the sub-groups that were established through this project as well as participating in virtual and in-person workshops. In 2023, the focus has been on publications including a special issue of the journal Global Perspectives (published by UC Berkeley) and a special issue of Daedalus (Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences).

The project has been renewed for another two years and discussions are underway to eventually transfer the coordination and further development of project from Columbia University to the ACSS.

K. Institutional Alliances and Networks

As a network of networks, the ACSS has embarked on, or consolidated in 2023 the institutional alliances it has been incubating or interested in fostering over the coming years. Below is a description of these alliances.

Network for Regional Research Institutions

As the ACSS reflects on its journey that started more than a decade ago, and as it prepares to enter the second decade, it has come to the realize not only that the journey has not been an easy one,

but that the ACSS continues to encounter more and new challenges. Some of these include the difficulty of navigating the complex regional political situation and the banking and economic crisis in Lebanon (the latter necessitated the opening of new bank accounts and branches/entities) as well as the prolonged process of institutional strengthening and issues related to recruitment, staffing and fundraising.

This inspired the Director General to start an informal network for regional research institutions that are based in Lebanon which face similar challenges which, for the time being, is envisioned as a space to extend mutual support, share experiences and lessons learned. Eventually it can take a more formal shape of an institution or a consortium which can initiate joint programming and mobilize joint resources. The first meeting that took place on Zoom on November 21, included AFAC, Culture Resource, Etijjahat, and the Arab Reform Initiative. More institutions would be added as appropriate. The next meeting will take place in February 2024.

ACSS Network of Arab Universities

In its endeavor to enhance the social sciences and humanities in the Arab region, with a focus on educational policies, pedagogies and opportunities for faculty and students, the ACSS invited 14 Arab universities to the first meeting of the newly-established Network of Arab Universities, held during the ACSS Sixth Conference in May 2023. To introduce the ACSS, the meeting started with presentations about ACSS programs and activities including the ASSM, research ethics and NewGen. In the discussions that followed, several topics were raised by participants that could become areas of collaborative work between Arab universities. These included: protocols of research ethics, interdisciplinarity, mobility across disciplines and institutions, and the labor market and social sciences.

It was agreed, at the end of the meeting that the ACSS would form a steering committee of representatives of the different institutions to further discuss these different topics, expand the number of participants as appropriate, organize future meetings to possibly add new topics, and finally, launch pilot projects and activities that would reach out to policy makers in the area of higher education.

The first meeting of the steering committee was held on September 13 on Zoom and included: the American University in Cairo (Noha El Mikawy), the Lebanese University (Marlene Haidar Nagar), Doha Institute (Amal Ghazal), Manouba University – Tunisia (Juhaina Ben Boubakr Gharib), Notre Dame University- Lebanon (Maria Abu Zaid) and Suzanne Kassab (ACSS Chair of BoT), in addition to the Director General Seteney Shami and ACSS staff. The meeting was chaired by Mounir Siadani, member of the ACSS BoT.

More specifically, participants expressed interest in collaborations in the area of research ethics, interdisciplinarity and the labor market and social sciences. They also entrusted the ACSS with the task of drafting a mission statement for the network, emphasizing that its goals should include 1) defining programs and activities that the ACSS can undertake in coordination with the network and 2) projects of common interest to network members which they can implement together with the facilitation of the ACSS. They also underscored the need for a list of network priorities over the short and long run for feedback and comments.

Partners and Donors Annual Forum

In 2023, the ACSS organized two meetings related to the Partners and Donors Forum. The first in May 24, 2023 one day prior to the ACSS Sixth Conference, and the second, a meeting for the Donors' Steering Committee on November 15, 2023.

The first meeting titled "Un/natural Disasters: The Place of Knowledge in Crises" was attended in person by seven organizations while nine participated online via Zoom (Appendix 7: List of participating institutions).

The three-and-half hour meeting included three main presentations by Mona Fawaz (American University of Beirut and member of the ACSS BoT) on "Mapping/Counter-Mapping: The Beirut Port Explosion and a City in Crisis" followed by Abdulla Al Kafri (Ettijahat-Independent Culture) on "the Post-Earthquake *Ahliyeh* Initiative: Collaboration in times of Crisis" and Mathieu Denis (International Science Council) on "Science in Times of Crisis: What Can the Science Community Do To Protect Itself." Each of the three presentations was followed by questions and comments, followed by an open discussion (Appendix 8: Meeting minutes).

The next step, as agreed upon, was for the ACSS to invite a small steering committee to reflect on the discussions so far and to think about how to amplify them and plan activities that would help achieve the common aims articulated.

On November 15, 2023 ACSS organized the First Donors Forum Steering Committee Meeting on Zoom, which was chaired by Mary Kawar (ACSS Board Member and Chair of the Administration & Finance Subcommittee). Participants included Roula El Rifai (IDRC), Salah Khalil (Alexandria Trust), Hillary Wiesner (Carnegie Corporation), Mona Fawaz (ACSS Board Member) and, Seteney Shami (ACSS Director General), Moushira Elgeziri (ACSS Associate Director), Vera Zeidan (Senior Assistant to the DG). The one and a half-hour meeting included the following main agenda items: 1) The current situation in Gaza and its impact on the donors and ACSS; 2) Additional comments on the issues that were raised at the Donors and Partners May meeting; 3) expanding the committee and 4) Planning the next meeting (Appendix 9: Minutes of steering committee meeting).

The next step, as agreed upon, was for the ACSS to schedule another meeting for the steering committee to plan the Donors and Partners upcoming meeting in 2024. Seteney Shami asked the committee members to suggest two other names to join this committee.

IV. OUTPUTS, DISSEMINATION AND ELECTRONIC PLATFORM

Online Activities

The ACSS continued to implement its strategic plan for the blog known as the Digest, which is the most dynamic part of the ACSS website. Over 2023, this has meant diversifying the type of content featured, and increasing coverage of ACSS events and activities, especially in Arabic. Calls for applications and job opportunities have become regular posts, as more and more organizations continue to contact the ACSS to circulate their calls. The expanded offerings of the ACSS have also led to more digital exposure: the ACSS website received over 6200 visitors per month in the year 2023, an increase of 20% from 2022. Website: www.theacss.org

Social Media

As social media 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 also diversify our social media posts, thus increasing the ACSS online presence and enhance its profile. In 2023, ACSS Facebook followers increased to reach over 44,000. It is also important to note that this figure is reached without any paid boosts.
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/theacss

With respect to Twitter, the number of followers has continued to grow. The year 2023 saw an increase from roughly 4,150 in January 2023 to 4,700 by December 2023. This means that more people are finding value in the ACSS tweets and following its account.
Twitter: Acss_org

ACSS presence is also growing on Instagram which means we have been able to reach a more diverse and younger audience than those active on Facebook and Twitter. In a short period, starting 2022, we have reached close to 800 followers.
Instagram: @ACSS

ACSS is also increasing its presence on YouTube, as we currently have 53 videos (up from 47 in 2022) on the platform. The videos include lectures, panel discussions, webinars, interviews and short documentaries. Our subscribers continue to grow from 1000 in 2022 to 1400 in 2023.
YouTube: Arab Council for the Social Sciences

Print Activities and E-Publications

Working Papers

The ACSS call for Working Paper submissions remained open throughout 2023. A decision had been reached by the BoT Publications Sub-Committee and the Secretariat to make the submission of a working paper a grant requirement for grantees in the ECFP program and the ACSS-FMSH Short-Term Postdoctoral Mobility Fellowships. Since then, grantees have been 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 (currently a blind review by two external reviewers and an additional review by the ACSS associate director for papers submitted by grantees and fellows, or members of the publications sub-committee for other papers). In 2023, six papers were submitted and four were published (in Arabic): (paper 1, paper 2, paper 3, paper 4).

Occasional Publications

Fatema Mernissi Closing Series Publication

To close the Fatema Mernissi lecture series, the ACSS produced a comprehensive publication that included the three main lectures, testimonies by the three chairs named after Fatema Mernissi in Rabat, Brussels and Mexico City: Driss Ksikes, Iman Lechkar and Alejandra Tapia, respectively, as well as a testimony from Mernissi's assistant, Mohamad Akajaj and exclusive photos and a comprehensive bibliography for Mernissi's work in its original languages.

This publication which was distributed during the closing session of the series at the ACSS sixth conference on May 28, 2023 achieved an unprecedented record on ACSS social media platforms in terms of viewership (exceeding 220,000 views), likes and shares, and downloads of the electronic version (more than 8,000 copies).

Moreover, the International Book Fair in Rabat-Morocco (2023) allocated a pavilion to Fatema Mernissi in which the publication was displayed, and a large screen was installed to showcase the bibliography produced by the ACSS, which is considered the first of its kind.

Fifth Conference Occasional Publication

This publication includes the keynotes delivered at the ACSS Fifth Conference (held in Casablanca, Cairo, and Beirut on December 2, 7, and 10, 2021 respectively,) and a commentary on them.

The publication titled "Interrogating the Social Sciences in the Vortex of Crises: Waves of Discontent and Demands for Change" includes keynotes by Ibrahim Kouny (Morocco day), Haider Saeed and Mounir Saidani (Beirut Day), as well as an essay by Sarah Mourad and a commentary by Elizabeth Suzanne Kassab.

"Gendered Resistance" Third 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 three 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 seven essays by seven authors reflecting different disciplinary approaches, narratives and countries in the Arab region.

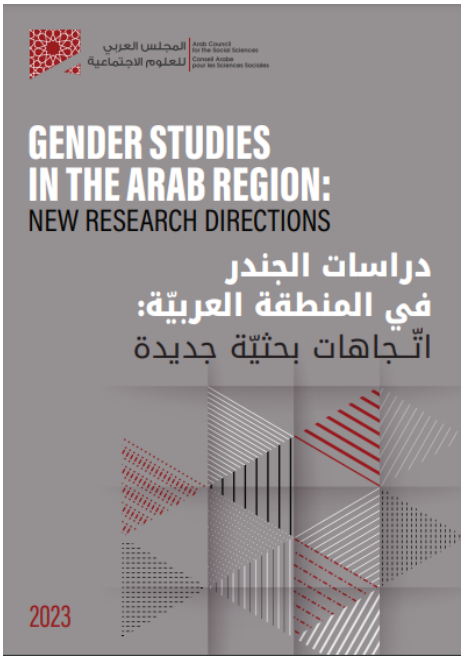
Third Arab Social Science Monitor Report

The Third Arab Social Science Report entitled "The academic Universes and Career Trajectories of Social Scientists in the Arab world" charts the educational and career trajectories of social scientists and humanists in the Arab world, both within and outside the academy, as well as the factors that enable or constrain their career and knowledge production.

The report looks at the ways in which the careers of individual social scientists and humanists unfold within the academic sphere and principally within the institution of the university. It also identifies individual as well as institutional and occupational characteristics of Arab social scientists and humanists, including their biographical profiles (age, gender, and citizenship), education (fields of study, level and year of obtained degrees, and study location), employment (including job title, type and location of employing institution, professional duties, and recruitment and promotion criteria), and research profiles (fields, themes, and geographic scope of research; quantity, quality, form, and outlet of research output; and evaluation criteria). As well, the report sheds light on the opportunities, motivations, incentives, and barriers that social scientists and humanists encounter over the course of their careers.

Gender Studies in the Arab Region: New Research Directions

This publication titled "Gender Studies in the Arab Region: New Research Directions" consists of six papers, five of which are in English and one in Arabic. The book chapters tackle different topics within the interdisciplinary field of gender studies, including the non-governmental organization phenomenon within women's and gender studies in the Arab region; feminist security studies; the status of research on gender, health, and displacement in the Arab region; women's economic empowerment in the Middle East and North Africa, gender and higher education in Palestine; and gender and law in the Tunisian context.



To summarize, in 2023, the ACSS witnessed a significant increase in the number of its publications and it is expected that 2024 will also see another remarkable increase in both publication and dissemination to reach a wider audience. This is part of the ACSS communications strategy whose design and implementation involves the secretariat, BoT, subcommittees, focal points and partners and aims among other things to shine a light on the ACSS outputs and their use among researchers particularly as they are free and open access resources.

In a related context, the ACSS social media platforms continue to grow in terms of followers and daily posting pace. We also increased the capacity of our Mailchimp account, which is our mailing list resource, to be able to reach more people.

Our efforts have been reciprocated by our audience's visible expression of their 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 and is in turn helping strengthen the position of the ACSS as a reference and resource for the social scientists in the Arab region.

V. FINAL REMARKS AND THE WAY FORWARD

Despite the lingering financial problems that have cast their shadows on the ACSS, the institution has maintained its programs and consolidated itself as an institution in 2023. The ACSS 2030 strategy is now charting the road ahead by thoughtfully delineating programs that will continue to be provided with gap years for reflection and evaluation, and others that will be offered over the years as new funding sources become available (Table 2). Moreover, a quick look at the ACSS programs (Table 1 of the strategy) not only shows the large number, diversity and richness of the programs offered, but also how programs reinforce each other and serve more than one goal in advancing the ACSS Main Pillars of work, for example the Research Grants Program serves both "Research" and "Networking" and the ASSM advances "Research Infrastructures" and "Institutional Support".

As indicated above, the strategy is meant to be a dynamic and living document that will be reviewed periodically by the BoT and secretariat. While the first two years are cautious to reflect financial uncertainties, the following years will witness programmatic expansion and substantive growth and diversification. It is also important to mention in this context that the presence of two entities of the ACSS in Jordan and the USA have largely resolved the financial risks arising out of the continued banking crisis in Lebanon, and facilitated transactions and transfers to different countries.

The generous core grant from the OSF received in 2023 will undoubtedly help the ACSS address some of its severe funding gaps in personnel and some programs. of the year 2024 will see a rigorous fundraising campaign by the ACSS to diversify its donor base by approaching both new and old-time donors. In this context, Alnawa financial consultants, have put the ACSS on the right path towards calculating the ACSS true overhead and recovery of true costs. They have also encouraged the negotiation of a Capital Reserve Fund for the ACSS, especially with long term donors. As it approaches new donors, the ACSS also needs to plan for increased overheads and indirect costs to cover its premises, banking, legal fees and staff costs in multiple locations.

The next two to three years will also witness the launch of an endowment drive - to be led by the Director General - harnessing the efforts of the "Friends of the ACSS" group which will be formed shortly and comprises prominent individuals, public and business figures - as well as the Partners and Donors Forum. In particular, the latter would help the ACSS to find areas of intersection between its mission and the interests of donors working on this region. The ACSS will also consider establishing services that can recover costs by providing institutions with training and consultation services in areas such as grants and data management as well as research ethics. Finally, the ACSS is in conversation now with the Ford Foundation regional office in Cairo under the new leadership of Saba Mubaslat, in order to discuss potential core and/or project funding for the ACSS. Ford has supported the ACSS for a long time both through the BUILD grant and project funding.

The ACSS has made remarkable progress in 2023 on the front of South-South, global and regional collaborations and networking and the ACSS is increasingly recognized as the go-to organization in the region for collaboration and joint work. In 2023, the Director General represented the ACSS in several platforms and events organized by sister organizations like CODESRIA. Reciprocally, executive staff of South-based organizations (CODESRIA and CLACSO) were invited to participate in ACSS events (e.g. the Sixth Conference) and new ideas for programmatic collaborations are burgeoning. On the regional front, the ACSS is sought as a regional resource for training in areas such as research ethics and a thought leader in subjects like academic freedoms and public policy. This noteworthy and growing recognition has encouraged the ACSS to play a more active role as a network of networks, bringing similar regional organizations together to think about their present and future in the region. It is also bringing together donors supporting the region to reflect on the changing landscape and new challenges and opportunities. Finally, on the regional level, the ACSS is mobilizing a number of Arab universities to reflect on potential areas of collaborative activities to enhance higher education and social sciences in the region. The latter has been particularly buttressed by the large body of work the ACSS has helped produce – through the ASSM – on developments in higher education and social sciences in the Arab region. On the global level, the ACSS continues to contribute to the InterAsia discussions among global networks and universities. At the same time, organizations such as the Paris-based International Science Council (ISC) are reaching out to the ACSS to enhance the visibility of the Arab region in the global social science scene. Reciprocally, the ACSS has invited ISC representatives to its Sixth Conference and the Donor Forum. Activities and programs have been included in the ACSS 2030 strategy to reinforce all the above collaborative endeavors over the coming years.

Finally, the ACSS has made good progress in 2023 on the reorganization of its HR procedures, having come up with a system to regulate staff remuneration in ways that are commensurate with their progression and growth in the organization. Moreover, an agile work arrangement has been put in place whereby some staff members have taken up new roles that simultaneously fill in existing gaps and offer new opportunities for their own professional growth.

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