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# The Presence of Social Science in Arab Civil Society Organizations

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Background Paper

# **The Presence of Social Science in Arab Civil Society Organizations**

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# 1

## Abstract

This paper explores the forms of presence of social science in Arab civil society organizations. It tries to assess the links between social science and Arab CSOs through a focus on three main areas: (1) the presence of social science within the CSO; (2) the relationship between the CSOs and social science academic institutions; and (3) the impact of CSOs on public debates and dialogue. The study relies on qualitative research methods in order to systematically analyze the presence of social science in five Arab civil society organizations. The focus was on NGOs from four Arab countries (Lebanon, Palestine, Egypt, and KSA) and one regional NGO. The findings point to a clear presence of social science in the topics and fields of work of most civil society organizations. It is also clear that civil society organizations form a considerable part of the job market for social science graduates and act as a recruiter for many

social scientists (as employees or consultants). However, there still seems to be a broken link between civil society organizations and academic social science. This is measured in the lack of strong ties between NGOs and universities in the Arab region; and the lack of cooperation between social scientists (university faculty members) and CSOs in research and knowledge production. In addition, there seems to be a heavy reliance on personal networks in creating bridges between the public sphere and the academic sphere. The findings also point to the fact that the engagement of public (versus private) universities in the Arab world with civil society organizations remains very limited. Therefore, in order to bridge the gap between the “academic bubble” in social sciences and the public sphere, more effort has to be made on both sides in order to create stronger ties and to bring about change and development.

# 2

## Introduction

*"If the standpoint of economics is the market and its expansion, and the standpoint of political science is the state and the guarantee of political stability, then the standpoint of sociology is civil society and the defense of the social. In times of market tyranny and state despotism, sociology - and in particular its public face - defends the interests of humanity." – Michael Burawoy, 2005*

This paper is part of the Arab Social Science Monitor (ASSM) effort to assess the presence of social science research in the Arab public sphere at the national and regional levels. More specifically, this study focuses on the forms of presence of social science within civil society in the Arab region. Although there exists a wide literature on civil society in the Arab world, very little is known about the relationship between social sciences and the Arab civil society. A limited, yet growing, literature on the state and role of social sciences in the Arab region has recently started to surface<sup>(1)</sup>. Discussions on the role of civil society in guiding the transition in Arab societies after the 2011 uprisings are gaining center stage<sup>(2)</sup>. However, these two bodies of literature only exist in parallel; the relationship between them has not yet been thoroughly explored.

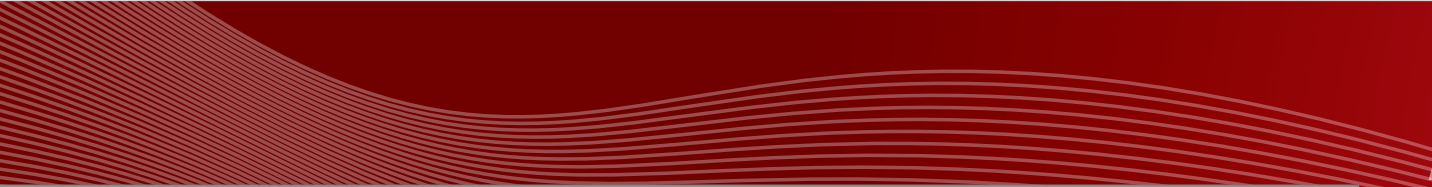
What are the forms of presence of social science in Arab civil society organizations? Are there links between civil society organizations and social science institutions in the Arab region? How does social science research impact the work of civil society regarding social development, public dialogue and policy debates at the national or regional levels?

Following the definition that has been adopted by the World Bank in 2010, civil society "refers to a wide array of non-governmental and not-to-profit organizations that have a presence in public life, expressing the interests and values of their members or others, based on ethical, cultural, political, scientific, religious or philanthropic considerations"<sup>(3)</sup>. For reasons of time and space, this paper will focus on civil society organizations (CSOs), and more

(1) Hanafi & Arvanitis (2014); Zahlan (2012); El-Amine (2014)

(2) Behr & Siitonen (2013); Cavatorta (2009); Halaseh (2013)

(3) The World Bank. 2010. Defining Civil Society. Available at: <http://go.worldbank.org/4CE7W046IKO>



precisely on non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Similarly, this paper will consider social sciences to include the following fields: anthropology, economics, history, political sciences, psychology and sociology. It also includes cross-disciplinary fields that have social science elements such as gender studies and development studies. Moreover, given the importance of advocacy and policy change in the work of civil society organizations, I will consider law (specifically socio-

legal studies) to be a field of social science.

In what follows, I will start with a brief review of the literature looking at the role of social science in civil society; followed by a section on the research design and the methods used. I will then move to my data analysis section where I will present a detailed case study of each of the six selected civil society organizations. Finally, I will conclude my paper with a discussion of the main findings and recommendations.

# 3.

## Literature Review

There is a limited literature looking at the relationship between social sciences in general and civil society. As explained above, there exist two separate bodies of literature: one dealing with civil society, and another looking at the role of social science in society. In what follows, I will quickly review these independent bodies of literature by providing (1) an overview of civil society in the Arab world and (2) a discussion on social science and the “public”.

### 3.1 Civil Society in the Arab World: An Overview

The study of civil society is not new. It has been a central topic of discussion for hundreds of years amongst philosophers, political theorists and social scientists. Discussions of the concept of “civil society” have been central in the works of many thinkers such as Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Tocqueville, Gellner and Gramsci. Multiple definitions have been put forward in an attempt to delineate

the boundaries between the state, the market and civil society. However, the concept of civil society remains highly contested today. In the Arab region, a distinction is often made between two notions of civil society<sup>(4)</sup>: (1) al mujtama al madani, referring to a modernist understanding of collective activism usually promoting human rights, development and democracy; and (2) al mujtama al ahli, including a more primordial understanding of social organizations usually taking the form of religion-based groups, family or tribe-based associations, and charitable organizations<sup>(5)</sup>. For the purpose of this study, I will focus on al mujtama al madani and its organizations (NGOs).

Civil society in the Arab world cannot be studied without an understanding of the diversity of the contexts under which it operates. There has clearly been an uneven development of civil society organizations in the Arab world. While countries like Lebanon, Palestine or Egypt have a

(4) Amman Issue Brief. 2012. “Arab Civil Societies after the Uprisings: Challenges during Political Transitions.” The Center on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding (CCDP). August. Available at : <http://www.gcsp.ch/Regional-Development/Publications/GCSP-Publications/Books-and-Edited-Volumes/Amman-Issue-Brief-Arab-Civil-Societies-after-the-Uprisings-Challenges-during-Political-Transitions>

(5) Karajah, Sa'ed. 2007. “Civil Society in the Arab World: The Missing Concept.” *The International Journal of Not-For-Profit Law*, Vol.9, No.2.

long history of civil society activism, other countries like Syria or Saudi Arabia have a very limited presence of civil society organizations. Such variations within the Arab region can be linked to the political environment enabling or disabling the development and flourishing of civil society organizations. It is therefore clear that that under authoritarian regimes, civil society organizations can only exist if they are either created or coopted by the state. Halaseh (2013, p.259) explains that "traditionally, civil society organizations in the Arab world have been commonly viewed as "governmental-non-governmental registered organizations– (G-NGOs)" having a controversial relationship with the regimes, partly as a survival mechanism, and mostly due to regime restrictions imposed on them". In such cases, the regime takes all measures needed to control civil society organizations and render their activism completely apolitical. This is the case for example in Saudi Arabia where the legal and political environment is still a major obstacle for NGOs. Most civil society organizations in Saudi Arabia are controlled by the state in a way or another, and focus on apolitical social or charitable work<sup>(6)</sup>. The picture is quite different in countries where

the state is weaker<sup>(7)</sup> or the regime is relatively more open to the presence of civil society organizations. In Lebanon for example, civil society organizations have flourished since the mid-19th century<sup>(8)</sup> and have been very actively engaged at the political, social and economic levels. Between those two extremes fall countries like Algeria where civil society associations are closely monitored and operate under a state of emergency since 1992<sup>(9)</sup>. Another type of context that shapes the work of civil society organizations is: occupation. Civil society organizations in Palestine are highly active and play an important role in various social and economic spheres in the Palestinian society<sup>(10)</sup>. Given the Israeli occupation, civil society organizations in Palestine are highly politicized since most of their work and activism is shaped by the context of occupation. Finally, the study of civil society in the Arab region does not only have to take into consideration cross-country variations and the diversity of local political contexts; but it also has to account for the major transitions that the region has been undergoing since the start of the Arab revolts in December 2010. For example, although the state of emergency has ended in Egypt after

(6) "Civil Society and Human Rights in Saudi Arabia: Status and Future Prospects." 2008. EU-GCC Civil Society Conference, Brussels, The Hague, 11-17 October.

(7)- Berman, Sheri. 2003. "Islamism, Revolution and Civil Society." *Perspectives on Politics*. 1:257-272.

(8) Karam (2006); Bennett (1996)

(9) Cavatorta, Francesco. 2009. "The civility and un-civility of the relations between secular and religious NGOs in Algeria." Paper prepared for the BRISMES Workshop "Liberation, Domination, Expression: Micro-Political Processes" at the University of St. Andrews, 8-9 February.

(10) Gerster, Karin, and Helga Baumgarten. 2011. "Palestinian NGOs and their cultural, economic and political impact in Palestinian society." Rosa Luxemburg Foundation in Palestine.

the January 25 ,2011 revolution; a crack down on civil society organizations has occurred since December 2011 with the arrival of the Muslim Brotherhood to power, followed by the military coup of Abdel Fattah El-Sissi. Despite Egypt's long history of vibrant civil society organizations, civil society activism has been considerably hampered by the strong grip of the state security apparatus under Mubarak<sup>(II)</sup>, as well as under Morsi and El-Sissi.

Therefore, it seems to be more reasonable to talk of Arab "civil societies", given the considerable differences in the political realities under which they operate. Although there exists a wealth of studies on the role of the civil society and its relationship with the state; very little has been written about the relationship between knowledge production and civil society. More precisely, it is assumed that civil society organizations are important actors for change in societies; however, little is known on how the directions of change are determined. Is the advocacy of civil society based on evidence? Is there a relationship between research in social science and the work of civil society organizations?

### 3.2 Social Science and the "Public"

Very few studies have tackled the issue of the relationship between social science and the "public". In his 2004 Presidential Address at the American Sociological Association, Michael Burawoy calls for a "Public Sociology", one that bridges between the academic field and civil society. Burawoy (2005) explains that sociologists tend to have a lot of discussions amongst themselves, but very few dialogue with the wider public. It is based on this idea that Burawoy (2005) develops his concept of public sociology calling for more cooperation and stronger ties between sociologists and "the public", embodied in civil society. He argues for the destruction of the barriers that separate the academic world from the public and encourages sociologists to become actively engaged with their societies.

Burawoy's approach is interesting since most studies that look at the relationship between civil society and social research usually focus on CSOs' agency. In other words, studies usually focus on the extent to which research is used by civil society in order to affect policy. For example, Pollard and Court (2005) discuss how around 100 civil society organizations have used evidence-

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(II) Rishmawi, Mervat, and Tim Morris. 2007. "Overview of Civil Society in the Arab World." Praxis Paper No. 20, INTRACT. Available at: <http://www.intrac.org/data/files/resources/421/Praxis-Paper-20-Overview-of-Civil-Society-in-the-Arab-World.pdf>

based research in order to influence policy. They argue that CSOs can have a tremendous impact on policy since it acts as the only bridge between “researchers” and “policymakers”<sup>(12)</sup>. However, this is only possible if CSOs are receptive to the knowledge that is being produced by academics and researchers. Therefore, civil society is responsible for bridging the gap between knowledge production and actual policy change in society.

Applied in the Arab world, this schism has also been reproduced. There exists a wide literature that examines the agency of Arab CSOs by looking at the role of donors in shaping the agendas of CSOs, the role of CSOs in times of revolutionary transitions and the impact of CSOs on policy change. However, there is only a limited, yet growing, literature that studies the matter from a different angle, and thus focuses on the role of scientific research or academic institutions (such as the university) in engaging with the public and shaping the work of civil society. For instance, Hanafi & Arvanitis (2014) argue that there is a broken link between research, universities and society in the Arab world. They explain the detached role of universities in the Arab world, since most university professors are not

engaged in serious research and are hampered by heavy teaching loads. Hanafi & Arvanitis (2014) explain that in order to fix this broken link, universities have to encourage their faculty members to engage more in research and to create bridges with civil societies (including private companies interested in innovation and research). In a similar spirit, El-Amine (2014) explores the civic responsibility of universities in the Arab region. He explains that there are only 11 universities<sup>(13)</sup> in the Arab world that have joined the Talloires Network: an international association of institutions committed to strengthening the civic roles and social responsibilities of higher education. Most of these universities are private institutions and follow American or French systems of education. Following his thorough review of the literature, El-Amine (2014) concludes that the civic responsibilities of higher education institutions in the Arab world remain very limited and underdeveloped.

Based on the above-presented review of the existing literature, this paper will attempt to bridge between both bodies of literature. It will focus on the forms of presence of social science in civil society organizations in the Arab world.

(12) Court, Julius, Ingie Hovland, and John Young. 2005. *Bridging Research and Policy in Development: Evidence and the Change Process*. Rugby, Warwickshire: ITDG Publishing.

(13) The American University of Cairo (Egypt), the American University of Beirut (Lebanon), the Lebanese American University (Lebanon), Notre Dame of Louaize University (Lebanon), Saint Joseph University (Lebanon), Effat University (KSA), Al Ahfad University (Sudan), Al Quds University (Palestine), Birzeit University (Palestine), Dubai School of Government (UAE), and the American University of Kuwait (Kuwait).

# 4

## Research Design

The research was designed in order to answer the questions related to the role of social sciences in the work of civil society in the Arab region. The research was conducted between October 15, 2014 and November 25, 2014. This short period included the conceptualization, the research design, the data gathering, the data analysis and the writing of the report. Given the very limited time that was available for this study, I decided to conduct in-depth interviews with representatives from civil society organizations. I have also done a rapid content analysis of their websites and the material/publications that they have provided me with. The sample included five civil society organizations that were chosen using snowball or referral sampling techniques. The sample included four national NGOs and one regional NGO as follows:

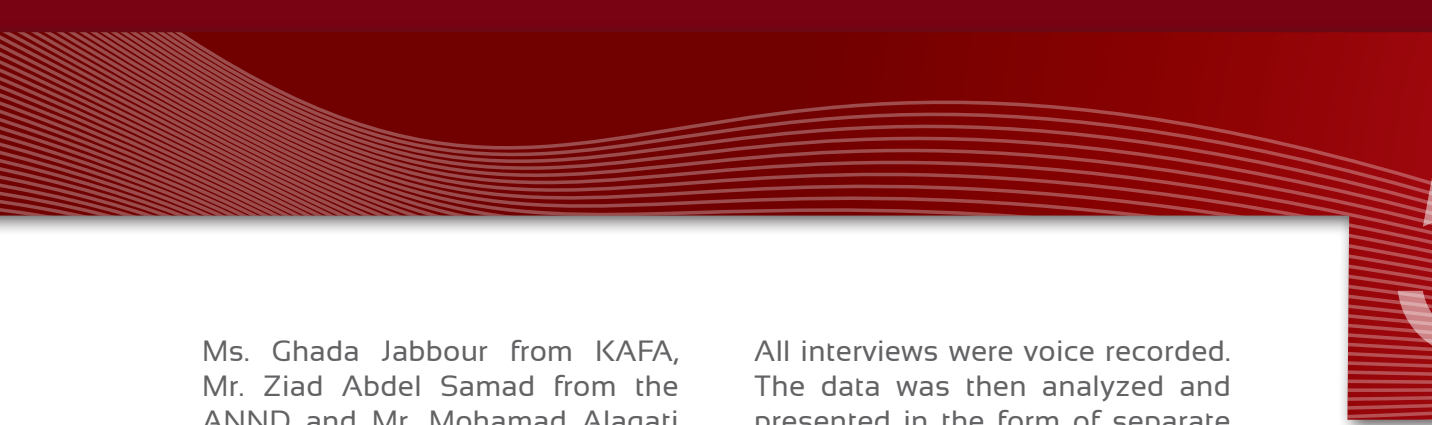
1. AlQaws for Gender and Sexual Diversity from Palestine
  2. KAFA: Enough Violence and Exploitation from Lebanon
  3. The Arab Forum for Alternatives (AFA) from Egypt
  4. Al-Nahda NGO from Saudi Arabia
  5. The Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND): regional
- This sample was chosen because for its diversity: an LGBT Group

(AlQaws for Gender and Sexual Diversity in Palestine); a feminist group (KAFA: enough violence and exploitation in Lebanon); a charity organization (Al-Nahda in Saudi Arabia); a political think tank (The Arab Forum for Alternatives in Egypt) and a development-oriented regional NGO (The Arab NGO Network for Development).

All the organizations were first contacted by email asking if they would agree to participate in the research. Once the NGO has agreed to participate, the information sheet (see Appendix 1) and the questionnaire guide (see Appendix 2) were sent via email and an interview was requested. The research questions focused on three main aspects of the relationship between social science and civil society:

1. the presence of social science within the civil society organization;
2. the relationship between the CSO and social science institutions; and
3. the impact of CSOs on public debates and policy dialogues

I have managed to conduct interviews with five civil society organizations (face-to-face or via Skype). It was only in the case of Saudi Arabia that an interview was difficult to schedule. The face-to-face interviews were all conducted in Beirut and included:



Ms. Ghada Jabbour from KAFA, Mr. Ziad Abdel Samad from the ANND and Mr. Mohamad Alagati from Egypt (he happened to be in Beirut for a conference). I have also conducted a Skype interview with Mr. Ghaith Hilal from AIQaws in Palestine.

The data (in the form of answers to the questions) was either returned in writing by email or obtained through the interviews.

All interviews were voice recorded. The data was then analyzed and presented in the form of separate case-studies. The questionnaire examined three aspects of the relation between social science and civil society: 1) the presence of social science within the CSO; (2) the relationship between the CSOs and social science academic institutions; and (3) the impact of CSOs on public debates and dialogue.

# 5.

## The Case Studies

### 5.1 Palestine: AIQaws for Gender and Sexual Diversity in Palestinian Society

#### About AIQaws for Gender and Sexual Diversity:

AIQaws for Sexual and Gender Diversity in Palestinian Society is a group of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) Palestinian activists working on transforming the perspectives on gender and sexual diversity within the Palestinian society; and struggling for broader social justice. AIQaws was founded in 2001 as an autonomous project within the Jerusalem Open House for Pride and Tolerance (JOH)<sup>(14)</sup>; and obtained the status of non-profit organization in September 2006. Defying boundaries imposed by the Israeli occupation through systematic separation of Palestinian communities, AIQaws works in various locations across Palestine including Yaffa, Jerusalem, Ramallah and Haifa.

With more than a decade of grassroots experience, AIQaws connects with the Palestinian reality and context. Although its focus is on gender and sexual diversity, AIQaws'

activism is at once political, social and economic since it adopts a holistic approach in understanding oppression as an interconnection between occupation, patriarchy and capitalism.

AIQaws provides Palestinian LGBTQ activists and allies with a space for knowledge sharing, capacity development and dialogue-based activism. Community-building is an essential part of AIQaws strategy; and it usually takes the shape of outreach programs, local leadership groups, and hosting intellectual and cultural events that provide a rare space for creative energies in the domain of sexual and gender diversity. Other community building activities include: monthly queer party, youth capacity building groups, and local and national activists meetings. In addition to that, AIQaws is actively engaged in efforts for social and cultural change within the Palestinian society. This is done through awareness sessions, capacity-building workshops and academic summer camps training the civil society on issues of gender and sexual diversity. AIQaws has also introduced multi-media and music<sup>(15)</sup>

(14) See more: <http://joh.org.il/index.php/english>

(15) For more information, visit: [www.ghanni.net](http://www.ghanni.net)

as a way to engage youth and students on issues of gender and sexual diversity, identity, political engagement and society. Finally, AIQaws provides direct counselling (through a hotline)<sup>(16)</sup> and friendly support to individuals with diverse sexual and gender identities.

### **AIQaws and Social Sciences:**

#### **A. Social Sciences within AIQaws**

AIQaws is exceptional in its engagement with social sciences as a civil society organization in the Arab region. It understands well the intricate links between its work on the ground, and theories that stem from social sciences. As a grassroots organization, AIQaws relies heavily on theorizing from the field: from its own experiences and the experiences of the people it has worked with. However, AIQaws also goes back to relevant theories from queer studies, gender studies, anthropology, and psychology; and it cross examines it with the work it does in a sort of “ongoing praxis between the field and academia”, as explained by Ghaith Hilal<sup>(17)</sup>. Therefore, AIQaws’ work and strategies keep changing according to the needs identified on the grounds; and depending on how it believes it can achieve its goals in the best way within the Palestinian culture and experience. In order to be able to achieve its goals

and sustain its activism, AIQaws relies on a network of activists and supporters. As explained by Ghaith Hilal, all of the NGO’s personnel hold master’s degrees in social science fields ranging from social work to media, psychology or gender studies. Most of AIQaws work is carried out by three employees: two of them have an MA in Social Work and one has a BA in Social Work and an MA in Management. AIQaws does not often rely on consultants; it usually heavily depends on its network of activists and its personnel since a deep understanding of the complexity of the situation in Palestine is needed. However, AIQaws sometimes relies on consultants who are friends of the organization; and who are well versed in the organization’s work and in the Palestinian context. For example, in 2014, AIQaws hired consultants who are Palestinian in the diaspora in order to help in the Academic Sexuality School<sup>(18)</sup> program. Nevertheless, AIQaws sometimes needs to rely on consultants from outside its circles in order to undertake certain types of research. In such cases, it collaborates with experts or social scientists that are not part of AIQaws tight network but who have extensive experience working within the Palestinian context. For instance, AIQaws has consulted

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(16) For more information, visit: [www.alkhat.org](http://www.alkhat.org)

(17) Ghaith Hilal is a queer Palestinian activist from the West Bank who has been part of AI-Qaws leadership since 2007.

(18) For more information, visit: <http://www.alqaws.org/news/Sexual-Politics-in-the-Colonial-Context-of-Palestine-December-18-20-2014>

with social scientists to conduct a study about the views of Palestinian civil society organizations on sexual and bodily rights<sup>(19)</sup>.

Therefore, AIQaws only hires consultants in specific cases and it does not work with international or foreign consultants since it considers that they might lack the knowledge needed to understand the complex Palestinian local context.

In addition to having all of its staff and consultants trained in social sciences, AIQaws also heavily relies on theories and knowledge produced in social sciences in order to shape its work. For instance, Ghaith Hilal explained that they rely a lot on studies and theories in the fields of post-colonial studies (like for example Fanon and Freire) or queer and feminist studies (for example Judith Butler, Combahee River Statement, and Adrienne Richie). He also explained that AIQaws engages with the academic work that is published on queer activism in the south, and on people of colour queer activism in the west. In addition, AIQaws often organises book discussion and knowledge exchange sessions where classical works or new publications are discussed.

Moreover, AIQaws has produced a wealth of knowledge about gender and sexual diversity in Palestine; either in the form of

toolkits, short articles and reports; or in the form of research papers. Therefore, social science is heavily present in the work of AIQaws. Not only is the NGO working in fields and topics that are at the heart of social science (i.e. gender and sexuality); it is also one of the rare NGOs in the region that engages with academic knowledge production and theories in shaping its activism. AIQaws also relies on a team of activists who are all trained in social science fields at the postgraduate level.

## **B. Relationship with Social Sciences outside AIQaws**

AIQaws also has a strong relation with social sciences outside the boundaries of the organization. Although the NGO does not have subscriptions in academic journals, it has access to most studies through its network of members and friends. Similarly, AIQaws members invest in buying academic books in fields of relevance to the organization.

In addition, AIQaws is not only at the receiving end of knowledge production, but it has also contributed with publications in many social science platforms such as GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies, Verso, and a few other books and journals. For instance, a recent article co-written by Haneen Maikey and Lynn Darwich ("The Road from Antipinkwashing Activism to the Decolonization of Palestine") was published in WSQ: Solidarity<sup>(20)</sup>.

(19) The study can be accessed through the following link

<http://www.alqaws.org/مقالات/مواقف-مؤسسات-المجتمع-المدني-الفلسطينية-من-الحقوق-الجنسية-والجسدية>

(20) More information here: <http://www.feministpress.org/books/wsqa-solidarity>

In addition, Haneen Maikey and Heike Schotten have published an article in Jadaliyya entitled "Queers Resisting Zionism"<sup>(21)</sup>. Also, Haneen Maikey wrote a chapter in Audrea Lim's edited volume: *The Case for Sanctions Against Israel*<sup>(22)</sup>.

AIQaws' presence in the social science academic spheres is also clear since many academics and faculty members, such as Dr. Jasbir Puar<sup>(23)</sup>, Dr. Maya Mikdashi<sup>(24)</sup>, and Dr. Jason Ritchie<sup>(25)</sup>, have collaborate with AIQaws and used the work of the organization in their publications. Similarly, AIQaws' work has also been used by postgraduate students in their thesis, dissertation or published work.

Although AIQaws seems to have a strong link with academia and academics, its relationship with academic institutions in Palestine is still somehow weak. AIQaws has never built a partnership with a university or a research center in Palestine, although it works closely with certain faculty members who are within the networks of the NGO. Haneen Maikey, director of AIQaws, explained this by saying: "We have a varying level of connections with academics both

abroad and in Palestine, none of them are with academic institutions per se. I wouldn't say that our link with academics abroad is better than here, and when in touch with academics abroad they are mostly Arab or Palestinians (examples include Rabab Abd Elhadi, Dana Alwan, Nadine Niber, Ziena Zaatari and more). The Academic School that we are organizing at Qaws is an example of that, where we have a group of mostly local academics and Palestinian academic working aboard. Also the program of our Academic School is based on local Palestinian young academics from various local academic institutions."

In addition, AIQaws is also often invited to give talks at different universities around the world. For example, in 2014, Haneen Maikey (Director of AIQaws) toured the UK to give talks on several university campuses during the Israeli Apartheid Week.

Finally, the weak ties between AIQaws and academic institutions or research bodies are also translated in funding. AIQaws explained that it has never received any fund from social science councils or institutions. It similarly has never

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(21) Read article here: [http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/7738/queers-resisting-zionism\\_on-authority-and-accounta](http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/7738/queers-resisting-zionism_on-authority-and-accounta)

(22) More information here: <http://www.versobooks.com/books/956-the-case-for-sanctions-against-israel>

(23) Dr. Jasbir Puar is Associate Professor of Women's & Gender Studies at Rutgers University.

(24) Dr. Maya Mikdashi is currently a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow at Rutgers University. She is also a Co-Founder/Editor of Jadaliyya Ezine.

(25) Dr. Jason Ritchie is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the Florida International University.

worked on a co-funded project. In fact, AIQaws funding comes mostly from international foundations. Maikey explained: "We don't take money from Israeli/American governments as a principle. Our current partners including: Global Fund for Women, Norwegian Representative Office in Palestine, Heinrich Boll – Palestine and Jordan Office, Open Society Foundations – Regional Office in Amman, Astraea-Lesbian Foundation for Justice, and finally Arcus Foundation".

Therefore, AIQaws is an exceptional Arab NGO in terms of its relationship to social sciences. It has managed to build solid bridges with academia through its engagement with the literature and its publications in academic platforms and academic journals. It has also been successful in engaging with a certain circle of academics from around the world who work on issues of gender and sexuality. However, AIQaws still seems to struggle in building strong partnerships with academic institutions and research bodies within Palestine.

### **C. Impact at the Local/National levels**

Contrary to most civil society organizations in the Arab region, AIQaws is not interested in policy change since such form of activism does not make sense in a political context of occupation. As explained by Ghaith Hilal, AIQaws doesn't believe that working on policy change (whether with the Israeli

government in the 1948 land, or the PA in the West Bank) is relevant for their work at the moment. AIQaws perceives the Israeli government as its occupier, and thus is not interested in policy change within the occupation. Similarly, it does not believe that advocacy and policy work with the Palestinian Authority could lead to any real change, since many groups, such as women's rights groups, have tried and failed. Therefore, AIQaws believes that affecting the society from below is a far more relevant and effective approach than the traditional top down method that is concerned with changing policy. For that end, AIQaws has indirectly affected the public debate on sexuality and gender within the Palestinian society through the use of graffiti, multimedia, music and writings. AIQaws has also impacted international debates through its activism and the material and theories that it shaped from its experience on the ground. One of the most successful campaigns that AIQaws has led over the last few years has been its effective political activism against the Israeli government's PR campaign commonly known as "pinkwashing". Israel's strategy was to present itself as a liberal, progressive state that is a "gay-haven" in the midst of oppressive and homophobic Palestinian and Arab societies. Such efforts aim at distracting the Western attention from the illegal occupation and the apartheid policies that Israel is applying against Palestinians;

and tries to “polish” Israel’s image. However, members of AIQaws have been especially active in drawing attention to the brutal human rights violations committed by the Israeli state against Palestinians, which “pinkwashing” seeks to veil. It has also managed to steer activism in different parts of the world in order to challenge the Israeli mainstream discourse.

More recently, AIQaws has witnessed a move from pinkwashing to proactive and strategized pinkWATCHING efforts. These efforts have included the launching of the new website (Pinkwatching Israel) that aims “to bring together vibrant queer activists from around the world to imagine, visualize, create and launch campaigns, initiatives, events, and actions for BDS and against pinkwashing.”<sup>(26)</sup> This campaign has been very successful since several LGBT groups from around the world have announced their support of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel (BDS) campaign, and their support to anti-Pinkwashing activists in Palestine. There was also a large number of articles and publications about anti-Pinkwashing activism that appeared in newspapers, blogs, journals and E-zines. Examples include Sara Schulman’s op-ed in the New York Time, Maya’s Mikdashi’s article in Jadaliyya and Jasbir Puar’s article published in The Feminist Wire.

### Conclusion:

In conclusion, it is clear that there is a solid relationship between AIQaws’ work and social sciences. This is seen in the topics that this NGO is concerned with, the fields of expertise of its personnel and the theoretical backgrounds that shape its vision. AIQaws does not only benefit from the academic literature in social sciences, but it has also made huge contributions to the understanding of gender and sexual diversity in the context of occupation. The intersectional nature of AIQaws’ analysis, together with the lived experience of most of its members, made of its publications important breakthroughs in the studies of LGBT and queer political activism against occupation.

AIQaws has not only maintained bridges with academia through its publications in academic platforms and journals; but it has also managed to create strong ties with social scientists who work in the field of gender studies. This has enhanced the exposure of AIQaws, especially in the West. However, although the work of AIQaws is often cited in western academic publications, and the NGO representatives are frequently invited to give talks in European and American universities; the ties with the Palestinian academic community and with Palestinian universities seems to be weak. No collaboration or partnership with

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(26) The study can be accessed through the following link: <http://www.kafa.org.lb/studies-publications/26/2/the-effects-of-socialization-on-gender-discriminat>

a university in Palestine has been forged. This could be traced back to the personal ties and networks of the individuals who are active members within AIQaws.

Finally, AIQaws activism is not focused on policy change in the context of the Israeli occupation. AIQaws is more interested in shifting the perceptions on gender and sexual diversity from below through arts, music and awareness trainings and campaigns. AIQaws has been extremely successful in opening public debates about sexuality and the Israeli occupation through its anti-pinkwashing campaign that has quickly gained international acclaim. This campaign has also engaged social scientists from all over the world who have reflected on the relationship between pink-washing and colonization.

## **5.2 Lebanon: KAFA (Enough) Violence and Exploitation About KAFA (Enough) Violence and Exploitation:**

Established in 2005, KAFA (enough) Violence and Exploitation is a Lebanese feminist civil society organization that works to eliminate all forms of violence against women in Lebanon. It has adopted a secular approach in dealing with women-related issues and fighting the Lebanese patriarchal system. KAFA's activism and advocacy focus on three main areas: (1) domestic violence against women; (2) women's exploitation and trafficking with a

focus on migrant domestic workers and women in prostitution; and (3) child protection, particularly from sexual and gender-based violence.

KAFA has used several approaches in order to push for gender equality in Lebanon and to fight exploitation and violence against women and children. It has mainly worked in advocacy for legal and policy reforms. KAFA has also launched numerous campaigns in order to influence public opinion and alter attitudes vis-à-vis violence against women. In addition, KAFA has been very active on the research front by conducting valuable evidence-based studies and providing trainings and workshops. Finally, another pillar of KAFA's work is the direct services that it offers to women and children victims of violence in the form of social, legal, and psychological support. KAFA has established a Listening and Counseling Center that is composed of professional social workers, lawyers and psychotherapists who are available to provide women and children victims of abuse with advice and support. It has also established a confidential helpline that victims can call in order to receive private and professional social, legal and psychological support.

### **KAFA and Social Sciences:**

#### **A. Social Sciences within KAFA**

Broadly defined, social sciences are at the core of the vision and mission of KAFA. As a feminist organization, KAFA bases its work on a theoretical

perspective that believes in gender equality and promotes the rights of women in society. Although KAFA's vision does not delve into the theoretical debates between the different feminist schools and approaches; it clearly adopts the broad feminist concepts that have previously been put forward by leading social scientists and activists. Such a theoretical starting point plays a central role in shaping the agenda of KAFA and in developing its campaigns.

The bulk of KAFA's work can be described as being centered on the fields of sociology, psychology and law. Although law is not strictly defined as a social science, KAFA's legal services and advocacy are closely related to social topics such as exploitation, gender inequality and oppression; thus, it mostly focuses on the socio-legal aspect of most cases it deals with.

KAFA has twenty-two employees, most of whom hold degrees in social sciences (mainly social work; in addition to psychology, sociology, and anthropology) or law. Most of KAFA's employees have graduated from the Saint Joseph University (USJ) or the Lebanese University. The organization also has recourse to consultants when the need arises. KAFA has a list of experts and consultants that they contact when help is needed in legal matters or in research and knowledge production. These consultants are

mainly Lebanese (or foreigners who live in Lebanon) and they are usually selected on the basis of their expertise. KAFA does not hire international consultants because of budget constraints. Consultants who have been involved in writing research papers are mainly social scientists and legal advisors, but there is also an important amount of work that has involved consultants from the fields of public health and medicine. This bridge between the medical aspect and the social aspect is important to note. For example, Dr. Jinan Usta, a family doctor at the American University of Beirut, has been involved in research on socialization and gender discrimination in the city of Baalbeck in Lebanon<sup>(27)</sup>, together with freelance social researcher Dr. Christine Hamieh. Similarly, Dr. Jinan Usta and Dr. Ziyad Mahfoud (both AUB medical faculty) have conducted a study on child sexual abuse in Lebanon<sup>(28)</sup>. The fact that KAFA has recourse to consultants from a wide array of fields and uses a multi-dimensional approach to the issue of gender-based exploitation is based on a holistic approach to the understanding of the problem of gender inequality and patriarchy in Lebanon. From this perspective, KAFA has worked on a number of social science-related topics such as divorce, prostitution, violence against women, exploitation of domestic workers, socialization and gender discrimination, child sexual abuse, femicide, etc.

Therefore, KAFA has managed to

(27) The study can be accessed through the following link: <http://www.kafa.org.lb/studies-publications/26/2/the-effects-of-socialization-on-gender-discriminat>

(28) The study can be accessed through the following link: <http://www.kafa.org.lb/studies-publications/13/2/child-sexual-abuse-the-situation-in-lebanon>

produce a wealth of evidence-based research in areas that are of relevance to its work. These publications are essentially used in order to raise awareness about the sensitive topics of discrimination and violence against women and children; and more importantly, they are used for policy recommendations. KAFA employees or consultants carry out most of these studies; and they usually follow social science research guidelines and methodologies. Although their studies are not officially peer-reviewed, KAFA tries to get feedback from its network of friends and experts before publishing any study on its website. Most of the studies rely on both quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis. For example, in September 2014, KAFA published an important study on prostitution in Lebanon entitled *Exploring the Demand for Prostitution: What Male Buyers Say about Their Motives, Practices, and Perceptions*<sup>(29)</sup>. The study has used qualitative methods (semi-structured interviews) that are broadly used in social sciences. Another important information about KAFA's publications is that most of their work is published in both Arabic and English. The use of the Arabic language is essential for their advocacy within the Lebanese society and in their communication with the Lebanese state; however, as an advocacy organization KAFA finds it important to also publish in English in order to get international exposure and thus

better pressure the government. KAFA also explained that it is crucial to publish in English (as well as Arabic) because it becomes easier for foreigners (donors, researchers and students) to know more about the topics that KAFA is working on.

Therefore, social sciences are present in KAFA's work as disciplines, topics/fields of focus, recruitment processes and published research (methodology).

### **B. Relationship with Social Sciences outside KAFA**

Although KAFA seems to have a strong internal component of social sciences, its relationship with social science knowledge production or academic/research institutions is still limited.

KAFA has some links with academics in social sciences in different universities in Lebanon; however, it still is not common practice to engage them in the work of the organization or to rely on them for research and knowledge production. Although many social scientists are involved in research with KAFA, only a few of them are faculty members in universities or full-time academics. Most of them are social practitioners, free-lancers or experts on specific social issues. Ghada Jabbour, the co-founder of KAFA and head of the unit on exploitation and trafficking in women, relates this to the distance that exists between the civil society and academics. She explains that

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(29) <http://www.kafa.org.lb/studies-publications/43/2/exploring-the-demand-for-prostitution-what-male-bu>

university academics are usually skeptical of the work of civil society organizations and often deal with CSOs in a dismissive way. Academics usually send their students to work with KAFA and consult it for their research, but they rarely approach the NGO themselves. Jabbour said that this gap between the academic “bubble” and the civil society does not encourage KAFA to approach university faculty members in social sciences when they want to carry out a study. They find it easier to rely on their network of experts and to design their study from their perspective, which is more targeted at policy recommendations. Having said that, KAFA has expressed an interest in expanding its connections with social science researchers. They explained that as an NGO, their role and interest is not to produce research but rather to use evidence-based studies as a backbone to their advocacy. KAFA has already taken a few steps to create bridges with academic institutions. For example, KAFA is now conducting an ILO-funded nationwide survey on domestic workers in Lebanon in partnership with the Public Health Department at AUB. KAFA explained that they had approached AUB for this partnership since they needed their knowledge and expertise in conducting such large-scale surveys. However, they haven’t contacted a social science department essentially because they do not have pre-existing networks with any of the faculty members in those departments. Therefore, it seems

that there is a broken link between social scientists and civil society in Lebanon.

This lack of relations between academics and civil society is also reflected in the lack of cooperation between universities and civil society organizations. Instead of relying and building on each other’s work, social science departments in academic institutions and civil society organizations in Lebanon are at a distance from each other. The few bridges that exist between these two spheres rely almost solely on individual networks and not institutional decisions to make the link between academia and civil society.

In other words, it is only when individuals know each other on a personal/social level that cooperation is created. Such cooperation usually takes the form of being invited to give a talk at a university or participate in a conference. KAFA has been invited on several occasions to give talks about their work at universities such as the Lebanese American University (LAU), Notre Dame University, the University of Saint Joseph (USJ), the Lebanese University or the Issam Fares Institute at the American University of Beirut (AUB). However, it has rarely had research cooperations with social science departments or faculties. This gap between academia and civil society can be explained by two factors: 1) most academic institutions and social scientists work in a bubble that is separated from the public

and are not engaged in civil society activism; 2) on the other hand, civil society organizations rarely make the effort to connect with universities and academics and directly seek their support. For example, KAFA does not apply to social science academic conferences in order to present its work to the academic community; and it does not contact social science faculties within universities when wanting to start a research. This could also be hindered by the limited time that faculty members have and to the limited funds that civil society organizations have for research. In addition, KAFA does not have subscriptions to academic journals and does not follow up on knowledge production in the field of gender studies for instance. However, it regularly receives newsletters such as Al-Raida (published by the Gender Studies Department at the Lebanese American University) and the Legal Agenda, but they do not rely on these publications to shape or guide their work.

Although KAFA does not rely heavily on knowledge production in social sciences, it seems that students of social sciences often have recourse to the organization. KAFA explained that they receive numerous students and help them with their research and data collection. KAFA also often serves as the link between the researcher (students mainly) and the target sample of the study (usually women in prostitution, domestic workers or women who suffer from domestic violence).

Finally, KAFA has never received funding from a social science research center or university department in order to carry out a research or to implement a project. It has also never entered in official partnerships with research bodies or social science faculties in universities. This suggests a broken link between institutions of knowledge production and organizations that can implement and push for policy change.

Most of the partnerships that KAFA has forged throughout the years are mainly with multilateral organizations such as UN agencies or other civil society organizations such as GEFONT (General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions) and Anti-Slavery International. According to Jabbour, in 2013 KAFA has received funds from the following donors: Anti-Slavery International, Appropriate Communication Techniques for Development, Danish Refugee Council, DROSOS Foundation, European Commission, International Human Rights, International Medical Corps, International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific, KVINFO, Kvinna Till Kvinna, Norwegian People's Aid, Open Society Foundations, Oxfam-GB, Royal Norwegian Embassy, Save the Children International, Solidaridad International, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, UN Population Fund Agency, UN Women, World Health Organization, and UNICEF.

### C. Impact at the Local/National Levels

The work of KAFA has had tremendous impact on shaping public dialogue and bringing about legal change at the national level in Lebanon. For example, KAFA's campaign and mobilization for the introduction of a law to protect women from domestic violence has opened the debate between secular feminists and conservatives (especially religious authorities)<sup>(30)</sup>. The success in following up on cases of domestic violence and the exposure that KAFA received through the different media outlets made of domestic violence a public debate in Lebanon since the year 2007, when KAFA first introduced the draft law. KAFA has also worked with professional advertising experts in order to shape their campaigns and reach a wider audience. This has contributed to the success of their advocacy at the national level and has helped in mobilizing people to the streets. For instance, on International Women's Day of 2014 (March 8th), KAFA organized a march to ask for an end to domestic violence in Lebanon and to pressure the parliament to vote on a law that criminalizes it. It managed to mobilize around 3,000 citizens, a relatively large number for a non-partisan civil society organization in Lebanon. A few weeks later, on April 1, 2014 KAFA gathered hundreds of activists outside the house of parliament in downtown Beirut while the MPs were voting on the domestic violence law. Although

the parliament voted in favor of a law to criminalize domestic violence, KAFA still considered that the newly introduced law came short of many important amendments that the organization had requested. One of the main issues that was not included in the law was the criminalization of marital rape. This was mainly due to the lobbying of religious authorities, such as Dar El Fatwa, who had fiercely opposed the introduction of such a law. Therefore, the introduction of this new law in April 2014 formed a first, though "incomplete", success for KAFA's campaign.

This case gives a good example of how a civil society organization can open a public debate and shape the activism around it at a national level. The debate between KAFA and religious leaders has been covered by many media outlets and television talk shows, and engaged thousands of citizens and activists. This helped in raising awareness around domestic violence and in informing the public about the existing legislation and the civil society campaign to ameliorate the situation.

Therefore, this case shows that civil society organizations in Lebanon can have the agency and the power to lobby and pressure the parliament to introduce new laws or amend existing ones.

### Conclusion:

The social, psychological and legal aspects of fighting gender-based

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(30) <http://www.english.legal-agenda.com/article.php?lang=en&id=571>

inequality and oppression in Lebanon are central to the work of KAFA. Given the nature of its activism and the topics that KAFA is engaged with, social sciences can only be considered to be at the heart of its work. The concept and vision of KAFA are rooted in social science theories, its personnel consist mainly of social scientists, and its work includes social sciences research production and publication.

However, there seems to be a gap between academic knowledge production in social sciences and KAFA. This gap is mainly measured at the institutional level in the absence of research collaborations or financial partnership between the NGO and universities or research centers. In addition, there seems to be a gap between the knowledge produced by academics and civil society. KAFA does not have access to academic journals that publish research that could be relevant to the organization's work. It also does not directly engage with university faculty members from social science departments. However, the main link between KAFA and social sciences faculties and departments is through students who have recourse to the organization for their research projects. This missing link between civil society in Lebanon and academic faculties in social sciences is one of the main findings of this study. There needs to be stronger links between academic researchers in Lebanon and civil society organizations.

This would enrich the work of both academics and activists; and they would both rely on each other in order to push for better quality of knowledge production (through guided evidence-based research) and to lobby for better conditions for women in Lebanon (through the advocacy and campaigns of civil society organizations like KAFA). Finally, KAFA's work has had a considerable impact at the national level in opening policy dialogues and public debates around the topic of domestic violence. KAFA's most recent success was in lobbying the Lebanese parliament to pass a law criminalizing domestic violence in April 2014. Although this law was considered a big achievement for women in Lebanon, KAFA's fight continues in order to introduce amendments to the law that reinforce the protection of women from all sorts of violence (including marital rape).

### **5.3 Egypt: The Arab Forum for Alternatives**

#### **About the Arab Forum for Alternatives (AFA):**

The Arab Forum for Alternatives (AFA) is a non-governmental organization (think tank) that aims to promote a culture of research within the civil society in Egypt specifically, and in Arab region more generally. The organization was established in 2007 in order to bridge the widening gap between research and civil society activism. It works to address issues of political, social and economic development in a scientific

manner, away from propaganda and political incitement. The Arab Forum for Alternatives provides a space for researchers, experts and activists to exchange ideas and propose alternative policies based on scientific grounds. The AFA seeks to put forward its vision of democracy, justice and human rights in a scientific, yet practical, way in order to contribute to the development of the Egyptian society. Therefore, as a civil society organization, the AFA works on developing policy alternatives through evidence-based research. Its work focuses on producing analytical studies and policy recommendation papers based on which civil society organizations can build their activism. The AFA also invests a considerable amount of time on building networks and exchanging experiences at the national, regional and global level. For instance, the AFA is a member of several civil society or research networks such as the Observer at the EUROMESCO Network<sup>(31)</sup> or the "Joussour Masherek & Maghereb"<sup>(32)</sup>

### **AFA and Social Sciences:**

#### **A. Social Sciences within AFA**

The AFA is one of the rare civil society organizations in the Arab region that considers the link between social science research and civil society to be at the core of its vision. In fact, the organization was created in order to bridge the gap between the work of civil society organizations and that of social science researchers in Egypt.

Therefore, social science is present at all levels within the AFA.

The topics that the organization deals with are all within the boundaries of social science, with an emphasis on political science. The AFA is currently working on three main topics in Egypt: (1) democratic transition, (2) social movements and civil society, and (3) public policies.

Similarly, most of the organization's personnel are researchers and social scientists. The AFA has a total of thirteen employees: three administrative staffs and ten researchers holding either an MA or a PhD in social science. All of the AFA's researchers have a BA in economics or political science from the University of Cairo, but pursued their graduate degrees abroad (for example at the Aix-En-Provence University, Paris 1 University, Florence University). In addition, the AFA hires consultants who provide research papers and policy recommendations depending on their fields of expertise. Most of the consultants are Arab social scientists, university professors and researchers. The AFA rarely has recourse to international consultants; however this happens when comparative studies are needed. Throughout the years, the AFA has built a roster of experts and has widened its network with academics in order to bridge the

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(31) For more information, see: <http://www.euromesco.net>

(32) For more information, see: <http://www.e-joussour.net>

gap between scientific research and civil society activism.

The AFA has published numerous studies on topics related to (1) civil rights and democratic reform, (2) development, economic and social rights, (3) civil society and social movement, (4) international relations and globalization, and (5) culture and media. Most of these publications are policy-oriented research and aim at providing concrete analyses and possible alternatives. For example, since the fall of the Mubarak regime in 2011, the AFA has been highly engaged in the discussions about the electoral law in Egypt. In 2013, the AFA published a study by Amr El Shobaki entitled "Toward A New Parliamentary Elections Law"<sup>(33)</sup>. Such studies are used as a reference for civil society organizations to push for reform. On the other hand, the AFA has also published several non-policy oriented studies. For example in April 2013, the AFA has published a study entitled "The Left and the Arab Revolutions". This publication was a collection of conference papers presented by several academics and activists from the Arab region. Mr. Mohamad Al-Agati, the executive director of the AFA, explained that all of the AFA studies usually undergo several rounds of discussion and reviews before they get published. Some

studies are reviewed internally by the AFA's board; while others are peer-reviewed by a community of social scientists that the AFA refers to as experts in the fields of the papers. Similarly, the AFA is also often asked to act as a reviewer for papers that have been submitted to other institutions for publication. Moreover, all of the AFA studies are initially published in Arabic in order to make it available to the civil society in Egypt and the Arab world at large. Some of the publications are then translated into English if the translation costs are covered by the project or if the AFA sees the publication as important for foreign followers. In addition, the AFA also translates some articles into English for marketing strategies and in order to reach a wider audience and potential donors.

Al-Agati also explained that the AFA's work relies heavily on articles and books published by social scientists. He said that following up on new publications is part of the internal work of the AFA in order to stay updated with the knowledge produced in political science and other social scientific fields. For instance, the AFA reviews newly published books and articles in the field of political science in order to apply and localize the concepts to the Egyptian context<sup>(34)</sup>.

(33) For more information, see: [http://afaegypt.org/English/index.php?option=com\\_k2&view=item&id=51:towards-a-new-electoral-code-for-the-parliamentary-system&Itemid=141#.VHYRWFa6\\_lo](http://afaegypt.org/English/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=51:towards-a-new-electoral-code-for-the-parliamentary-system&Itemid=141#.VHYRWFa6_lo)

(34) For example, see:

[http://afaegypt.org/index.php?option=com\\_k2&view=item&id=440:إعارة-إنتاج-الديمقراطية#.VHYnLFa6\\_lo](http://afaegypt.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=440:إعارة-إنتاج-الديمقراطية#.VHYnLFa6_lo)

In addition, although the AFA relies on certain theoretical frameworks in their studies; most of their research is usually evidence-based and action-oriented. According to Al-Agati, the aim of these studies is to develop alternative policies and push for change in Egypt and the Arab world. Therefore, the AFA's strategies are not solely based on knowledge production in social science, but are also heavily shaped by events and realities on the ground.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that although the AFA is clearly very engaged in social science research, the organization does not have subscriptions to academic journals and has not invested in any social science analysis software (such as SPSS, STATA, NVIVO, etc.). Al-Agati, explained that access to most publications that are not freely available is usually done through the organization's network of friends and experts. Similarly, a quick review of the publications on the AFA's website indicates that quantitative research methods are not widely used in the organization's publications. This could explain why the AFA has not invested in statistical packages and software.

### **B. Relationship with Social Sciences outside AFA**

Whereas social science is heavily present within the work of the Arab Forum for Alternatives; it is worth exploring the relationship of the

organization with social science institutions. Al-Agati explained that the AFA has forged many relationships with universities and research centers in Egypt and beyond. However, no official partnership or memorandum of understanding has ever been signed between the organization and an academic institution. Most of the collaboration is ad-hoc and short-termed. For instance, most collaboration in Egypt is with the Cairo University; however this is still limited to small projects and consultancies from the university professors. Al-Agati explained that "as is the case everywhere else in the Arab region, most of these collaborations are purely based on personal networks and on who you know within the university or research center; it is not a matter of institutional collaboration".

The AFA has also collaborated on several occasions with universities outside Egypt. Examples include the Mohamad V University in Morocco, the Issam Fares Institute at AUB in Lebanon and Al Nahrain University in Iraq. Al-Agati explained that the AFA is in continuous contact with universities; and that they often attend conferences and present papers in order to discuss their work with the academic community. For example, in November 2014, the AFA participated and presented a paper at a conference on citizenship and the Arab uprisings organized by the Balamand University in Lebanon<sup>(35)</sup>.

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(35) For more information, see: <http://www.balamand.edu.lb/Academics/Faculties/FASS/NewsEvents/Pages/ImpactArabUprisingsCitizenship.aspx>

Aside from its collaboration with academic institutions, the AFA has also managed to engage in its work a wide range of prominent social scientists and researchers from the Arab region. For example, Prof. Fawwaz Traboulsi, Prof. Gilbert Achcar, Dr. Amr Hamzawi and others have participated in conferences organized by the AFA and have contributed with research papers that the organization has published on its website.

Beyond the publications on its website, the AFA has also focused on publishing short articles and op-eds in Egyptian and Arab newspapers such as Al-Shoruk or Assafir in order to reach a wider audience outside academia<sup>(36)</sup>. Similarly, the AFA's newsletters is regularly available in bookshops around Egypt; and some of its publications have been adopted by publishing houses (like Dar El Rawafed), and are thus available in most Egyptian and Arab book fairs. Moreover, many researchers within the AFA have also published their studies in academic journals as individual researchers.

Therefore, the AFA's work has become one of the main references for most researchers working on the civil society in Egypt. The AFA has a wealth of knowledge and information that students in social sciences or researchers often consult for their academic studies.

Finally, Al-Agati explained that the AFA has never received a fund from a university; however most of its funding is project-based and it usually comes from think tanks, research centers and other civil society organizations that are either Arab-based or international. For example, the AFA has previously received funds from the Center for Arab Unity Studies<sup>(37)</sup> with whom they have published two studies.

Therefore, the AFA has managed to build ties with social science research centers and universities. However, these ties have not been translated in terms of institutional collaborations or partnerships. As with other case studies, it seems that most collaborations are based on individual networks and connections. Moreover, the AFA has managed to engage the academic community in its work and to become a major reference for most social science researchers interested in civil society in Egypt. Finally the AFA relies on research centers and think tanks for its funding; however it has never received a grant from a university; which suggests a broken link with universities at the institutional level.

### C. Impact at the Local/National Levels

The importance and value of the AFA's work can be measured by the impact it had at the national level in terms of advocacy and policy dialogue. Mr. Mohamed Al-

(36) The following blog includes a list of all newspaper articles published by Mohamad Al-Agati: <https://elagati.wordpress.com/category/مقالات-بالصحف/>

(37) For more information, see: <http://www.caus.org.lb/Home/index.php?Lang=en>

Agati explained that several of the studies conducted by the AFA have been adopted by other civil society organizations in Egypt as the ground for their policy advocacy. For example, in December 2012 the AFA published a study on women and citizenship in the new constitution of Egypt<sup>(38)</sup>. This research was later picked up by other civil society organizations that used it in their advocacy and formulated alternative draft laws that were presented to the constitutional committee.

Another example of how the work of the AFA has impacted policy dialogue and public debates in Egypt is the paper that was published on the union freedom of association<sup>(39)</sup>. This paper was used by activists and unionists in their struggle for policy change in Egypt. The then Minister of Manpower and Immigration, Kamal Abu Eita<sup>(40)</sup>, had also attended some sessions organized by AFA.

The Arab Forum for Alternatives is an exceptional civil society organization in the Arab region since its main mission is to bridge the gap between social scientists (researchers), policy makers and civil society. This vision is based on the fact that these three spheres in Egypt operate independently from each other, although their work is very much interdependent. Therefore, social science is an important component within the work of the

Al-Agati explained that after the January 25th revolution in Egypt, there was a considerable space for the work of the AFA to impact policy discussions and public debates. During the first few months of 2011, the AFA was highly engaged in policy recommendations and strategic planning with decision-makers and

(39) For more information, see: [http://afaegypt.org/index.php?option=com\\_k2&view=item&id=163:علاقات-التقانة-الافتراضية-الاقتصادية-والحريات-الانتاج&Itemid=281%3FVHYtWVa6\\_lo](http://afaegypt.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=163:علاقات-التقانة-الافتراضية-الاقتصادية-والحريات-الانتاج&Itemid=281%3FVHYtWVa6_lo)

(40) Kamal Abu Eita was the President of the Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions (EFITU) until he resigned in 2012 to become Minister of Manpower and Immigration.

organization. The topics that the AFA deals with are mainly focused on the field of political science and most of the personnel of the organization consists of researchers who hold graduate degrees in social science. The AFA is also engaged in knowledge production in social science through the production of evidence-based and policy oriented research. In addition, the AFA makes sure to remain updated on the latest academic publications in the West, and it often reviews new publications and tries to adapt new ideas/concepts to the Egyptian context. However, it is worth mentioning that despite the great effort that the AFA is putting in promoting knowledge-based activism in Egypt, the organization still does not have any subscription to academic journals, and it also does not have any social analysis software available for its researchers. The organization seems to heavily rely on its network of experts and researchers in order to access new publications and carry out empirical research. Besides the heavy presence of social science in the mission and vision of the AFA, the organization has also been able to build relations with social science institutions. The AFA has strong ties with individual academics and professors at universities; which has facilitated several collaborations with institutions such as the University of Cairo. However, the AFA has not created official partnerships with universities at the institutional level. This poses several questions

regarding the role of the university in the Egyptian and Arab society and the existing gap between the university and civil society in general. Moreover, the AFA relies mainly on funding from research bodies and other non-governmental organizations in order to finance its projects. The AFA has never received a fund from a university, however it has repeatedly been funded by research centers in the Arab world. Finally, the AFA had a great impact on policy dialogue and public debate within the Egyptian society during the post-revolution period. However, this impact has considerably declined with the arrival of the Muslim Brotherhood to power, and the situation has also worsened after the military coup of 2013.

#### **5.4 KSA: Al-Nahda** **About Al-Nahda**

Al-Nahda is a charitable women's organization established in Riyadh in 1962 under the patronage of the late Queen Effat Al-Thunayan, the wife of H.M. the late King Faisal Al-Saud. The organization is committed to women's social and economic development in accordance with Islamic law and guided by the goal of sustainable development. It is dedicated to empowering women socially and economically through a yearly reviewed selection of projects and programs in the fields of financial and social support, training for employment and self-development, and employment

services that are both capacity building, consultative as well as job placement. Since its establishment, Al-Nahda has implemented several development projects in line with the kingdom's official development plans. These projects have covered several fields and have targeted a myriad of groups within the Saudi society. Al-Nahda's projects ranged from social welfare to family health, special needs, early childhood and cultural artifact preservation. However, one of Al-Nahda's strongest fields of work remains the promotion of women employment in Saudi Arabia and the engagement of women as active partners in the development of the Saudi Arabian society. These strategic goals of the organization are based on long years of experience working within the Saudi Arabian society and on actual studies highlighting the needs in order to achieve sustainable development for women.

### **Al-Nahda and Social Science**

#### **A. Social Sciences within Al-Nahda**

As with most civil society organizations, social sciences occupy a central place within the work of Al-Nahda. The topics and fields that the organization engages with are strongly centered on social science fields of sociology, psychology, economics and development studies. In addition, most of the organization's core team has a university formation in social sciences. For example, the CEO

holds an MA in regional studies and a history degree, the Chief Projects Officer has an M.A. in psychology, the head of the social and financial support projects has a B.A in social work, and many members of the team hold master degrees in social service. According to Rasha Alturki, CEO of Al-Nahda, all of the organization's social workers and project heads received their social science training from Saudi universities; however, the executives have received their social science training from universities in the United States. Therefore, most of Al-Nahda's projects and proposals are guided by social science knowledge, theories and methods. For instance, Sheikha Al-Sudairy, the Chief Projects Officer at Al-Nahda, explained that the organization has made use of the Mazlo theory of needs in describing the relationship between its many projects. The organization has also adopted a holistic approach to the understanding of social development and its implementation in Saudi Arabia. It heavily relies on social science research published through the Stanford Social Innovation Review (SSIR) in order to shape its work and decide on the approach to adopt and the issues to focus on. Rasha Alturki explained that the organization heavily relies on the SSIR because "it is easily accessible, widely used in the field and a respected source of cutting edge research". Similarly, Al-Nahda has also engaged in evidence-based

research and data collection. This is still done on a small scale, and it mainly takes the form of needs assessments for certain projects, or periodical reviews of the results and efficacy of certain projects. For instance, Al-Nahda launched in 2011 a new program to reduce poverty and empower women (“Mustaqbali” or “My Future is in My Hands”) following a research it has conducted among women aged between 18 and 40 years old who had benefited from Al-Nahda’s financial support projects<sup>(41)</sup>.

Finally, despite its long history in social and developmental work within the Saudi Arabian society, Al-Nahda at this time does not hire consultants or refer to social scientists in the planning and shaping of its projects and goals although it has in the past for many of its projects over its 52 year history. Sheikha Al-Sudairy, explained that the organization hopes to engage more social science consultants in their work in the future in order to provide better training for the NGO’s personnel, and to conduct larger scale research. At the time being, Al-Nahda only has limited recourse to professors from universities in Saudi Arabia as volunteers who are consulted on specific issues.

Therefore, social science is heavily present within Al-Nahda on many levels. First, the fields and topics that

the organization engages with are central to social science. Second, the personnel and the core team of the CSO are all trained in social science fields and hold degrees in social science. Third, Al-Nahda’s mission and vision are shaped by social science theories and approaches. Fourth, although the organization does not directly engage in large-scale research, it has conducted several small-scale studies in order to shape its projects. Finally, despite the fact that Al-Nahda does not currently directly hire consultants, it has recourse to university professors when the need arises.

## **B. Relationship with Social Sciences outside Al-Nahda**

Al-Nahda has stretched its links with social science beyond the boundaries of the organization. As explained above, the CSO relies on knowledge production in social science in order to set its priorities and develop its strategies and projects. For this end, Al-Nahda has a subscription to the Stanford Social Innovation Review. However, Al-Nahda seems to be on the receiving end of research. Sheikha Al-Sudairy explained that due to time constraints, Al-Nahda does not publish its work (or findings) in any platform other than the organization’s internal documents. Moreover, the organization has tried to connect with universities and their staff in order to build a bridge

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(41) For more details, see: <http://www.arabnews.com/node/390924>

between academia and social work. For example, Al-Nahda has forged partnerships with the Princess Noura University and the King Saud University in Riyadh. Although the partnerships dictate that the universities would provide their research results and loan Al-Nahda their professors to review issues when needed; these partnerships have proved not to be fully utilized since very little action has been taken by the universities so far, as explained by Al-Sudairy.

A more successful level of engagement between Al-Nahda and universities in Saudi Arabia is through the students of social science. Sheikha Al-Sudairy explained that universities often send their students to the organization in order to carry out their research assignments or to use the organization's data. Similarly, many university students in social science come to Al-Nahda to either get training in social development work or to do internships.

Finally, Al-Nahda reported never having received any funds from a social science council or research body. Most of Al-Nahda's fund comes from the Saudi government or the private sector (endowments, family funds, Zakat, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) departments within large companies). Therefore, although Al-Nahda seems to strongly rely on the government and the private sector in funding its work, there seems to be a somehow weak tie when it comes to counting on

the university and on academics in shaping its work. Al-Nahda seems to be providing for university students in social science way more than what it is getting from university professors in terms of research and technical support.

### C. Impact at the Local/National Levels

Al-Nahda is one of the rare civil society organizations in Saudi Arabia that are at the forefront in dealing with issues of social development and women integration in the job market at the sub-national serving the Riyadh area only. Al-Nahda's work is crucial in developing a public debate on many issues related to women's position in society since they provide a strong voice for such problems. The organization also thrives to find appropriate solutions while respecting the Saudi Arabian culture and the Islamic norms. For example, Al-Nahda's success in employing women in factories and in the industrial sector made a huge contribution to the change in attitudes towards women employment in such sectors. Al-Nahda has capitalized on this success in order to encourage the government in its efforts at employing a larger percentage of women in the retail sector recently and provided training to equip them to join the market.

In a similar fashion, Al-Nahda has also developed project focusing on the importance of preschool education and mother's parenting development. This program was adopted and adapted from the

Turkish organization ACEV<sup>(42)</sup>. Al-Nahda worked with over 350 disadvantaged mothers and children to better prepare children to face the requirements of first grade and to train mothers on the parenting skills required in order for them to support their children's development. Finally, Al-Nahda's work at the grassroots level allowed it to gain insight into how policies are being carried out and disseminated to the larger public. This has enabled the organization to better understand the dynamics at the societal level and to shape policy advice based on the real needs on the ground. Through its connection with policy decision-makers and through its participation in consultative councils<sup>(43)</sup>, Al-Nahda is one of the few CSOs in Saudi Arabia that is able to affect policy dialogues and interject with its observations and recommendations.

### Conclusion:

In conclusion, it is clear that social sciences occupy an important role in Al-Nahda's work. Social science theories and approaches are at the heart of the organization's mission and vision. Moreover, most of the personnel and core team of Al-Nahda hold degrees in social science ranging from history to sociology, psychology and development studies. However, despite the fact that the organization's work is shaped to a certain extent by

knowledge production in certain fields of social science; Al-Nahda does not clearly engage in research, with the exception of small-scale research for the shaping, monitoring and evaluation of its projects.

Besides the internal component of social science in Al-Nahda's work, the organization has also built some ties with universities and academics in Saudi Arabia. Al-Nahda acts as an important reference for students of social sciences who are often sent by their universities to carry out research about the organization, to use the organization's database or to interview the organization on social matters related to women in Saudi Arabia. Students also have recourse to Al-Nahda in order to get trainings and internships. In return, Al-Nahda has forged partnerships with two universities in Riyadh in order to benefit from the knowledge and expertise of their professors. However, these partnerships turned out not to be very successful since university faculty members have not taken enough measures to support the CSO in its work. Therefore, there seems to be an unequal relationship between the university and the civil society organizations: universities benefit from CSOs (especially in terms of training their students) much more than they invest in them (in terms of providing them with solid research and knowledge-based support). This could be explained

(42) For more information, see: <http://www.alnahda-ksa.org/Projects/Traning/TranningProjects2011/MOCEP.aspx>

(43) Al-Nahda does not participate in the Shura as an organization. However, two of its main figure heads (president and secretary general) are members of the Shura Council as well as others of our society's members.

by the heavy teaching load of university professors who end up having very little time to dedicate to research and engagement with civil society organizations. Finally, Al-Nahda is one of the few civil society organizations that has been able to advance its causes and affect the policy debates through the strong links it has built with the government and the private sector (companies and banks).

### **5.5 A Regional NGO: The Arab NGO Network for Development** **About the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND):**

The Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND) was established in 1997 and has its headquarters based in Beirut, Lebanon. ANND is a regional network, working in 12 Arab countries with nine national networks (with an extended membership of 250 Civil Society Organizations from different backgrounds) and 23 NGO members. ANND's members are based in the following countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Palestine, Sudan, Tunis, and Yemen. ANND aims at strengthening the role of civil society, enhancing the values of democracy, respect of human rights and sustainable development in the Arab region. ANND advocates for more sound and effective socio-economic reforms in the region, which integrate the concepts of sustainable

development, gender justice, and the rights-based approach. ANND aims at supporting local NGOs in the Arab region in order to influence the policy-making processes, on the national, regional and global levels. ANND also enhances the availability and production of indigenous resource material and research related to the role of CSOs in the Arab region. Such knowledge production is used to enlighten and strengthen the work of NGOs in the region.

ANND is a member of several regional and international civil society networks including: BetterAid Network, Our World is Not For Sale Organization, CIVICUS People's Alliance, Global Call to Action Against Poverty, EuroMed Non-Governmental Platform, Asia Pacific Research Network, and Social Watch.

### **ANND and Social Sciences**

#### **A. Social Sciences within ANND**

Social sciences play a key role in the work of ANND given the topics it deals with, the personnel it hires and the knowledge it produces.

As explained, ANND aims at enhancing and strengthening civil society advocacy on social and economic policy-making processes. This requires an active role for civil society actors not only in implementing public and social services and the monitoring and evaluation roles, but also in providing policy alternatives. Social sciences, including economics,

politics, international relations, law and development studies are very significant to the work of ANND in this regard, since it is the tool used to evaluate and assess the current policies, to highlight needs and necessities, and to develop new policy recommendations. This comes in addition to strengthening participation in decision-making and policy formulation. Therefore, social sciences are strongly present in the three areas of focus of ANND's programmes: (1) Development policies both at the national and regional levels; (2) Social and economic policies in the agendas and the role of international and regional organizations and ; (3) Economic and trade liberalization policies and its social and economic implications. In addition, on a horizontal level, ANND addresses issues of human rights, peace and security and climate change in the region at large. Similarly, ANND's work is somehow driven by a broad theoretical background. ANND follows a human rights-based approach in its work and calls for a rights-based development framework. Accordingly, ANND integrates in its analysis the binding human rights according to the international law; and uses human rights as a benchmark to assess policies and living conditions. For instance, in its trade and development related work, ANND sheds lights on negative impacts deriving from multilateral

and bilateral free trade agreements on the enjoyment of socio-economic rights of people (right to work, right to health, etc.)<sup>(44)</sup>.

Apart from the topics and fields that ANND engages with and the approaches it adopts, social sciences are also present in the recruitment processes of the organization. ANND has three main departments: an administrative, a financial and a programs department. Whereas the latter one does a lot of research work and analysis it thus consists of social sciences graduates, mostly with Master degree (from politics, economics, or law studies), the personnel are not experts-social scientists but rather practitioners of their academic knowledge in the civil society sector. Most of them have graduated from universities in Lebanon such as AUB, LAU, USJ or the Lebanese University. Other personnel throughout the region have graduated from universities in Egypt (such as AUC), Palestine (such as Birzeit University), Morocco (such as Casablanca University), Tunisia, Algeria and some have degrees from Turkish universities in some cases. Therefore, ANND is a recruiter of social scientists who are more interested in careers in development and « hands on » work than in academic and research careers. In addition to the staff of the organization, ANND also collaborates with social scientists as consultants,

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(44) <http://www.annd.org/english/eventId.php?eventId=%2054>

especially when working at the national level. These consultants are usually Arab nationals who are in general active civil society representatives with an academic background. Their work includes country/regional assessments and comparative analyses of social and economic policies in different fields (labour, social protection, health, tax, investments, etc.). ANND does not usually hire international (out of the Arab region) social scientists as consultants, yet it cooperates and collaborates with international/European partners/US based NGOs and their social scientist staffs. For instance, with regard to monitoring and advocacy for the EU, ANND's partnership with European NGO networks (such as Concorde, Solidar, Bank Watch, Bretton Woods Project, Eurodad, etc.,) allowed the sharing of experience and exchange of ideas among civil society representatives. Finally, knowledge production and the provision of civil society organizations throughout the Arab region with resource materials that can be used in support of their advocacy is one of the main objectives of ANND. For this end, ANND is engaged in producing evidence-based studies, assessments of policies and recommendation reports. Although these studies are not exactly social sciences research papers (do not always include bibliography, do not always have a methodology section, do not have a literature review section, etc.); they form an important source of knowledge for civil society

practitioners in the region. These reports are usually policy oriented and focus on the advocacy and recommendations aspect, more than the research and analysis. This is understandable in the context of civil society organizations; however, it suggests a certain distance between academic social sciences and civil society's work on the ground. ANND also participates in many global networks that produce researches and studies (examples include: Social Watch-issues annual monitoring report of poverty and gender, Civicus-issues reports and surveys on civil society status and assessment, Asia Pacific Research Network, ...) or issue journals (ex: Reality of Aid).

Finally, the ANND tries to prepare all publications in both Arabic and English; however, priority is given to Arabic since the aim of most publications is to be used as tools for advocacy by local actors and civil society organizations. In cases where the targets of the study are foreign institutions (such as the EU, the IMF and others), it is then published in English (in addition to the Arabic version). However, in all cases, an executive summary is always prepared in both Arabic and English.

#### **B. Relationship with Social Sciences outside ANND**

A closer examination of the relationship between ANND and social sciences suggests that the NGO has built some important

bridges with the social science academic world; however these bridges have only reached specific components of social sciences. For instance, ANND attends and actively participates in the public events organized by universities; and it is often invited to present its work at various platforms within universities. For example, ANND was hosted in several events by the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at the American University of Beirut (AUB)<sup>(45)</sup>. In addition, in 2013 ANND received the status of Associate from the Lebanese American University Headquarters and Academic Center in New York. This status has been given to ANND as an appreciation of its work in the field of social development and philanthropy, public service, civic engagement and advocacy. With this status, ANND and LAU joined their efforts to construct a bridge between knowledge production and civil society activism in the Arab region. ANND also collaborated with the American University in Washington DC, during its advocacy visit to the United States and organized multiple public debate sessions<sup>(46)</sup>.

ANND builds relations with the Middle East Center at the American University in Washington as well as the New America Foundation. Furthermore, ANND's link with universities expands beyond simply

attending and participating in events. ANND has established an internship program for university graduates in order to train social science students to become practitioners in the fields of development and civic engagement. In some cases, these internships are run in collaboration with university administrations, and it hosts graduates both from inside and outside the Arab region.

In addition, ANND participates at the LAU and AUB Civic and Volunteering Fair<sup>(47)</sup>, which aims at connecting civil society and non-governmental organizations with AUB centers and groups involved in civic and outreach work with students, faculty, staff and the public at large. This is also an example of an effort made by the university in order to enhance the relation between civil society organizations and its faculty and student body. Similarly, ANND also approaches university faculty members when expertise is needed in producing certain types of research. Therefore, although ANND usually relies on its associated team of social science practitioners; it sometimes collaborates with academic social scientists in order to produce research material that can be useful for civil society organizations. An example of such collaboration would be the publication of the report entitled "Development Reforms in Lebanon, Between Concepts of Sustainable Development and Challenges

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(45) <http://www.annd.org/english/advocacyId.php?eventId=44>

(46) <http://www.aub.edu.lb/Events/Pages/EventDetails.aspx?ItemId=658>

(47) <http://www.annd.org/english/data/publications/pdf/13.pdf>

of War and Rehabilitation: A Civil Society Perspective”<sup>(48)</sup>. This paper was co-drafted by the ANND team and Dr. Jad Chaaban, who was then an Assistant Professor at the Department of Economics at the American University of Beirut. Finally, ANND’s institutional relation with social sciences does not directly involve financial cooperation. Whereas ANND receives most of its funding from international organizations; it has never received a direct fund from a social science council, research body or university. Nevertheless, ANND and Issam Fares Institute co-funded several events, such as the Kennedy School roundtable to co-implement a joint research program about civic engagement in public policy making after the “Arab Spring”.

Looking now beyond the relationship between civil society and social science institutions; we focus on the relationship between ANND and social scientific knowledge production. Although ANND does not have any subscription to social science academic journals, and does not thoroughly follow the publications of the academic community at the regional or international level; its work still focuses on producing knowledge-based reports that can serve as a reference for CSOs in the Arab region. Similarly, ANND and its members have never attempted at publishing

their research in academic journals that focus on issues of development in the region. Ziad Abdel Samad, the director of ANND, explained that such is the case essentially because ANND is not driven by research per se; but rather responds to social needs and realities on the ground through the production of policy assessment and analysis reports and research. Therefore, ANND’s knowledge production is totally geared towards the civil society and crucially focuses on the assessment of current situations and policy recommendations for the future. In this respect, one of the aims of ANND’s program interventions is enhancing the availability and production of indigenous resource material and research related to the role of CSOs in the Arab region. ANND believes that indigenous research material that critically assesses the socio-economic situation in the Arab region, can contribute to further dialogue and exchange of ideas among various civil society representatives. It can also help build capacity of CSOs in policy analysis, policy formulation and advocacy. In this regard, ANND launched the CSR-DAR portal in 2012. This website serves as an open platform through which a variety of resources on development issues in the Arab region can be accessed and used by CSOs as information tools for advocacy. This website includes books, papers and articles,

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(48) <http://www.annd.org/english/data/publications/pdf/13.pdf>

guides and methods, and other relevant resources that are produced by ANND and its partners. It also contains some relevant documents that have been published by official or governmental sources in order to keep the CSOs updated on the latest developments. In addition to being a disseminator of valuable information, CSR-DAR is also a platform where civil society organizations active in the Arab region, or on issues pertaining to the region, can share their own news, events, and resources. It is important to note here that the CSR-DAR portal is temporarily unavailable due to technical problems with the host company.

Finally, ANND issues the Arab Watch Report every two years. This resource is in line with ANND work on the establishment of a “watch function” to monitor economic and social rights in the region with a focus on policies that lead to the violation of these rights. The report also serves as a scientific reference for civil society in their advocacy work and in their campaigns<sup>(49)</sup>.

Therefore, the ANND has managed to build some strong ties with academic institutions and social sciences departments at various universities. However, it seems that such ties are mainly focused on “elite” universities such as the American University of Beirut or

the Lebanese American University. This could suggest a missing link with national universities such as the Lebanese University. Moreover, although the ANND is directly involved in research and knowledge production, it seems to be detached from resources produced by academics and published in social science academic journals. This also suggests a broken link between CSOs and academic knowledge production in fields that are pertaining to their work.

### C. Impact at the Local/National Levels

The work of ANND has a considerable impact on advocacy, public debates and policy dialogue at the national and regional levels. Through its members in various Arab countries, ANND has been engaged in dialogue between civil society and states as well as intergovernmental (EU, League of Arab States) and international institutions (WB/IMF, EBRD/EIB,..) and organizations (UN agencies); and has been able to advocate for new perspectives in social and economic development programs.

For instance, ANND has recently been engaged in a two-year research project in collaboration with six national organizations<sup>(50)</sup>. This research argues that tax systems in the Arab world are based on taxation to improve state spending or reduce the deficit without having any

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(49) <http://www.annd.org/english/eventId.php?eventId=50>

(50) <http://www.annd.org/english/data/publications/pdf/35.pdf>

economic and social foundations for a productive developmental outlook. Accordingly, ANND's work included analyzing the tax systems in Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan and Morocco and involved case studies of tax systems in Tunisia and Egypt. The comparative study argues that taxation systems are the core of the social contract; and they represent a powerful tool to reduce inequalities and control socio-economic disparities by providing social services and economic opportunities through public spending. Accordingly, ANND has used all possible and available platforms (such as the EU, the UN agencies and civil society organizations) to raise concerns in line with the main findings of this research and formulated recommendations for further advocacy at the national level. Similarly, ANND has initiated several national dialogue meetings/ consultations among multi-stakeholders. For instance, with regard to the Universal Periodic Review mechanism of the Human Rights Council at the United Nations (Geneva), ANND launched a comprehensive dialogue among civil society organizations that led to a joint submission of the periodic review reports analyzing economic and social rights, and some sectoral rights like the refugees, women, youth, children, and people with disability. In addition, these reports led to a multi-stakeholder dialogue that enabled exchange of ideas/ creation of a common platform on

human rights and development related issues; the process includes civil society, media, academics, and representatives of the government. The exchange among the stakeholders contributed to an effective engagement in this human rights monitoring mechanism.

Finally, aside from the activities organized by ANND, the organization has actively participated in public debates organized by Lebanese universities or institutes thus indirectly contributing to public debates. For instance, throughout the years 2013 and 2014, ANND took part in the organization of seminars and forums with the ESCWA and the League of Arab States. These meetings focused on the post-uprising economies, alternatives and changing paradigm; and called for a new development paradigm. It also stressed on the defectiveness of the current global neoliberal system and focused on the need to develop proper social justice policies. Therefore, as explained by Ziad Abdel Samad, the ANND has not only impacted debates at the national and regional level, but it has also affected the discussion on the post-2015 development goals globally.

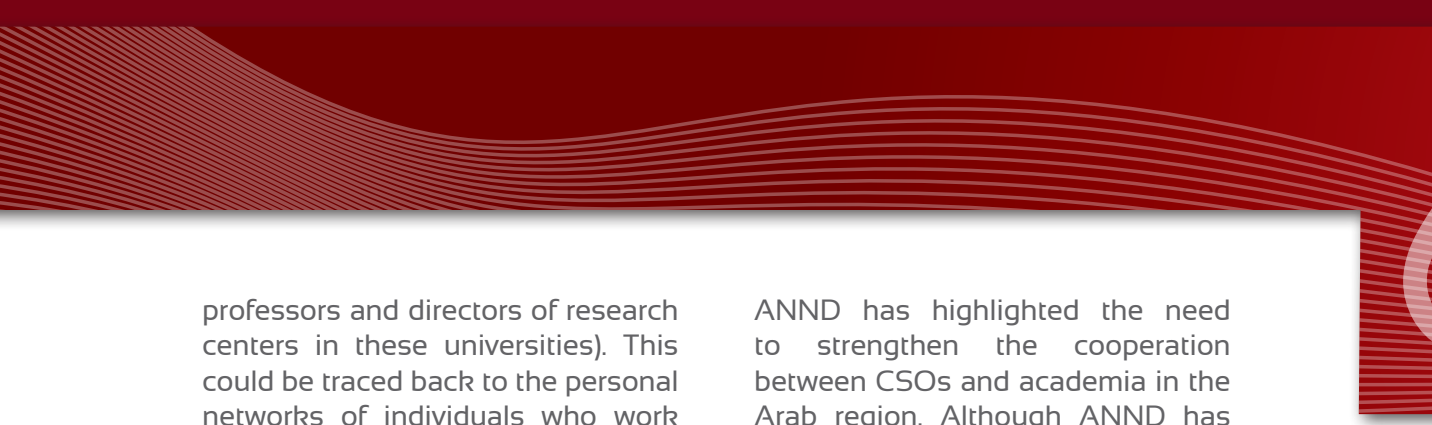
### **Conclusion:**

Based on the above analysis, it seems clear that social sciences form an intrinsic part of the work of the Arab NGO Network for Development. ANND's work is based on a human

rights-based approach, which forms the theoretical background of much of its activities and advocacy campaigns. Based on this, ANND engages directly with social sciences through the topics it deals with and its fields of interest. ANND mainly operates in the fields of socio-economic development, with a focus on political values such as peace and democracy. In order to fulfill its goals and operate in those fields, ANND recruits personnel who generally have a background in social sciences. Most of ANND's employees have a BA or MA in social science, which suggests that these are social science practitioners who are not interested in academic careers but rather prefer to be involved in social work through organizations (most of them they work at ANND a couple of year after the graduation before start working on the PhD). These employees, together with some civil society representatives from the Arab region, are usually the team that produces most of the studies carried out by ANND. Therefore, these publications aim to form resource materials for CSOs in the region to use in their advocacy work. Since they are focused on civil society needs, these publications come more in the form of reports and often miss out on some social science research parameters such as a literature review, a methodology section or even a bibliography. In brief, ANND produces and offers a wealth of knowledge related to social science; however, these studies

are essentially geared towards civil society and policy makers, not the academic community. Moreover, ANND does not seem to be engaged with academic publications in the fields that are relevant to its work. This suggests a certain distance between academic knowledge production and civil society's work on the ground. Therefore, social sciences are clearly at the core of ANND's mission and vision, although not exactly in its academic form when it comes to publications and knowledge production.

Notwithstanding, ANND has managed to build some strong ties with social science academic institutions, think tanks and social scientists in general. ANND has forged many partnerships with universities and has also developed internship programs for university students of social sciences. Moreover, ANND has had recourse to academics in certain fields of social sciences (such as Economics) for help and advise while drafting reports and formulating new visions. However, although this tie with academic institutions and social scientists seems to be strong, the ANND seems to have mainly forged such partnerships with American Universities (AUB and LAU) in Lebanon. As a regional NGO, the ANND does not seem to have strong ties with national universities across the region (some relations with Cairo University and AUC, Casablanca, Sanaa, Manama and Algiers through



professors and directors of research centers in these universities). This could be traced back to the personal networks of individuals who work within ANND.

Finally, ANND has done an excellent work in bridging the gap between national, regional and international organizations, and has been actively engaged in creating public debates and policy dialogues with many stakeholders in many Arab countries. However, there still seems to be a broken link between “academia” and civil society in general. Although ANND is one of the most engaged and involved NGOs in the region; there still seems to be a big gap with national universities and with academic knowledge production.

ANND has highlighted the need to strengthen the cooperation between CSOs and academia in the Arab region. Although ANND has long engaged in research-based advocacy, it considers that there still is a gap in this regard when it comes to the practice. ANND suggested that cooperation between CSOs and academic institutions should be established at all phases of the research (planning, designing, methodology, analysis, etc.) in order to make their work more effective. Therefore, like most national NGOs, ANND has expressed a deep interest in strengthening the ties with academic institutions and bridging the gap between academic knowledge production and civil society publications.

## Conclusion

This paper has attempted to explore the forms of presence of social science within civil society in the Arab world. For that end, I have focused on civil society organizations from four Arab countries (Lebanon, Palestine, Egypt and KSA); in addition to a regional NGO. The sample included an LGBT Group (AIQaws for Sexual and Gender Diversity in Palestinian Society); a feminist group (KAFA: enough violence and exploitation in Lebanon); a charity organization (Al-Nahda in Saudi Arabia); a political think tank (The Arab Forum for Alternatives in Egypt) and a development-oriented regional NGO (The Arab NGO Network for Development). The research method consisted of a thorough analysis of the CSOs activities and publications (through their websites); in addition to in-depth interviews with representatives of each organization. The analysis focused on three main aspects of the relationship between social science and civil society:

1. the presence of social science within the civil society organization;
2. the relationship between the CSO and social science institutions; and
3. the impact of CSOs on public debates and policy dialogues.

The findings point to a heavy presence of social science within the studied civil society organizations in the Arab region. Given the nature of the topics they engage with, the studied CSOs have a clear social science component. Even though, the sample included CSOs with very diverse backgrounds and interests; however they all proved to have social scientific concepts and approaches at the heart of their work.

Moreover, civil society organizations form a considerable part of the job market for social science graduates. Most of the employees in CSOs around the Arab world hold degrees in social science. Civil society organizations are a major career option for individuals who have BAs or MAs in social science. In other words, it is an important professional option for social scientists who do not want to become academics (and invest in a PhD).


However, although social science is heavily present within civil society organizations, there still seems to be a broken link with academic and institutional social science. In other words, civil society organizations are not always interested (or included) in academic

debates within social science. They also do not always have access to knowledge that is published in academic journals. However, some civil society organizations make the extra effort to follow up on latest publications in their fields of interest. Nevertheless, this does not seem to be very common within CSOs; and academics do not seem to be doing an effort to include the public (through CSOs) in their debates. In fact, this study has shown that although most CSOs produce their own evidence-based/policy-oriented research; there still exists a big gap between the “academic bubble” and the work of civil society organizations on the ground. In other words, although most civil society organizations have some links with universities; these relationships are very asymmetrical and unequal. The findings point to the fact that civil society organizations tend to give universities (social science divisions) much more than what they get from them. In fact, CSOs are the most common destination for students in social sciences if they want to conduct research, access data, or get training and internships. Although universities send/encourage their students to seek help from CSOs; they have not tried to develop this relationship further by building solid partnerships and engaging CSOs more in the academic debates with the university. Moreover, the findings suggest that most relationships between CSOs and universities happen through individual contacts

and personal networks between faculty members and civil society actors. In other words, these relationships are usually not institutional decisions to forge partnerships; but rather ad-hoc consultancies and collaborations on small projects that are limited in time and scope. Therefore, most of the relationships between civil society organizations and universities take the form of short research collaborations or one-time events (such as CSOs participation in a talk or conference at the university). In addition, these relationships are only possible if individual connections pre-exist. NGOs that do not have contacts within the academic circles find it very difficult to engage with social scientists and universities in general. Thus, this important finding suggests that the university (and its social science departments) operate in a parallel universe to civil society organizations. Therefore these two “bubbles” do not meet unless social networks and personal contacts exist between individuals who happen to be on one side or the other of the spectrum. Bridging this gap between academia and civil society in the Arab world will first require an acknowledgement that “science” and “society” are interdependent.

Finally, the importance of social science knowledge production in civil society activism can also be





measured by the impact CSOs can have on public dialogues and policy debates. Therefore, civil society organizations need to rely on evidence-based research in order to shape its advocacy on solid grounds and propose policy reform. There seems to be a growing trend in the Arab region for CSOs to rely on research and studies in order to advance their causes and open public debates. Some NGOs, such as KAFA in Lebanon, have succeeded in introducing new laws and legislations through their evidence-based activism. Other organizations, such as the AFA in Egypt, have played a central role in shaping policy dialogues and proposing alternatives based on scientific studies. Finally, some organizations such as AIQaws in Palestine and Al-Nahda in KSA

have been able to alter attitudes in their societies through their evidence-based activism.

In the end, the picture is not gloomy. Although there seems to be a broken link between social science and CSOs at the institutional level; the ties between the two remains very solid at other levels. This could form the base to build more solid bridges between academia and civil society since the work of both parties is very clearly intertwined. The findings of this paper could be used as a call for more scientific activism on the part of civil society organizations; and more active (engaged) scientists on the part of social science institutions (universities).

# 7

## Appendices

### 7.1 Appendix 1: Information Sheet

The Arab Social Science Monitor (ASSM) is envisioned as an observatory dedicated to surveying the landscape and assessing the trajectory of social science research in Arab countries, evaluating capacities and characteristics of the social science communities across the region, and following up on emergent research agendas and themes. Both quantitative and qualitative measures will be collected and analyzed and a resource website will be created for the posting and dissemination of the data and analysis.

One of the main components of the ASSM is the Arab Social Science Report (ASSR), a biennial publication on the state of social science research in the Arab region. The ASSR includes systematic and quantifiable analysis on the development of the social science research in these countries and aims to reflect and showcase the work and voices of the region's social science community. Each issue of the ASSR will focus on a broad theme of relevance to social scientists, research administrators, universities, research NGOs as well as to organizations and donors working in the field of social research

and development. The theme of the first ASSR is the "forms of presence" of social science research in the Arab world. Four specific domains will be examined: academic institutions, research institutions, the public sphere and civil society/development organizations.

To assess the cross-country/regional presence of social science research in the public sphere and its use by civil society/development organizations, the Arab Council for Social Sciences (ACSS) is undertaking a study on the use of social science research by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as well as multilateral organizations in the Arab region. The focus will be on five Arab countries: Algeria, Egypt, KSA, Lebanon and Palestine. For the purpose of the ASSR, social sciences include the following fields: anthropology, economics, history, political sciences, psychology and sociology. It also includes cross-disciplinary fields that have social science elements such as gender studies or development studies.

Your organization was chosen as a case study on how the use of social science research impacted social development programs, policy dialogue, public debates and whether there

was outreach and dissemination to different audiences (whether national or regional). We would be grateful if you could provide us with any information about your organization that you think is important for this research. We would also request to carry out a short interview with a representative of your organization.

## **7.2 Appendix 2: Interview Guide**

### **Tentative Interview Guide (questions could be added/modified):**

#### **Social Science Within the Organization:**

- 1- Could you please give us a brief about the work of your organization?
- 2- How would you describe the role of social science in the work of your organization?
- 3- What does the social science component in your work consist of?
- 4- What are the main social science related fields/topics that your organization works on?
- 5- Could you give us details of your personnel? How many are social scientists (and what are their degrees)?
- 6- Do you hire Arab social scientists as consultants? Please give details.
- 7- Do you hire international social scientists as consultants? Please give details.

8- Do you involve social scientists in the planning/shaping of your work? Please give details.

9- Do you rely on social science knowledge production (published studies) in shaping your work? Please give details.

10- Do you conduct evidence-based research (qualitative or quantitative)? Please give details.

11- Is your work driven by social science theories? Please give details.

12- Are your publications peer-reviewed?

#### **Relationship with Social Science Institutions**

13- Do you have any subscription with social science academic journals? Please give details.

14- Do you publish your work in any social science platform (academic journal or e-zines)? Please give details.

15- Has your work been used by social scientists in their published studies? Please give details.

16- Do you have any relationships/partnerships with universities or research centers? Please give details.

17- What is your main source of funding? Have you ever received funding from a social sciences council or research body? Please give details.




## **Impact on National and Regional Level**

18- Has your work affected social development programs at the national or regional level? Please give details.

19- Has your work contributed to policy dialogue at the national or regional level? Please give details.

20- Has your work shaped public debates at the national or regional level? Please give details.

21- Is there any aspect that you think is relevant that we haven't tackled in this questionnaire?



# 8

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## BACKGROUND PAPER

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