

**CALL FOR PAPERS  
THE ARAB COUNCIL FOR THE SOCIAL SCIENCES  
SECOND CONFERENCE  
“Questioning Social Inequality and Difference in the Arab Region”  
MARCH 13-15, 2015**

**DEADLINE: August 24, 2014**

**Online application and registration forms will be available on the ACSS website by July 1, 2014**

The Arab Council for the Social Sciences (ACSS) is a regional, independent non-profit organization headquartered in Beirut, Lebanon and working across the Arab region as well as globally. The ACSS is dedicated to strengthening social science research and knowledge production among individuals and academic/research institutions in the Arab region.

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The Arab Council for the Social Sciences is pleased to announce its second conference, titled ***Questioning Social Inequality and Difference in the Arab Region***, to be held in Beirut, Lebanon on March 13-15, 2015. Papers will be selected based on two criteria:

- The extent to which they engage seriously with the aim of the conference to challenge and/or nuance prevailing concepts and theories in the social sciences generally, and those pertaining to the Arab region particularly.
- The empirical depth of the paper and the focus on innovative cases and locations.

The conference is open to papers from all social science and allied disciplines. Researchers from the Arab region, whether currently resident in or outside the region, are particularly encouraged to apply. Applicants must hold at least a MA degree and be actively engaged in social science research. Papers may examine contemporary or historical phenomena and comparative, cross-regional and global perspectives are encouraged.

**The Theme:**

Across the globe there are increasing levels of severe poverty coupled with state repression, conflict, displacement and military occupations, all of which are leading to the deepening of the structures of inequality globally and at the national and local levels. In addition, various ways and forms of marking social and cultural difference also raise issues of discrimination and inequity. As a reaction, the world has witnessed intensifying forms of global and local protests, movements, insurgencies and resistance. In the Arab region, inequality between social groups and classes has risen markedly in the past two decades with increasing regional and sub-regional disparities within countries. These intersect with various other structural forms of difference including regional, ethnic, linguistic, religious, tribal and so on. Significantly, Tunisia, the country of an “economic miracle” according to the IMF and the World Bank, was the first country to initiate the wave of “Arab uprisings”, in no small part due to the “miracle” being focused on the capital and northern coastal cities, not the interior of Tunisia or the south.

The literature exploring the varied manifestations and consequences of social inequalities and social difference in the Arab region has been limited compared to the volume of analysis of the phenomenon in other regions. In fact, there has been little or no effort thus far to provide a comparative perspective to document and account for the emergence, intensification and trajectories of inequality. Historical perspectives are also lacking and there is little attempt to position the Arab region within the global context when discussing such phenomena and trends. The ways in which various types of inequalities

have played a role in, and had an impact on, the Arab uprisings and their aftermaths also need to be investigated.

Crucially, there has also been little analysis in the region on the prevailing discourses on social inequality, difference, discrimination, deprivation, exclusion and poverty, whether in research, public perceptions or policy interventions. Here, Social Science knowledge production needs to be particularly investigated: How are issues of inequality and difference being discussed and taught in schools and college curriculums across the Arab World? What theoretical paradigms are being deployed to study social inequality in the Arab world? How does the work of Arab scholars compare, converge or diverge with the work of scholars working in the global north and other parts of the global south?

The conference will be organized around four main axes of discussion:

- Forms and dimensions of social inequalities

This theme discusses the multiple forms of inequalities that have existed historically across the Arab world and how such forms have changed over time. Further, it highlights the different factors active in deepening systems of inequality and in reproducing the experience of marginalization and exclusion among different social categories and groups. A special focus is given to the interplay and intersection between the various forms of inequalities and difference such as class, gender, ethnicity, age, occupation, nationality, citizenship, disability and the rural/urban divide among others. How have these processes been discussed publicly and how have ideological shifts among elites and political actors played out in addressing, ignoring or negotiating inequalities and difference in society?

Specific issues could include:

- What kinds of inequalities exist between and within Arab states? What would the region look like if mapped according to indicators of inequality?
- How and in which contexts do colonial and neo-colonial relations shape inequalities?
- How do different forms of inequality affect access to basic rights (for example, work, housing, basic services, health, education, justice)?
- What is poverty and who counts as poor in the Arab region?
- How do different forms of inequalities manifest themselves in the everyday experiences of different groups in society, including the poor and the marginalized, the middle classes, civil servants, young men and women among others?
- How does the interplay of different social markers (religion, gender, age, ethnicity, etc.) deepen the experience of marginalization of certain social groups?

#### 1) Policies and Politics of inequalities

This theme focuses on the processes, mechanisms and political economy of the production and reproduction of inequality and difference. The roles that state actors, the transnational and local capitalist class, multinational economic and development institutions, and other relevant actors play would be examined under this theme. Special attention should be given to the continued rentierization of Arab economies and neo-liberal policies and well as the discourses and practices of Islamist political movements on inequality whether they are in, or out, of power. Furthermore, the articulation between mechanisms of accumulation by dispossession and social and regional marginalization should be examined. Here rural dynamics are important to understand including the consequences of impoverishment and dispossession of small farmers on local and family small farmers and global (national) food sovereignty and well as how “export-oriented agriculture” exacerbates local social and spatial marginalization and food insecurity?

Specific issues could include:

- What is the relationship between inequality and different forms of capitalism and financial power (global/transnational, regional, national, local)?
- How and when do policies and political processes lead to social exclusion, disempowerment and deprivation?
- How are these processes and policies legitimized? What kind of ideologies, theories or other forms of knowledge production is invoked to justify and legitimate them?

- What role have economic policies, such as privatization, deregulation, and liberalization undertaken in the past decade played in reducing or furthering social inequalities?
- Are new forms of state emerging in the Arab region? Has the welfare state disappeared? What impact does decentralization, devolution of state authority and federalism have on inequality?
- What role does political power play in defending, reproducing and deepening social inequalities?
- Is there an “Arab neoliberalism”? What similarities or differences exist between the Arab countries and other regions (be they structural [e.g. oil economies], cultural [e.g. pan-Arabism], or otherwise) that bear particularly on the issue of inequality and class differences?
- How has state power been used to advance neoliberal policies in the Arab world?

## 2) Resistance(s) to inequalities

This theme would examine the forces combatting social inequality: social movements, labor unions, political parties, NGOs, community organizations, transnational social movement organizations, etc. A historical perspective is encouraged and “non-movements” as well as quotidian everyday resistance practices should be examined in addition to emergent forms of organization, alternative discourses and new imaginaries. Special attention should be paid to new political actors including those from underprivileged groups such as domestic workers, construction workers, peasants, slaves and so on. The nature of demands, for dignity, social justice and so on would be examined in relation to social inequalities and difference.

Specific issues could include:

- How do the ideologies of different political social movements and elites discuss, rationalize and promote inequality?
- To what extent have NGOs and community organizing? been successful in addressing social inequalities and dealing with them?
- Three years into the Arab Uprisings, what can we say about the role inequality has played in popular mobilizations, and what kinds of inequalities fueled the uprisings?
- What kinds of movements have historically mobilized around the concept of inequality in the Arab region?
- What has been the role of marginalized and dispossessed rural populations and small farmers in the different forms of resistances and uprisings before and after the “Arab Uprisings”?
- What typologies of movements could be constructed? Is there a difference between those mobilizing around equality and those mobilizing around rights? Are there forms of resistance peculiar to the Arab region?
- What have been some theorizations of everyday resistance to different forms of inequality in Arab societies: has there been a conflation of resistance, rebellion, subversion, resilience, survival, steadfastness and adaptation in understanding the everyday practices of subordinate groups? What is the theoretical and practical value of making distinctions?

## 3) Spatial inequalities

This theme explores inequality and difference in the Arab region through a spatial lens. The papers under this theme can explore how inequalities are inscribed spatially and how difference is manifested through conceptions, perceptions and experiences of space and place. What are the geographies and scales of inequality in the Arab region and how are they produced and reproduced? What processes that have been described as “the shrinking of the commons” are taking place in the Arab region, through the diminution and privatization of public space, mobility and services, including basic services and housing? How is this related to the expansion of militarization and securitization, and the need of protecting the ruling elite from the threat of a stigmatized “other,” and/or neoliberal objectives of expanding capital accumulation through real-estate speculation? A particularly neglected area of study is the competition between agribusiness and small farmers over agriculture resources, such as land and water, and the subsequent impoverishment, dispossession and marginalization of rural populations and peasants. Poverty, social exclusion and food insecurity (at the local and family level) are among the

most visible consequences of such processes.

Specific issues include:

- Should the rural/urban divide be rethought in light of rampant urbanization, the restructuring of the countryside and the political and discursive marginalization of the rural?
- How do urban policies and projects consolidate neoliberal economies at the expense of the commons and collective rights?
- What are the mechanisms of security and militarization in cities, towns and regions, and their impacts on dwellers' mobility and spatial practices?
- What is happening to public spaces in cities, towns and villages, with a special attention to the frameworks regulating the collective use of the commons over time?
- What is the impact on natural environments, resources and landscapes, and their social and economic roles in the daily lives of dwellers?
- What are the threats to the "right to the city" (housing, infrastructure, basic services, mobility, public space)?
- What kinds of resistances, insurgencies and interventions are emerging to counter these processes and claim back the commons and access to resources (including agricultural resources) and services?

Application Instructions and Conference Information:

The ACSS invites proposals for individual paper presentations or for organized panels. Proposals may be submitted in Arabic, English or French and should be in the language of the planned paper and presentation.

1) Individual applicants:

To submit a paper proposal, please complete the online application form including the cover sheet and an abstract of 1 page (or approximately 400 words) by the submission deadline of August 24, 2014.

Please note that applicants can submit a co-authored paper proposal. However, if selected for inclusion in the conference, the ACSS can only guarantee financial support for the primary author. The ACSS will decide if it is possible to provide support for a second author on a case-by-case basis after the selection decisions have been announced.

Selection decisions will be announced by September 10, 2014.

2) Organized Panels

Individuals or research institutions may submit an organized panel on the theme of the conference. Each panel should include 3-4 papers and the panel organizer should also present a paper in the panel.

To submit a panel proposal, please fill out the online cover sheet for a panel submission. In addition each panel participant should fill in the individual paper application (the cover sheet and abstract).

Deadline for submissions is August 24, 2014 and selection decisions will be announced by September 10, 2014.

Selected participants are required to submit their completed papers by February 2, 2015. If the paper is not received by this deadline, the participant will be taken out of the conference program. All conference abstracts will be posted on the ACSS website and made publicly available, and paper presenters may be asked to revise their abstracts for posting. The Conference papers will be made available to all the conference participants. In addition, after the conference the ACSS will invite a number of papers for inclusion in one or more publications, which may include translation of the paper into different languages.

Conference presentations should be 15-20 minutes per paper and may be presented in Arabic, English or French. Simultaneous translation from English and French into Arabic and from Arabic to English will be provided. The conference site will be A/V equipped. Additional details on the composition of individual panels will be available after selection decisions are announced in September 2014.

Paper presenters will be covered fully for economy-class travel and accommodation costs. The ACSS will provide up to three-four nights' accommodations, based on flight availability and travel itineraries.

If not selected to present a paper at the conference, please note that applicants are encouraged to register to attend the conference, which will be open to the public.

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Questions ? Please contact: PA@theacss.org

**The Arab Council for the Social Sciences**

Mohsen Ghandour Bldg., M Floor

Jeanne D'Arc Street, Hamra

Beirut, Lebanon

P: +961 1 737 510

F: +961 1 737 520

<http://www.theacss.org/>