Gender & Development

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/cgde20

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To cite this article: Lina Abou-Habib, Carla Akil & Cynthia Chidiac (2023) A flurry of feminist knowledge production in the SWANA region and the emergence of a robust young intersectional movement, Gender & Development, 31:2-3, 479-494, DOI: 10.1080/13552074.2023.2268393

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2023.2268393

GENDER & DEVELOPMENT
2023, VOL. 31, NOS. 2–3, 479–494
https://doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2023.2268393

OXFAM
Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

ESSAY

A flurry of feminist knowledge production in the SWANA region and the emergence of a robust young intersectional movement

Lina Abou-Habib, Carla Akil and Cynthia Chidiac

Is there any indigenous feminist writing in the SWANA region?

Some two years or so ago, I had a significant experience that in a way inspired me to delve seriously and systematically into the world of local feminist knowledge production in the South-West Asia and North Africa (SWANA) region. A friend of mine was running a professional international training on gender and development that was created and delivered in Europe and usually attracted international students. One student from Egypt lamented to my friend that it is impossible to find any knowledge production in any form produced in Arabic and by local authors and knowledge creators from the SWANA region. I contested that this was not the case, but my friend and her Egyptian student were adamant that the SWANA region does not and cannot produce feminist knowledge. I was puzzled by this position which, in my view, could only come from a colonial mindset that denies the global South the possibility of having its own community of knowers as well as existing local processes of knowledge production. Hence, came the idea of harvesting and categorising existing feminist knowledge production in the SWANA region.

The process involved a two-level online data search, an analysis of this data, and the write-up of this article which includes reflection on the present and future of feminist knowledge production in the SWANA region. The data collection and subsequent analysis were carried out by the Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship at the American University of Beirut. This endeavour fell within the Asfari Institute's interest to act as a knowledge hub for an emerging civil society ecosystem in the region, as well as amplify the importance of intersectional feminist frameworks as a condition *sine qua non* for achieving social justice in a region marred by various forms of brutal oppression, inequality, and codified discrimination. In addition, in September 2022, we embarked on a knowledge decolonising and localising effort which kicked off during a global conference titled the Power of Knowledge (Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship 2022) that took place simultaneously in Beirut, Johannesburg, and Amsterdam. As part of this initiative, the Asfari Institute committed to investing in amplifying, catalysing, and increasing the outreach of homegrown feminist and other forms of knowledge production.

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This article seeks to provide hard evidence that there is indeed a vibrant, diverse, rich, and solid feminist knowledge production in the SWANA region. The article begins by setting the scene of this knowledge production against the background of at least two waves of Arab uprisings (2011 and 2019) and everything that has happened in between. We argue that the significant burgeoning of feminist knowledge production appears to have accompanied a dynamic of youth awakening during that period and the marked visibility of youth dissent. This is followed by a brief overview of what constitutes a simple and straightforward secondary data collection. The data analysis is then presented as we attempt to pull out some key findings to describe the current state of the art of local feminist knowledge production and the key trends and features that these data present. This part of the article seeks to answer questions such as: Who produces feminist knowledge in the SWANA region? About what? For whom? In what form? The subsequent part of the article puts forward a series of reflections as we attempt to position the findings *vis-à-vis* contextual factors such as political change/instability, the status of personal liberties and human rights, crack-down on civic space and freedoms, dynamics within and between local social movements, various forms of feminist resistance and contestations, and the existence of other forms of more mainstream feminist knowledge. Lastly, we share thoughts and ideas for subsequent research questions which are intended to enable a better analysis of the ecosystem of feminist knowledge production in the Arab region and assist whomever thinks that the region cannot and does not have the capacity to produce homegrown feminist knowledge, to reconsider this position.

As such, this paper is a modest attempt to shed light on some of the existing feminist knowledge production initiatives in the SWANA region and highlight the various ways in which the emerging intersectional feminist movements, activists, and content creators are actively engaged in decolonising and localising feminist knowledge production.

The Arab Spring of discontent and awakening

Much ink has been spilled on trying to describe and analyse what was supposed to be a period of profound transformation in the SWANA region beginning with the first spark of the uprising in Tunisia in 2011 (Belhaj 2021). What remains from that period, and with the benefit of hindsight, is undoubtedly the opportunities (and hopes) it created for the formation of fresh youth-led and intersectional movements. The first wave of uprisings carried the voices and aspirations of women and girls which put to the forefront the demand for safe public and private spaces, and condemned all forms of violence against women (Al Nadheri et al. 2021). Many women and girls who took to the streets and demanded democracy and freedoms were met with sexual harassment by their own peers and the armed forces. Many of these were subjected to sexual violence such as gang rapes which remain to this day unpunished (Tannir, Badaan, and Yahya 2013). This same pattern was reproduced during the second wave of SWANA uprisings beginning in 2019 where sexual harassment, physical and verbal violence, and rape were used against women and girls as well as migrants and queer folks who were fighting for their rights, bodily autonomy, freedoms, and well-being (Asfari Institute for Civil Society and

Citizenship 2023). To be reminded that the second wave of the uprisings essentially took place in Algeria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Sudan, was triggered by mounting discontent *vis-à-vis* dysfunctional yet authoritarian states, increased economic hardship, and clampdown on freedoms. During both the first and second waves of Arab uprisings, we note that in communities where women and girls are supposed to be hidden and subdued within the private domain, this was an unprecedented act of courage and resistance in the face of utmost brutality, repression, and unbridled sexual violence.

Indeed, young feminists in the SWANA region played a pivotal role in shaping post-Arab Spring activism partly, we would argue, through the feminist knowledge they produced and made available and accessible. A quick at-a-glance look at the feminist content producers included in our dataset shows diverse backgrounds and experiences, along with a common concern to challenge traditional gender norms, advocate for rights, and address intersecting forms of discrimination faced by all women and girls in their diversity as well as marginalised communities (notably migrants, refugees, queer folks, sex workers, folks with special needs). Indeed, a key defining feature of these emerging young feminist activists and movements was their intersectional approach as they recognised the need to address intersecting inequalities comprehensively.

Parallel to the rise of young feminist movements during that period, the SWANA region also witnessed the growth in visibility and voice of LGBTQ+ activism. Queer activists and movements in the SWANA region date back way before the beginning of the uprisings in 2011 (Sultan 2021). However, during that period, queer activists courageously advocated for the rights and visibility of LGBTQ+ individuals, often in the face of significant social and legal obstacles (Ghoshal 2018). Their activism was interconnected with broader movements for social justice and human rights.

While this period initially brought hope for political change, it also brought instability, violence, and a severe backlash against activists and their demands for rights and freedom (Amnesty International 2021). Meanwhile, social media was rife with feminist voices that sought to inform, mobilise, raise awareness, and collectivise feminist efforts for change. This form of digital activism played a transformative role in these emerging movements. Social media platforms provided spaces for organising, sharing stories, sending alerts, and mobilising support (Brown, Guskin, and Mitchell 2012). Young feminist activists from the SWANA region harnessed the power of hashtags, online campaigns, and digital storytelling to amplify their messages both within the region and globally, despite being attacked by formidably well-resourced armies of bots and hackers (Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship 2023). In fact, oppressive regimes in the SWANA region have responded with repression, legal restrictions, censorship, and online harassment, in addition to detention, arrests, torture, and threats to safety (Fatafta 2020).

Despite these massive challenges, feminist knowledge production in the SWANA region not only prevailed but also expanded and gained in breadth and depth as well as outreach. It certainly expanded the discourse on gender and sexuality and contributed to broader conversations connected to social justice, democracy, and human rights in the region.

Brief overview of the methodology

The data collection part was essentially an online search of the following:

- feminist content creators (individuals, collectives, and/or organisations);
- active online at the time of data collection;
- harvesting of the type of knowledge produced (texts, visuals, cartoons, research, various feminist writings, etc.);
- themes and geographies covered;
- online and offline knowledge products;
- language used.

The data collection started in July 2022 and ended in April 2023 with 64 different knowledge production sources identified and included in a database which we have kept alive to allow for a yearly update and monitoring of the status of the knowledge products we had already identified. As such, this article is based on an original database of 64 online feminist knowledge production entries collected during a 10-month period and covering the SWANA region. It is important to note that this database is not complete or comprehensive.

Feminist knowledge production in SWANA: what the data show

The SWANA region has seen a burgeoning interest in feminist knowledge production, as evidenced by the dataset detailing 64 entities and initiatives actively contributing to this domain. The data offer a rich tapestry of insights, unravelling the thematic, geographical, and linguistic contours of this knowledge production. The distribution of entities/initiatives by country (Figure 1) provides insight into which countries are more active in feminist knowledge production within the SWANA region. The rich tapestry of feminist knowledge production in the SWANA region is underscored by diverse thematic focuses and linguistic preferences (Figures 2 and 3), intricately intertwined with the sociocultural and political milieus of individual countries.

Thematic landscapes in SWANA's feminist knowledge production

While the data are replete with themes spanning rights, women, research, and development, one theme emerges as conspicuously under-represented: 'the region' itself. At first glance, this might seem paradoxical. The SWANA region, with its shared history, cultural threads, and geopolitical dynamics, seems ripe for a regional thematic focus. Yet, the data suggest otherwise. The under-representation of the 'regional' theme could be indicative of several dynamics. Firstly, it might highlight the primacy of national or local concerns, with entities prioritising issues immediately pertinent to their specific contexts. Secondly, while shared challenges exist, the nuances and specificities of each country might demand a more localised focus. However, this gap also represents an opportunity. A regional

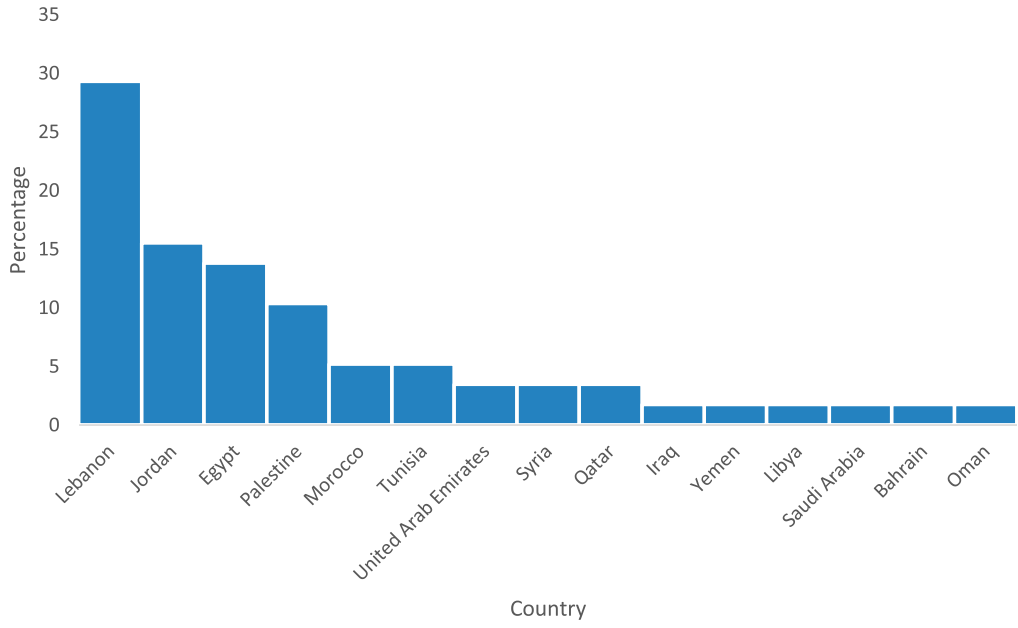

Figure 1. Distribution of entities/initiatives by country.

approach can foster collaborations, shared resources, and collective advocacy, amplifying the impact of feminist knowledge production.

Exploring this dataset, three pivotal questions emerge, each shedding light on the dynamism and nuances of this knowledge production landscape. The data reveal that Lebanon boasts the most varied thematic representation among all countries (Table 1). From rights and research to women-centric issues and development, Lebanese entities encapsulate a spectrum of concerns. This diversity can be attributed to Lebanon's unique sociopolitical history and its vibrant civil society. Historically, Lebanon has been a melting pot of cultures, religions, and ideologies, resulting in a rich tapestry of narratives and discourses. The country's civil war, its aftermath, and more recent sociopolitical

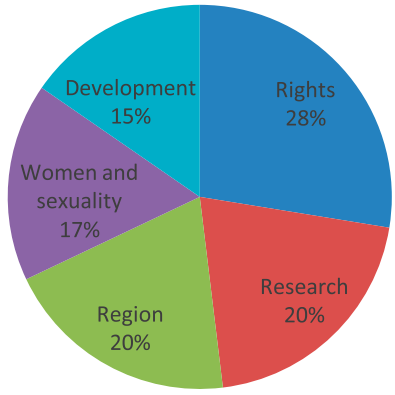

Figure 2. Percentage of themes covered.

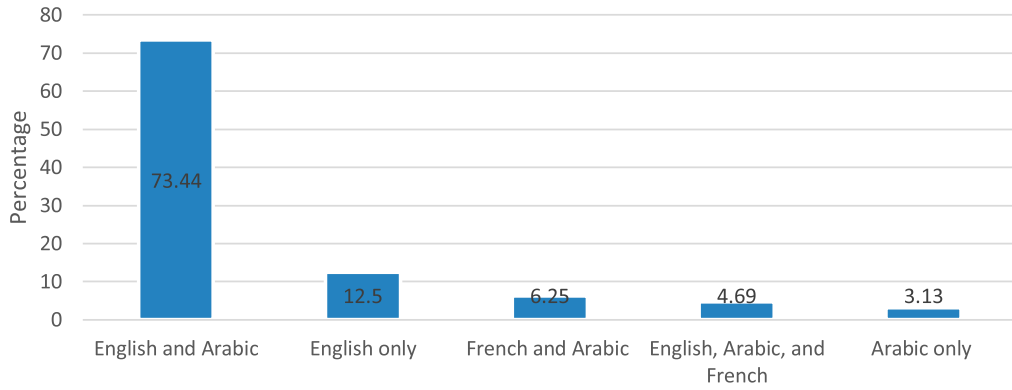

Figure 3. Distribution of 64 entities/initiatives by language.

upheavals have led to introspection, activism, and a plethora of initiatives addressing a wide array of concerns. In the realm of feminist knowledge, this has translated into an exploration of both deeply rooted traditional issues and contemporary challenges. The diversity in themes is not just a testament to the myriad challenges faced by women and marginalised communities in Lebanon, but also indicative of the proactive, multifaceted approach of Lebanese entities in addressing these challenges.

Linguistic landscapes in SWANA's feminist knowledge production

Findings show that the majority of entities/initiatives operate in both English and Arabic, highlighting the bilingual nature of feminist knowledge production in the region (Figure 3). Language, in any form of knowledge production, is not just a medium but a message in itself. It dictates reach, resonance, and representation. The SWANA region's linguistic landscape is a complex interplay of historical legacies, colonial imprints, and contemporary global influences. Within this intricate web, Lebanon emerges, once again, as the country with the most varied linguistic representation (Table 2). Lebanese

Table 1. Themes per country

Country	Development	Region	Research	Rights	Women	Other
Bahrain	0	0	0	1	0	0
Egypt	0	0	2	5	0	1
Iraq	0	0	0	1	0	0
Jordan	1	0	2	5	1	0
Lebanon	2	1	7	4	2	1
Libya	0	0	0	0	1	0
Morocco	0	0	0	2	0	1
Oman	0	0	0	0	0	1
Palestine	1	0	2	1	0	2
Qatar	0	1	1	0	0	0
Saudi Arabia	0	0	1	0	0	0
Syria	0	1	0	1	0	0
Tunisia	1	0	0	2	0	0
United Arab Emirates	0	1	0	0	0	0
Yemen	1	0	0	0	0	0

Table 2. Languages per country

Country	AR	EN	EN and AR	FR and AR	EN, AR, and FR
Bahrain	0	0	1	0	0
Egypt	1	0	6	0	1
Iraq	0	1	0	0	0
Jordan	0	1	8	0	0
Lebanon	1	2	13	0	1
Libya	0	0	1	0	0
Morocco	0	0	0	3	0
Oman	0	0	1	0	0
Palestine	0	0	6	0	0
Qatar	0	0	2	0	0
Saudi Arabia	0	1	0	0	0
Syria	0	0	2	0	0
Tunisia	0	0	1	1	1
United Arab Emirates	0	0	2	0	0
Yemen	0	0	1	0	0

AR, Arabic; EN, English; FR, French.

entities exhibit a rich linguistic palette, seamlessly transitioning between Arabic, English, and French. This trilingualism is deeply rooted in Lebanon's history, with its French colonial legacy, its educational system, and its global diaspora. Arabic, the native tongue, ensures grassroots resonance. English, with its global ubiquity, ensures wider reach and international collaborations. French, with its historical and cultural ties, offers a unique linguistic dimension. This linguistic diversity is emblematic of Lebanon's broader identity – a confluence of the traditional (largely binary) and the modern (intersectional, inclusive, and non-binary), the local and the global.

As we reflect on the findings of this analysis, it is important to acknowledge potential gaps in the dataset. The absence of clear dates or timelines for each entity limits our understanding of the evolution of feminist knowledge production in the region. Additionally, a dedicated column for themes, rather than relying on descriptions, could provide more structured and transparent insights into the priorities of each entity. Finally, countries with fewer entities might benefit from targeted support, capacity building, and collaborations to enhance their contributions to feminist knowledge production.

Reflections for further investigations and deep dive into feminist knowledge production in the SWANA region

Historical reviews and longitudinal studies

The dataset collected showed that there is a clear need for gathering historical data and timelines for each entry. There is much to be learned from the stories of the genesis of each of these feminist knowledge production initiatives, their growth, transformation, key milestones, and the ways in which these timelines connect to the political and activism contexts. This is likely to allow the feminist movement in the SWANA region to gain a comprehensive understanding of the evolution of feminist knowledge production in the region, and for this, it is imperative to conduct longitudinal studies that track the development of initiatives and entities over time.

Comparative analyses and cross-countries/cross-communities insights

This article provides a still picture of existing feminist knowledge production in individual countries in the SWANA region. As feminist activists and aspiring feminist researchers who are essentially grounded in the region, this brief reading of the current ecosystem has piqued our curiosity to conduct comparative analyses that explore the differences and similarities in feminist knowledge production among various countries in the region. It would be of utmost interest to identify and analyse the factors that shape potential country variations, namely historical and colonial legacies, political landscapes, cultural dynamics, and the various iterations of the multiple social movements in what is definitely a most dynamic region.

Regional networks and other forms of collaborations

The dataset as it was constructed did not look to gather information about existing regional networks of collaboration in feminist knowledge productions. In fact, in reviewing each of the online knowledge production initiatives listed in the database, one's first impression is of individual and largely disconnected work as well as a gross under-representation of regional collaboration or even regional themes in feminist knowledge production. While such regional collaborations surely exist, it would be indeed important and critical for young feminist researchers and scholars from the region to further investigate and document existing regional collaborations and networks among feminist knowledge production entities in the SWANA region. Additionally, this is likely to lead into an exploration of opportunities for creating new platforms and initiatives that promote and build regional co-operation.

The wealth of current feminist knowledge production in Arabic in the SWANA region is indeed impressive. The current dataset indicates not only the prevalence of Arabic but also the inclusion of various local dialects, thus making the knowledge produced even more accessible and democratised. Indeed, the use of classical (*Fusha*) Arabic would have greatly limited the audience to individuals with a certain degree of formal education. By using local and colloquial Arabic dialect, most of the entities included in the present set have not only secured a wider audience but also, and most importantly, have normalised conversation around topics and issues that continue to be considered taboo, such as bodily agency, queerness, sexuality, and sexual pleasure. I would argue that this particular feature of SWANA feminist knowledge production has probably had a significant impact in raising awareness around feminism, gender, and sexuality amongst the youth in the region. In addition, by providing alternative sources of feminist knowledge, it has challenged an age-old and outdated educational system in the region which is based on rote learning while reinforcing traditional gender roles and patriarchal norms.

Building capacities and resources for sustainability, creativity, and resilience

The current dataset reveals variations in the number of entities across countries, with some countries having fewer contributions to feminist knowledge production than

others. At this stage, there is no information or data to explain these marked discrepancies. This is yet another investigation and analysis which needs to be considered. This will allow a better understanding of the ways in which each entity is positioned locally (and regionally), what challenges it faces, what are its strategies for resistance, and which capacity-building initiatives are likely to help empower entities in these countries and promote their growth, stability, and sustainability.

Are all the marginalised voices able to create and disseminate feminist knowledge?

The current dataset shows an impressive variety of thematic issues being unpacked, discussed, and put forward, including feminist theory and feminist theorists, intersectionality, queerness, sexual orientations and sexual identity, and social relations of gender. However, there is a need for a further deep dive into whose voices are being amplified and whose voices remain marginalised and under-represented. In thinking about the eco-system of the SWANA region, it would be very important to identify ways in which the voices of all women and girls in their diversity and who may be refugees, displaced, migrants, people living with disability, sex workers, rural residents, and workers, victims of the carceral system, survivors of armed conflict and sexual violence, and others are empowered to be able to produce and share their own feminist knowledge.

Beyond feminist knowledge production: dissemination, advocacy, and influencing

At the time of compiling the SWANA feminist knowledge database, there was no intention to gauge the extent to which it would be impactful in its ability to lead to meaningful change. Meaningful change here refers to societies and communities accepting, respecting, and celebrating all forms of diversity and where patriarchal ways of doing and thinking are constantly challenged. At this point in time, we will recommend that we explore further the strategies that feminist knowledge creators in the region develop and use for effective dissemination of knowledge and how they use this homegrown knowledge to engage in local, regional, and global advocacy efforts and spaces. This is critical since a quick review of the feminist content produced shows clearly that it is accessible in terms of language, relevance, format, and communication media used to an audience that is markedly broader than the limited outreach of elitist academic publications. It is interesting to note that there is some evidence in the existing datasets of specific and/or punctual forms of collaboration with alternative and progressive media (mostly web-media) outlets in the SWANA region. It would be immensely interesting and important to identify the level and framework of such collaborations as well as identify whether and how the feminist knowledge production outlets under study are engaged in any form of collaboration with advocacy fora and influencing spaces, and whether this knowledge is used to feed into public lectures, policy briefs, info sheets, and other forms of information dissemination. We also see great potential in using such wealth of feminist knowledge production to enrich educational and academic curricula as well as inform and influence policymaking processes.

Feminist knowledge production in the SWANA region as a field of study on decolonising knowledge: what are the possible future research questions?

What began as an effort to build a basic database to prove an idea wrong has undoubtedly morphed into a Pandora's box of unanswered research questions. Indeed, when this effort started, it was meant to answer a simple question: *Is there homegrown feminist knowledge production in the SWANA region*? While the current (albeit incomplete) database answers this question with a resounding yes, it however leads us to a broader field of investigation, which is likely to contribute to gaining more familiarity with the growing organic efforts to localise feminist and gender knowledge in the SWANA region. With all of the above data, information, analysis, and reflection in mind, we will hazard putting forward some research questions that might contribute to guiding feminist activists, researchers, and content creators in the SWANA region in understanding further the state of the field, where to go from here, the future of feminist knowledge production, and how can it possibly be a game changer in shifting realities, communities, and mindsets.

Historicity, contextual influences (local and global), and trends

While this primary database covers a short period of time, it is important to construct an annotated historical timeline of feminist knowledge production. This could include looking at how has feminist knowledge production in the SWANA region evolved over time. What are the historical, political, and social factors that have influenced and shaped its development and trajectory?

As indicated earlier, the dataset at hand reveals a significant diversity in the themes and topic covered, including issues considered to be 'taboo', namely sexual orientation and gender identities, sexuality, queer folks, bodily agency, sexual violence, and feminist mobilisation and organisation. It would, however, be interesting and important to identify and analyse the possible key thematic shifts in feminist knowledge production in the SWANA region. This analysis could also be furthered in order to understand how such shifts relate to each country's somehow unique sociopolitical history.

How does a feminist theme become a priority and what are the cross-countries connections?

In a comparative analysis of feminist knowledge production in different SWANA countries, what factors and actors influence the emergence of priority issues? Within the same vein, what are the commonalities and differences across countries in the SWANA region? What role do other social and political movements play in framing feminist knowledge production in the SWANA region? In fact, what are the implications of these intersections for broader social change?

Investigating regional and cross-regional collaborations in feminist knowledge production?

As indicated in the findings section above, we know very little about the existing dynamics, connections, and tension amongst various creators, dynamics, and processes of feminist knowledge in the SWANA region. As such, it is essential to explore existing regional collaborations and networks among feminist entities in the SWANA region, and how these collaborations contribute to the effectiveness of feminist advocacy and influencing on regional issues, and within which local, regional, and/or global advocacy and influencing spaces are these occurring?

Why is feminist knowledge production seemingly uneven amongst SWANA countries?

An interesting entry point for further exploration is understanding the reasons, if any, which determine the frequency, depth, and breadth of feminist knowledge production in the SWANA region. To what extent does political oppression play a role in curbing such work? What role do networking and collaboration play in supporting robust and resilient feminist knowledge production? What do we know about the availability and accessibility of material, financial, and human resources to sustain such work? How do feminist knowledge producers deal with poor internet connectivity and infrastructure, censorship, hacking, and online violence, and what is the role that these factors play in curbing continuous and sustained feminist knowledge production in the SWANA region? Also, what specific capacity-building needs exist among feminist entities in countries with fewer contributions to knowledge production, and how can tailored capacity-building programmes empower these entities?

Enhancing dissemination of localised feminist knowledge and amplifying outreach

This section will put forward a number of practical recommendations that are like to amplify the impact of localised feminist production and which are based on some of the perceived gaps but also the identified potentials within the region.

The establishment of a *joint collaborative feminist knowledge hub* seems to be a priority. This entails a continuous effort towards consolidating and updating the regional feminist knowledge production database while at the same time adding various levels of information including histories, timelines, milestones, and other critical information. This is likely to bring together feminist entities, researchers, activists, and policymakers, as well as serve as central repositories of knowledge production, best practices, and resources related to feminist issues in the SWANA region. This can also foster networking, resource sharing, and interdisciplinary discussions.

Engaging in *community-based dissemination strategies* to reach marginalised and underserved populations is also an important step forward which includes collaboration with grassroots organisations to organise convenings and informal discussions that are likely to influence feminist content creation as well as accelerate the impact that this feminist knowledge seeks to bring about.

As a feminist activist from a different generation who attempted like so many sisters to engage directly with systems in force, I do wonder whether the current forms and shapes of feminist knowledge production might lend themselves to be repackaged as policy briefs and advocacy and influencing tools which are designed to communicate issues and demands effectively to policymakers, thus providing recommendations on how to integrate feminist perspectives into legislation and policy development. While I realise that this vision may be from another time, I do wonder whether the current wealth of feminist knowledge produced may be reshaped to target different audiences.

Exploring collaborations with feminist academics is certainly an area worth exploring. While a small number of knowledge production outlets do indicate that they include academics on their editorial boards and committees, many do not. This is certainly an area of tension and discomfort in many a case. In fact, in June 2022, an event took place on the American University of Beirut campus as part of an annual convening of scholars and researchers working on SWANA. The event was co-organised by the Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship whose role was to facilitate the presence of community-based queer feminist activists from Lebanon and the region alongside SWANA scholars, and attempt at opening a candid dialogue between the career scholars and activists. To describe that panel as tense is an understatement. According to witnesses who took part in this panel, both sides were unable to converge with feminist activists insisting on the need for them to be heard and not to be expected to acquiesce to extractive research. Most scholars on that table were essentially unable to connect or to accept criticism from community-based feminist activists. In a personal communication with one of the said scholars, she indicated clearly that she feels that as an academic, her goal is 'to make feminist activists feel uncomfortable'. As this is a recurring example, and given the magnitude of contributions that SWANA feminist activists are making at the level of knowledge production, exploring academic-community collaborations that might bridge this gap may be useful. This might enable more researchers to engage with local feminist knowledge producers to co-create feminist knowledge.

In closing

This article was woven by gazing through a first dataset which was collected and consolidated with a limited objective in mind. As this dataset was reviewed and analysed, the first and immediate recommendations that come to mind and which will become the subject of further investigation are the following:

- *Expand data collection*: To understand the the trajectory and evolution of local feminist knowledge production, it would be beneficial to have a timeline or date of establishment for each initiative.
- *Theme categorisation*: Instead of relying solely on text analysis of the description, a dedicated column for themes (pre-defined or using tags) could provide clearer insights into the thematic focus of each initiative.

- *Engage under-represented **themes and countries***: Initiatives focusing on the 'region' theme are relatively fewer. Efforts could be made to encourage knowledge production in this area. Similarly, countries with lower representation might benefit from more support or collaborations to boost feminist knowledge production.
- *Linguistic diversity*: While the dominance of English and Arabic is evident, there might be merit in exploring content in other local languages to cater to a broader audience in the SWANA region. For instance, more initiatives could incorporate French, given the linguistic landscape of certain SWANA countries.
- *Capacity building*: For countries with fewer entries, capacity-building initiatives could be introduced. This could involve training, resources, and funding to stimulate feminist knowledge production.
- *Collaborations and partnerships*: Promote collaborations between entities from different countries. Shared experiences and resources can lead to richer and more diverse knowledge production.
- *Digital presence*: Given the data on social media platforms, it might be worth studying the digital engagement of these entities. A strong online presence as well as digitalising existing research, manuscripts, and books can significantly amplify the reach and impact of feminist knowledge production.

As such, and while the dataset offers valuable insights into feminist knowledge production in the SWANA region, there is potential for deeper exploration with more comprehensive data. The recommendations aim to address gaps and further enhance the breadth and depth of knowledge production in the region.

Closing reflections

The SWANA region's feminist knowledge production landscape, as revealed by the dataset, is both diverse and dynamic. In this rich mosaic of themes and languages, each country, each entity, and each initiative tells a story – a story of challenges faced, battles fought, and changes envisioned. It is a testament to the resilience, vision, and dynamism of countless individuals and organisations striving for a more just and equitable future. The exploration of feminist knowledge production in the SWANA region reveals a dynamic and multifaceted landscape that is deeply intertwined with the sociocultural and political fabric of individual countries. This comprehensive analysis has illuminated several key insights and questions that provide valuable context for understanding the state of feminist knowledge production in the SWANA region.

On the other hand, the under-representation of the 'regional' theme in the dataset raises important questions about the priorities and dynamics of feminist knowledge production in the SWANA region. While the shared history, cultural threads, and geopolitical dynamics of the region suggest the potential for a regional thematic focus, it appears that entities are primarily concentrating on national or local concerns. This may be due to the specific challenges and nuances of each country, which demand localised approaches. However, it also presents an opportunity for greater collaboration,

shared resources, and collective advocacy on regional issues, potentially amplifying the impact of feminist knowledge production.

Furthermore, the linguistic landscape of the SWANA region plays a significant role in shaping the reach and resonance of feminist knowledge production. Lebanon, once again, stands out as a linguistic melting pot, with entities seamlessly transitioning between Arabic, English, and French. This linguistic diversity reflects Lebanon's complex history and its ability to bridge the traditional and the modern, the local and the global. Language, in this context, is not merely a medium but a message, conveying a sense of inclusivity and global engagement.

It is to be noted that there are no countries that completely lack representation in terms of the identified themes. However, it is worth noting that this does not necessarily mean there are no gaps in the broader context. Our dataset has limitations in terms of the depth and breadth of information. A more comprehensive dataset with more detailed categorisations might reveal nuanced gaps in representation.

Our key takeaway from this investigation is that the SWANA region's feminist knowledge production landscape is characterised by diversity, complexity, and resilience. It reflects the unique histories and contexts of individual countries while also offering opportunities for regional collaboration and amplification of impact. As feminist movements in the SWANA region continue to evolve and respond to changing dynamics, this analysis serves as a valuable snapshot that can inform future research, advocacy, and support for these critical initiatives.

Epilogue

At the time of finalising the writing of this article, a newly formed Lebanese feminist initiative called 'No2ta: the Feminist Lab' convened a forum in Beirut including 40 women feminist content creators. The event span over three days and was titled 'The Arab Feminist Forum for Digital Content'. For the organisers, the Forum sought to shift the narrative, shift perceptions, and shift realities in the SWANA region. Speakers came from SWANA countries which are going through endemic crisis and where the backlash exercised by both regimes and conservative communities and other entities against feminist and queer activists as well as other vulnerable groups are mounting in frequency and brutality. The countries represented included Syria, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Algeria, Iraq, Tunisia, and Lebanon. Most of the feminist content creators figure in the database that we have constructed and used for this article. The event in and of itself was a massive and collaborative effort in feminist knowledge production which included powerful and vibrant feminist messages which were reproduced via a significant net of social media channels. The three days were attended by 200 people in person and more than 500 online. There is indeed a significant level of sustained interest and participation which probably speaks to the content provided by the Forum. In watching the proceedings of the event, I noted the validity of many of the reflections and recommendations put forward, notably the importance of collaborative work, the commonalities of challenges faced by feminist knowledge producers in the SWANA region,

the critical importance of expanding outreach and solidarity as a way to face the increasing backlash, and the need to strategise for growth and durability.

In more ways than one, the Forum spoke to the subject matter of this article: an exponential growth of local feminist knowledge production over the past decade coupled with the emergence of fresh and vibrant grassroots-led feminist activisms, notwithstanding brutal crackdowns, conflict, backlash, violence, and intimidation. In short, young intersectional feminists activists within the SWANA region seem to be at the forefront of localised feminist knowledge production.

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