WORKSHOP I UNIVERSITY OF COLOGNE

Global South Studies Center
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DAWLA MADANIYYA:
A FUTURE FOR THE CIVIL STATE IN THE ARAB WORLD?

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The term dawla madaniyya (civil state) was one of the most often heard during the so-called ‘Arab Spring’ uprisings across the Arab World. Anti-regime protestors, regime supporters, intellectuals and academics of diverse social and political backgrounds, Islamic scholars, Islamist activists, tribal shaykhs, etc. all made use of it when framing their demands for the creation of a new political system and a new social contract in their respective countries. Used in such a ubiquitous manner, dawla madaniyya became a ‘floating signifier’ invested with multiple notions linked to the relationship between the governing and the governed, to citizenship, justice, security, the role of religion in state, etc. This academic workshop seeks to discuss and elucidate the underlying notions of and visions for the disputed concept dawla madaniyya in the Arab World. How was dawla madaniyya framed in the various 2011 uprisings and their aftermaths and how was this influenced by the specific local contexts? Which actors were particularly active in bringing forward national and/or regional ideas of dawla madaniyya and how did their visions relate to other concepts of statehood? How have their visions impacted on political debate and reform in the various contexts? What are the historical discursive roots of dawla madaniyya in the Arab world and which changes has the concept undergone since it first began to take shape several decades ago?