Overview of the Year/Mission/Vision

George Mason University’s Center for Social Science Research (CSSR) is committed to conducting publicly engaged social research that can promote social justice and inform equitable social policy. Housed within the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, the CSSR builds on a long tradition of social science research for the public good. At its center are thematic research hubs engaged in quantitative, qualitative, community-engaged research inquiry, and program evaluation.

Our Priorities:

- Creatively marshal social science research for problem-solving ends
- Strengthen civil society by supporting research initiatives that serve the public, build sustainable communities, and promote dignified lives
- Promote interdisciplinary engagements among scholars and practitioners to respond to deep challenges confronting local and global communities
- Draw stakeholders beyond the university and equitably engage a diversity of perspectives and expertise to build community capacity through social science knowledge
- Support students seeking careers in the social sciences through professional development programming

Our Research Hubs:

- Movement Engaged
- Education & Health
- Urban
- Global South Collective

Our Initiatives:

- Democratizing NOVA
- Next System Studies Initiative

Research, Scholarly and Creative Work

Central to the vision for the 2021 recharter is the development of four inaugural research ‘hubs,’ a change in CSSR’s organizational structure intended to increase faculty participation and better align center research priorities and faculty research strengths. One end goal is to build infrastructure to more fully incorporate qualitative and community-engaged research approaches to social research, to complement existing quantitative approaches. Research hubs will be organized based on core areas of research specialization among faculty in SOAN. In
these hubs, faculty with shared scholarly interests in, for instance, social movements, urban issues, health and disease, or education, may conduct collaborative research and/or develop inventories of external partners and potential funding sources that could support individual or collaborative projects. Alumni outreach with applied sociologists has also been an important part of developing research capability for the hub. CSSR has grown its number of alumni affiliates, faculty affiliates and its graduate student involvement through the hubs.

These hubs will:

a) encourage greater faculty participation in CSSR

b) provide an organizational identity that will help to focus external funding efforts for CSSR and its faculty affiliates

c) model working research groups for student professional development

d) integrate graduate student alumni as community and research practitioners to strengthen CSSR/community connection

Expanded CSSR support for faculty research through the Center’s infrastructure and services, in combination with greater faculty participation, will not only provide an anchor for the Center’s activities, but also potentially increases research dollars flowing into the Center, as faculty participating in hubs may develop their individual or collaborative research grants managed through CSSR. In addition, building an identity around areas of research specialization will strengthen network ties to organizations that support research in those substantive areas.

Finally, the research hub model is a way to engage more anthropology faculty in the Center moving forward, as CSSR has historically involved sociologists primarily. We can report an increase in the number of anthropologists either involved in research hubs or as faculty affiliates at the end of this first year of the 2021 recharter. In the second year of the recharter we will continue our efforts to increase participation through scholarly endeavor and grants management.

Four research hubs were launched during the 2021 AY. Research hubs, composed of faculty, graduate students and alumni from Sociology PhD program meet monthly. Each research hub has been between 6-12 regular participants. They are described below.

**The Movement Engaged Research Hub**

**Director:** John Dale  
**Website:** [https://cssr.gmu.edu/research-hubs/movement-engaged-research-hub](https://cssr.gmu.edu/research-hubs/movement-engaged-research-hub)  
**Membership:** 16 Members

*Dedicated to disciplined movement-engaged research* relevant to social movement activists and policymakers and works to deepen democracy in formal politics, the economy, and in the broader civil society. Through intentional engagement with community, constituency, and transnational organizations and networks, we seek to engender new visions, practices, relations, institutions, and systems that liberate human potential and emancipate our global society.
Ongoing projects include:

- The Future of Work
- Corporate Accountability
  - Frontiers in Sociology
  - Inter-campus Social Movement Workshop with University of California, Santa Barbara, York University (Toronto), and University of Pittsburgh (and soon to be including University of Notre Dame and City University of New York)

The Urban Research Hub

**Director:** Rashmi Sadana

**Website:** [https://cssr.gmu.edu/research-hubs/urban-research-hub](https://cssr.gmu.edu/research-hubs/urban-research-hub)

**Membership:** 6 Members

The Urban Research Hub is a group of faculty, students, alumni, and community partners interested in critical perspectives on urban development and researching the social forms and politics that emerge from everyday life.

Individual and collaborative research projects, workshops, and seminars on topics include:

- Mobility, infrastructure, and the built environment
- Social stratification in neighborhoods
- Mapping cities and urban peripheries
- Racial and class politics of gentrification
- Vernacular cosmopolitanisms around the world

The Education & Health Research Hub

**Director:** Blake Silver

**Website:** [https://cssr.gmu.edu/research-hubs/education-health-research-hub](https://cssr.gmu.edu/research-hubs/education-health-research-hub)

**Membership:** 21 Members

The Education & Health Research Hub brings together faculty, grad students, community partners, and alumni to collaborate on research, inquiry, and organizing around education and health.

We have an upcoming fall speaker series and several projects (including many with a community-engaged focus) that are in development by hub members. Ongoing funded projects include:

- Transitioning OUT: LGB Students’ Experiences in the Senior Year
- Labor Market Precarity and Higher Education

The Global South Research Hub

**Director:** Manjusha Nair

**Website:** [https://cssr.gmu.edu/research-hubs/global-south-research-hub](https://cssr.gmu.edu/research-hubs/global-south-research-hub)

**Membership:** 13 Members
The Global South Hub is a meeting place for faculty, students, alumni, and others to foster research on the Global South, which we consider as all those spaces and people, including in the United States, that are in the peripheries of the world order.

**Plans:**
- Hold lecture series (Inaugural Lecture: Recognising the Migrant - Fall 2021)
- Collaborate in research
- Procure funding
- Award prizes to graduate students
- Organize South-South conference
- Conduct workshops
- Create Global Social Theory website
- Potential collaboration with the New School India China Institute

CSSR also launched two long-term center-wide initiatives during the 2021 AY: Next System Studies and Democratizing NOVA (DNOVA) led by Dr. Ben Manski.

**The Next System Studies**

This is a transitional period in world history. State socialism and corporate capitalism appear to be past their end dates. New systems of societal organization are coming. But what will those systems bring?

Next system studies necessarily involve research into questions of systemic design, change, and movements – or put another way, “where are we going, how will we get there, and what must we do to get there?”

As a new area or study, one purpose of next system studies is to establish space, resources, and recognition for scholarship and public engagement on next system questions. Another is influencing and to some extent reorienting established disciplines around next system questions. Thus, next system scholarship involves:

- Production of practical knowledge of use to policymakers, communities, activists, and others about systemic design, change, and movements;
- Community engaged research uniting practitioners, students, and senior scholars in collaborative work; and,
- The raising of new cohorts of community leaders, policymakers, lawyers, entrepreneurs, managers, academics, and other specialists educated in the methodology and theory of next system studies.

To these ends, current priorities for next system research and teaching at George Mason University include:

- **Democratizing NOVA (DNOVA),** a 10 year project of community engaged research dedicated to hastening the transition of northern Virginia to a society that is truly sustainable, democratic, and just.
• **Next System coursework** offered in 2021/2022, a new Next System Fellows cohort in the Spring of 2022 as part of the Arlington Fellows program at GMU's Arlington campus.

• **The Next System Studies Initiative**, inspired by the success of our April 21st "The Next System and Academy" launch, is building a global interdisciplinary network of academic and community-based scholars through workshops, conferences, teach-ins, publications, and collaborative research projects.

**Democratizing NOVA**

Democratizing NOVA (DNOVA) is a new community-engaged civic research project of the Center for Social Science Research (CSSR) at Mason dedicated to deepening democracy in northern Virginia ("NOVA"). We engage with efforts to build community, economic, and political democracy in northern Virginia.

To this end, our team (comprised of Mason faculty, staff and students) is conducting an inventory of current and past initiatives in and around northern Virginia that increase the participation and ownership of ordinary people of the institutions and communities where they work, learn, eat, sleep, play, pray, and otherwise live their lives.

Examples may include:

- campus-community collaborations that further community development and democratization;
- worker, consumer, resident, and community cooperatives and credit unions;
- publicly and/or community owned and operated services, utilities, banking, and enterprises;
- community controlled currency, exchange, trading, and supply chain management systems;
- community property, land trusts, and commons;
- community owned and operated media;
- participatory alternatives to policing;
- participatory forms of public administration and governance;
- open government policies and other transparency reforms;
- expansion of the franchise, citizenship, residency, and personhood;
- voter initiatives, referenda, and other forms of direct democracy in elections;
- home rule and community rights laws; and many others.

By taking an inventory of current and past initiatives in these and related areas, we hope to gain a sense of present actual and potential ingredients for achieving a broader systemic democratization of the political economy of northern Virginia. This in turn should allow us to develop and implement plans for collaborative research and long-term campus-community alliances leading to regional democratization.
Democratizing NOVA is inspired by the advancements of transition efforts across the United States that present a number of alternative models for regional democratization. These include institutional models, such as the Evergreen Cooperatives, which form the body of what scholars have called “The Cleveland Model” for bringing to bear the resources of anchor institutions such as hospitals, universities, and local governments in driving cooperative economic development and neighborhood stabilization. They also include movement models, such as Cooperation Jackson in Mississippi and other such projects linked together through the Solidarity Economy Network, New Economy Coalition, the Transition movement, and other networks. And they include organic models involving adaptation, evolution, and the growth of a cooperative culture and knowledge base in a particular region, as seen in Madison, Wisconsin’s worker cooperatives, housing and consumer cooperatives, municipal and academic support for coops, credit union movement, CSAs, and more. DNOVA has 5 faculty affiliates and 6 graduate student participants. Our community-based partners include The Democracy Collaborative’s Next System Project and the U.S. Solidarity Economy Network.

https://cssr.gmu.edu/next-system-studies/democratizing-nova

- Proposals submitted for external funding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>PI</th>
<th>Sponsor</th>
<th>Period of Performance</th>
<th>Budget</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Bioarchaeology-Osteoimmunological Frontier: Integrating Skeletal Disease, Proteomic Biomarkers, and Early Life Stress on the North Coast of Peru</td>
<td>Haagen Klaus</td>
<td>NSF</td>
<td>07/01/2022-06/30/2024</td>
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<td>Innovating, Evaluating and Scaling Farm to School Interventions to Improve Dietary Health and Build the Next Generation of Food Educators</td>
<td>Amy Best</td>
<td>USDA</td>
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<td>Second-Generation Immigrants College Students and the Transition to Postbaccalaureate Life</td>
<td>Blake Silver</td>
<td>Spencer Foundation</td>
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<td>Future of Work at the Human-Technology Frontier: Core Research</td>
<td>John Dale</td>
<td>NSF</td>
<td>08/25/2021-08/24/2021</td>
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<td>Collaborative Research: Human Adaptation to a Dynamic Coastal Environment during the Last Glacial Period: Stable Isotope and Zooarchaeological Analyses at Sefunim Cave, Israel</td>
<td>Jamie Clark</td>
<td>NSF</td>
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<td>Uncertainty in Higher Education: Race, Ethnicity, and Inequality among College Students</td>
<td>Blake Silver</td>
<td>American College Personnel Association</td>
<td>03/01/2021-02/28/2023</td>
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### Active externally funded awards

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<td>Teaching Cultural Anthropology for 21st Century Learners (223627)</td>
<td>Cortney Hughes Rinker</td>
<td>SCHEV/VIVA</td>
<td>02/21/2020-06/30/2022</td>
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<td>LGB Seniors: Transitioning Out (223575)</td>
<td>Blake Silver</td>
<td>University of South Carolina</td>
<td>10/01/2019-12/01/2021</td>
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<td>Labor Market Precarity Uncertainty in Higher Education (223761)</td>
<td>Blake Silver</td>
<td>American Sociological Association</td>
<td>11/01/2020-03/31/2022</td>
<td>$7,840.00</td>
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<td>Parallel Pandemic Project (205334)</td>
<td>James Witte</td>
<td>U.S. Department of State</td>
<td>09/01/2020-07/30/2021</td>
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<td>Civic Engagement in Six Cities (203699)</td>
<td>James Witte</td>
<td>Corporation for National and Community Service</td>
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<td>Digital Archive Workshop II (205206 &amp; 205207)</td>
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<td>National Science Foundation</td>
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<td>Medication Assisted Treatment Utilization in Problem Solving Courts (204684)</td>
<td>James Witte/Faye Taxman</td>
<td>National Institutes of Health/Friends Research Institute</td>
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### External research, scholarship or creative partnerships

In 2021 CSSR faculty affiliates and students engaged 3 additional research collaborations with community and/or municipal government partners.

**DC Produce Plus:** Center for Social Science Research, faculty affiliate Dr. Katie Kerstetter led a program evaluation of the DC Produce Plus Direct, a state-funded, community-based farmers market incentive program. The Produce Plus program, a cross-sector partnership between a state public health agency (DC Department of Health) and local community-based organization, (DC Greens) to provide access to free produce to DC residents who qualify for at least one government assistance program (e.g., SNAP, WIC, TANF, and Medicaid). CSSR Interim Director, Dr. Amy Best served in the role of research consultant. Three graduate students and one undergraduate student were hired to assist with program evaluation research. DC Produce program’s goal is to reduce food insecurity in historically marginalized and racially segregated communities in DC. Through surveys and interviews the team identified obstacles to food access, and uncovered resource sharing, resource stretching, and a spirit of solidarity and mutual aid among participants. Findings suggest the program’s impact in reducing food insecurity and building community capacity was greatest when it recognized its participants as community stakeholders, and functioned as social infrastructure through which existing kin and neighborhood level social capital was supported. The final report and executive summary were delivered to community partners in December 2020. Findings and analysis were presented to DC Department of Health staff and DC Greens staff also in December 2020. One conference
paper was delivered at the Association for the Study of Food and Society’s annual meeting in June 2021 and a scholarly article is being finalized for the peer reviewed journal: *Agriculture and Human Values*. Students participated fully in all research activities.

A second long-term CSSR project is with FreshFarm’s FoodPrints, a comprehensive farm to school program that touches all parts of the local food system and works in DC public schools. FoodPrints is a high impact program with an integrative transferrable curriculum, represents a model of successful social sector partnership with a school district, and has been able to scale across different school/community contexts. Elementary school children learn lessons in ratios, acids and bases, soil composition, civic action, and about a system of enslavement and slave resistance through food, as they garden, prepare a meal, and eat together. A current priority for this long-term community/university partnership is to develop an evidence-based tool to assess experiential drivers that promote consumption of fruits and vegetables among school-age children. The HEALTH tool (“Healthy Eating, Active Learning Together”) will be designed to support and improve F2S program planning at schools across the U.S. F2S programs often operate in a context of limited resources and need tools to prioritize those resources for greater impact to promote long-term dietary health change and environmental sustainability. Dr. Katie Kerstetter, Dr. Meagan Call Cummings, Dr. Margaret Slavin and Dr. Amy Best submitted a $1,000,000 USDA NIFA grant to support this work. Drs. Best and Kerstetter intend to partner on two additional projects with FoodPrints and its parent organization FreshFarm in AY 2022 and anticipate involving and financially supporting graduate students in both research projects.

**Fairfax County Neighborhood & Community Services:** “Protective Factors for Successful Aging” Since January 2021, CSSR has partnered with Fairfax County Neighborhood and Community Services to identify the protective and risk factors that influence successful aging among older adults, and the system level community-based interventions that promote these factors. A team of faculty and student researchers (Dr. Eliz Storelli, Dr. Amy Best, Dr. Andrew Lee (Social Science Librarian, Sociology PhD students Kellie Walker and Fanni Farago) are conducting a scoping review to identify a U.S. based body of evidence of successful community interventions to reduce social isolation, enrich social connectedness, social contribution (volunteer and civic action), enhance a sense of meaning and purpose and protect against health declines associated with aging. As thought partners, CSSR supports the county’s effort to develop an evidenced based, system level initiative to promote age friendly communities using a social equity framework. To date, we have completed the systematic review of literature, are scheduled to present our findings to the County’s Neighborhood and Community Services division July 28, 2021 and intend to submit the scoping review to either *Activities, Adaptations, and Aging Journal* or *Journal of Aging and Health* for publication in fall 2021 In the fall, we will continue with the partnership conducting interviews and focus groups.

- Ongoing partners
Educational Activities

- Undergraduate and graduate students and post-doctoral fellows mentored or financially supported
  - Graduate Students
    - PhD Students
      - Kellie Wilkerson
      - Fanni Farago
      - Amanda Warner
    - MA Students
      - Juliann Evans
      - Manraaj Nijjar
  - Educational or training activities for student affiliates or post-doctoral fellows
    - CSSR/IIR Professional Development Monthly Workshops
      - GRA Orientation Aug 2020
      - Immigration 101 Sep 2020
      - Graduate School Funding Nov 2020
      - Student Support & Advocacy Resources Nov 2020
      - Zotero Resources Dec 2020
      - Job Search Documents- Cover Letter/CV/Resume Jan 2021
      - Preparing for the Academic Job Search Feb 2021
      - Preparing for the Applied Social Science Jobs Mar 2021
      - SciENcv: Science Experts Network Curriculum Vitae April 2021
On-campus educational activities sponsored (e.g., lecture series, conferences)
  - Social Movements Workshop: Discussed research carried out by advanced PhD students, early career faculty, postdocs, and movement based activist scholars. This workshop is a new collaborative exchange between academic institutions with specialties in disciplined social movement research. This workshop was planned in partnership with University of California Santa Barbara, University of Pittsburgh, and York University.
    - Friday, April 23, 2021 2:00 pm- 4:00 pm: Presenters- Melanie Brazzell (UC Santa Barbara), Sergio Cabrales (University of Pittsburgh)
    - Friday, March 12, 2021 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm: Presenters- Heather Hax (York) & Dr. Abdallah Hendawy (Mason alum)

Off-campus educational activities sponsored
  - Thursday, April 29, 2021 7:00 pm- 8:30pm: What's Going on in Myanmar: The Coup & The State of International Democracy- The evening featured panelists focusing on Myanmar, the events leading up to the recent coup, as well as a brief history of the region and the impacts on the state of democracy in the Southeast Asia region and beyond. The goal - an evening of education, questions, and discussion - was to provide attendees with information not generally discussed in the news and elsewhere to gain insight and a better understanding of the issues involved.

Community-based educational activities sponsored
  - Tuesday, May 18, 2021 10:00 pm- 1:15 pm CSSR Openhouse: During the virtual open house, we introduced CSSR initiatives & projects, our research capabilities & newly formed research hubs, and engaged dialogue for bridge building for university researchers and community organizations.
  - Wednesday, April 21, 2021 5:00 pm- 7:30 pm: The Next System and the Academy: Systemic Crises, Movements, and Change in the 2020s- What are the duties of the academy to society in this period of transition? What are the duties of the academy to society in this period of systemic crisis, decay, rebuilding, and transition? This was a meaningful discussion among leading policymakers, innovators, community organizers, and academics working to prepare our society for a transition to a more democratic, sustainable, and fair political and economic system. Featured keynote U.S. Representative Mark Pocan (2nd CD, WI), Kali Akuno (Cooperation Jackson), Dr. Gar Alperovitz (Democracy Collaborative), Dr. Amy Best (George Mason University), Dr. Diane Fujino (UC Santa Barbara), Peter Knowlton (UE General President, retired), Dr. Ben Manski (George Mason University), and Mike Strode (U.S. Solidarity Economy Network). This was an Earth Week Event sponsored by the Center for Social Science Research, the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, and the Democratizing NOVA project at George Mason University, with support from many partners.
Thursday, January 28, 2021 12:00pm- 1:15 PM A Panel Discussion: Social Problems in the Age of COVID-19 Sociologists Responding to Change: In the summer of 2020, The Justice 21 Committee of the Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP) released two rapid-response digital volumes: Social Problems in the Age of COVID-19 to clarify the far-reaching effects of the worldwide coronavirus pandemic on an array of national and global social problems, from mass incarceration, isolation and inequality in education, and access to mental health care, to precarious and crowded housing and homelessness, unemployment, workplace closures, and exposure risk.

As social scientists, sociologists who study social problems are guided by a clear and simple directive: reduce human suffering. COVID-19, the disease and its attendant policies has not only intensified human suffering, it has laid bare a host of institutional failures—the building blocks of a healthy society and the structures upon which life depends. Though the full effects of the pandemic are not yet known, Social Problems in the Age of COVID-19 recognizes the vital need for rigorous research to inform social problems solutions, identify their root cause, and chart a realistic and effective policy response.

Introductory remarks: Dr. Amy Best (CSSR Interim director)

Opening and Closing remarks: Dr. Corey Dolgen, President, Society Study of Social Problems

Panel: Justice 21 Committee members: Dr. Glenn Mushert, Dr. David Lane, Dr. Jason Smith (Kaiser, Mason alum), Dr. Kristen Budd.

Training and Dissemination Activities

CSSR supports a weekly virtual writing group for sociology graduate students and department faculty Fridays 9:30-12:00. Launched in January 2021, the writing group operates as a drop-in group, with 6-9 attendees each week.

- CSSR webinars organized this semester were recorded and posted to CSSR website. These include:
  
  A Panel Discussion: Social Problems in the Age of COVID-19: Sociologists Responding to Change [https://cssr.gmu.edu/events/11653](https://cssr.gmu.edu/events/11653)

  The Next System and the Academy
  Full video from our April 21st launch of Next System Studies and Democratizing NOVA at George Mason University [https://cssr.gmu.edu/articles/15856](https://cssr.gmu.edu/articles/15856)

  CSSR Virtual Open House [https://cssr.gmu.edu/events/12256](https://cssr.gmu.edu/events/12256)
Translational Activities

- Partnerships with industry, government or other institutions to promote translation of scholarly work
  - Washington Evaluators: University Ambassador
  - The Sociologist, DC Sociological Society
  - The New School India China Institute

Revenue and Expenditure for Fiscal Year 2021

Please see the attached Excel spreadsheet (CSSR FY 21 Annual Report Budget_072221) for revenue and expenditures for FY 2021.