



CIVIS Alliance – Open Lab Project Impact Assessment Report

01 – PROJECT DESCRIPTION

- Title of the project** VERIS - Voices of Palmyra : Engaging (in)tangible memorial heritage in social innovation for refugee inclusion
- Project coordinator** University of Lausanne – Patrick M. Michel
- Universities involved** Oana Șerban, UNIL & Brittnee Leyse, UofG
- Hub theme** Society, culture, heritage;
- Project duration** May 2026-July 2026
- Place of the activities** Lausanne, Bucharest, Glasgow *(those outside of the EU covered with other funds)*

02 – PARTNERS/TARGET AUDIENCE

Number of internal and external stakeholders involved in and impacted by the project

INTERNAL (All CIVIS universities)				EXTERNAL (All CIVIS cities/regions)	
Academics	Researchers	Students	Admin personnel	Citizens	Other - please specify
3	5	2	4	0	12 Syrian Refugees

Non-university associations and organisations that have been involved in the project

ASSOCIATIONS/ORGANISATIONS		
Name	Country	Description
JRS – Jesuits Refugee Service	Romania	The NGO offered a strong connection to a target group, 12 Syrian refugees
UNESCO Chair in Interculturality, Good Governance and Sustainable Development	Romania, Bucharest	We published a UNESCO report on the role of (in)tangible cultural heritage in supporting the social inclusion of Middle East refugees in Europe and the therapeutic healing of traumatic pasts; with a particular section on

		the role of CIVIS in offering support to create public policies on protecting cultural heritage and filling the gap between TCH and ICH; also, it actively helped disseminating our deliverables through the UNIWTIN network
UNESCO Chair on Refugee Integration through Education, Language and Arts	UK, Glasgow	Contributed to disseminate our VERIS results by hosting a one hour interview with the VERIS team, under the umbrella of the RILA podcast

03 – PROJECT IMPACT

Social dimension

The VERIS Open Lab project has generated significant and measurable social impact by bringing together some of the most socially vulnerable communities in Europe — Syrian refugees and displaced persons — with academic researchers, civil society practitioners, and cultural institutions. Its core methodology, rooted in the principles of the Faro Convention, treats community participation not as a supplementary feature but as the very engine of the research process.

Partnerships, Collaborations, and Institutional Agreements

VERIS has been anchored in a formal multi-institutional consortium spanning three CIVIS universities — the University of Lausanne (lead partner, Patrick M. Michel), the University of Bucharest (Oana Șerban, with the support of Liliana Dumitrache and Lilian Ciachir), and the University of Glasgow (Brittnee Leysen) — complemented by MOEVETIA (Switzerland), the UNESCO Chair for Interculturality, Good Governance and Sustainable Development (University of Bucharest), and the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Romania as its principal civil society partner.

Beyond this core consortium, VERIS has developed active collaboration agreements and working relationships with the following institutions and programmes:

- ▶ JRS Jesuits Refugee Service, offering direct access to a target group of Syrian refugees for a workshop hosted in Bucharest
- ▶ UNESCO Chair in Interculturality, Good Governance and Sustainable Development (University of Bucharest): production of an open access-report on the gap between TCH and ICH in biopolitical contexts, and the role of cultural heritage in supporting social inclusion of Middle-Eastern refugees, with a focus on a particular topic, *Learning from VERIS – A CIVIS Open Lab raising the Voices of Palmyra. Reframing UNESCO Approaches to Heritage and Refugee Inclusion in Biopolitical Contexts*
- ▶ UNESCO RILA (University of Glasgow): production of a podcast disseminating VERIS findings to international audiences
- ▶ Théâtre de Vidy (Lausanne): hosting of the public evening event 'Between Silence and Movement: Beyond the Body', featuring artist-in-residence Ahmad Joudeh in dialogue with Patrick Michel (<https://www.vidy.ch/en/event/between-silence-and-movements-beyond-the-body/>)

Social Diversity of Participants

The project has worked directly with Syrian refugees. The Bucharest workshop of September 2025 engaged ten participants (two women, the rest of them men), directly challenging gendered assumptions about craft participation: male participants, encountering embroidery for the first time, engaged with notable intensity and emotional investment, producing testimonies that reconnected them with familial and cultural memories. The mix of genders, ages, and displacement trajectories — including refugees, asylum seekers, and persons with subsidiary protection status — reflects the project's commitment to inclusive recruitment practices.

At the Lausanne workshop (18–19 May 2026), participants included 10 in-person attendees and 5 online participants representing the full range of VERIS partners, alongside civil society actors and a live online testimony from Mohammed Alali, a Syrian refugee residing in Azraq Camp. The public evening at the Théâtre de Vidy drew a full house from the Lausanne public. At CIVIS Days 2026 (Bucharest, June 2026), the Embroidering Memories exhibition attracted a broad institutional audience including CIVIS Alliance members, students, and representatives of civil society.

Inclusion Objectives and Intercultural Co-Creation

A defining feature of VERIS's social methodology is its insistence on co-creation rather than top-down cultural provision. Refugees have not been treated as passive beneficiaries or data sources but as active co-producers of knowledge and cultural memory. This is evidenced by the album *Imagining Homeland* — co-edited by Michel and Șerban — which integrates refugee testimonies, embroidery objects, and oral histories as co-equal scholarly contributions. It is further evidenced by the selection of Wasfi Al Nassef, JRS Romania's intercultural mediator and a former refugee himself, as one of two VERIS representatives in the Portrait Gallery of Influential CIVIS Open Lab Members at CIVIS Days 2026, next to Oana Șerban, one of our influent Open Lab CIVIS members, who disclosed her professional experience with enhancing the social role of universities in the public sphere in biopolitical contexts.

The intercultural mediator's role has been central to the project's social design: Al Nassef served as the critical bridge between the research team and the Syrian community in Bucharest, ensuring that workshop recruitment, facilitation, and follow-up were conducted with cultural sensitivity, logistical flexibility (accommodating participants' irregular schedules and precarious circumstances), and genuine respect for participants' wellbeing. The presence of a trauma-specialist psychologist, Psychologist Adrian Socol, also an expert in Philosophical Counselling, during embroidery workshops, further illustrates the depth of the project's commitment to participant welfare.

The round table 'Open Labs Without Borders' at CIVIS Days 2026 (11 June 2026), in which Patrick Michel and Wasfi Al Nassef both presented, foregrounded the human dimension of cross-border collaboration: the relational trust, cultural negotiation, and community embeddedness that underpin meaningful social innovation.

Cultural dimension

VERIS has generated an unusually rich and diverse portfolio of cultural outputs, each of which serves simultaneously as a dissemination mechanism, a heritage preservation instrument, and a vehicle for intercultural dialogue. The project's cultural impact spans academic, civic, and community registers — making it distinctive within the CIVIS Open Lab landscape.

Dissemination Events

The following major dissemination and knowledge-production events were organised or co-organised by VERIS across the project cycle:

- ▶ Bucharest Open Lab Workshop (September 2025): a full-day programme combining virtual reality reconstruction of Palmyra, participatory embroidery workshops, and storytelling sessions with Syrian refugees, hosted by the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Bucharest, in partnership with JRS Romania. Covered by the CIVIS Newsroom (published 29 September 2025).
- ▶ Short-Term Scientific Mission, University of Glasgow (16–18 March 2026): intensive co-working sessions on the VERIS Toolkit, podcast recording with UNESCO RILA, and strategic meetings with partners of two complementary CIVIS Open Lab projects.

- ▶ International Workshop 'On the Importance of Culture and Heritage for Refugees: Resilience and Higher Education' (18–19 May 2026, IDHEAP, University of Lausanne): a two-day hybrid academic workshop with scholars from four countries, civil society partners, refugee participants (including an online live testimony from Azraq Camp), an internationally acclaimed artist (Ahmad Joudeh), and an expert in education in emergencies (Dr. Oula Abu-Amsha). The public evening at the Théâtre de Vidy — 'Between Silence and Movement: Beyond the Body' — extended the workshop's reach to the wider Lausanne public.
- ▶ CIVIS Days 2026 (Bucharest, June 2026): participation through the Embroidering Memories exhibition (artistic showcase of workshop outputs), the Imagining Homeland album presentation, and the round table 'Open Labs Without Borders'.

Cultural and Multimedia Outputs

VERIS's cultural production encompasses a range of formats designed to maximise accessibility and reach across different audiences:

- ▶ Imagining Homeland: Palmyra's (In)tangible Heritage and the Voices of Displacement — a visual monograph co-edited by Patrick M. Michel and Oana Șerban, combining archival images of Palmyra before and after its destruction, documentation of workshop processes, 3D reconstruction imagery of the Temple of Baalshamin, and refugee testimonies. The album's curatorial concept draws on Benedict Anderson's theory of imagined communities to argue that belonging is actively constructed through cultural practice.
- ▶ The VERIS Toolkit: Intangible Cultural Heritage and Safeguarding of Cultural Memories: Supporting Syrian Refugees in European Context — a five-module open-access resource developed across workshops in Romania, Switzerland, Jordan and Lebanon, designed for use by UNESCO Chairs, cultural practitioners, academics, and NGO workers. Modules cover: (A) storytelling and oral history; (B) crafts and traditional skills; (C) seasonal traditions; (D) creative methods of emotional processing; (E) knowledge transfer from the field to teaching.
- ▶ UNESCO Policy Report: Intangible Cultural Heritage as a Tool for Social Cohesion and Integration of Middle Eastern Refugees — produced under the auspices of the UNESCO Chair at the University of Bucharest, submitted to the Romanian National Commission of UNESCO for formal publication, already accepted for publication and in pending for the editorial execution in open access, ready to be disseminated through UNITWIN.
- ▶ Podcast in collaboration with UNESCO RILA (University of Glasgow): recorded during the Glasgow mission (March 2026), situating VERIS findings within international conversations on cultural heritage, displacement, and social integration.
- ▶ Academic article on symbolic violence and cognitive toponymy (nearing publication at time of final report).
- ▶ Embroidering Memories — an artistic exhibition of embroidered objects produced by Syrian refugees across workshop contexts, presented at CIVIS Days 2026, with the Tree of Life motif from the Temple of Baalshamin as the unifying visual symbol.

New Approaches to Learning and Cultural Transmission

VERIS has pioneered an integrated methodology that combines three distinct cultural technologies — virtual reality heritage reconstruction (photogrammetry of the Temple of Baalshamin), participatory embroidery, and oral history collection — to activate what might be called embodied cultural memory. The recognition that 'the body remembers what the mind cannot easily articulate' has led the project to treat creative craft practices as epistemic instruments, not merely as therapeutic activities.

The project has also demonstrated the cultural and pedagogical power of direct encounter: doing a follow up on a previous field trip to Petra for selected Azraq Camp students — organised by professor Michel in a different context — invited speakers demonstrated that symbolic recognition of refugees as learners and cultural agents can be transformative in ways that no amount of online content delivery can replicate, which was an insightful feedback within VERIS, on the occasion of our two-days conference of Lausanne.

Student testimonies collected in Bucharest, documenting how university students were changed by their engagement with refugee narratives through the VERIS methodology, represent a further layer of cultural impact: the project has altered the understanding of belonging, displacement, and cultural identity among the next generation of European scholars and practitioners. Many of their testimonies have been actively disseminated through the Instagram account of VERIS, tagging official CIVIS and UNESCO profiles for a higher impact and visibility.

Economic dimension

VERIS has developed its economic and financial architecture across two principal axes: institutional funding received within the CIVIS2 framework, and strategic planning for future revenue streams that will ensure the project's long-term sustainability beyond the current funding cycle.

VERIS was funded as a CIVIS Open Lab project, with the University of Lausanne as lead applicant and the Universities of Bucharest and Glasgow as co-applicants. The CIVIS Open Lab mechanism provided financial support for workshop organisation, partner travel, materials, and dissemination activities, enabling a project that would not have been possible within single-institution or single-disciplinary funding frameworks. The project mobilised the resources of three European research universities and a major NGO (JRS Romania) in a genuinely integrated, co-funded research and civic engagement programme.

Additional Funding, Investments, and Contributions

- ▶ MOEVETIA (Switzerland): additional financial partner contributing to the Swiss component of the project activities
- ▶ European Union: project co-funded within the broader CIVIS Alliance institutional framework
- ▶ UNESCO Chair for Interculturality, Good Governance and Sustainable Development (University of Bucharest): in-kind and institutional contribution through the production and submission of the UNESCO policy report, and through the SMOC (Sustainable Management in Cultural Organisations) project partnership for the Imagining Homeland album
- ▶ Théâtre de Vidy (Lausanne): in-kind contribution of venue for the public event of 18 May 2026, extending the project's public cultural footprint beyond the academic circuit
- ▶ Interface Platform (UNIL): supported the earlier phases of the project before its CIVIS-funded expansion and the event at Théâtre de Vidy.

Future Funding Development

The Lausanne workshop (May 2026) produced a clear strategic consensus on two major funding development initiatives:

- ▶ CIVIS Civic Engagement Application (deadline 30 June 2026): a joint application to the CIVIS call for Civic Engagement Projects, with the University of Lausanne as lead applicant and the Universities of Bucharest, Glasgow, Rome and Madrid as co-applicants. JRS Romania will be among the external stakeholder partners. Successful application would fund a further cross-border workshop (preferred location: Madrid) with up to €10,000 in project support.
- ▶ European Research Council (ERC) Proposal: the consortium initiated discussions about an ERC grant application that would provide five-year financial independence and research capacity at a scale commensurate with the intellectual and social ambitions of the project's theoretical and practical contributions.

Other Opportunities

The project has supported employment and professional development in several respects: it has generated sustained engagement for intercultural mediators (Wasfi Al Nassef), academic researchers (the three principal investigators and graduate researchers including Lilian Ciachir and Alina Mareci), and NGO practitioners (JRS Romania). The Toolkit, upon open-access publication, will create economic pathways for cultural practitioners, educators, and NGO workers who adopt its modules — reducing the barrier to entry for heritage-based inclusion work across Europe. The future micro-credential initiative at UNIL–UNIGE, under the umbrella of the Collart-Palmyre Project and the Cultural Heritage Programme, offering three ECTS credits to Azraq Camp refugees or any refugee attending this course, creates a formal

pathway toward academic and professional recognition that has direct economic implications for refugee learners seeking European employment or further study.

Added value for the beneficiaries

The beneficiaries of VERIS are multiple and mutually constituting: Syrian refugees and displaced persons across European and Middle Eastern contexts are the primary beneficiaries; the broader university communities of Lausanne, Bucharest, and Glasgow are secondary beneficiaries; and European civil society, cultural institutions, and policy-makers constitute a third tier. The value created for each group is distinct but interconnected.

Social, Cultural, and Psychological Value for Refugees

The most direct and personal form of added value generated by VERIS is the transformation experienced by refugee participants in the embroidery workshops and heritage activities. The project has consistently documented the following outcomes:

- ▶ Identity continuity: refugees who participated in embroidery workshops reported a reactivation of cultural memory — the recall of specific family traditions, patterns associated with weddings or festivals, or memories of places they have not seen since their displacement. The body, in the project's own formulation, remembers what the mind cannot easily articulate.
- ▶ Psychosocial wellbeing: the structured integration of trauma-informed facilitation within creative workshops — with a specialist psychologist present — provided a culturally sensitive space for emotional processing, avoiding the clinical connotations that prevent many refugees from accessing conventional psychological services.
- ▶ Community cohesion: workshops brought together participants from different Syrian regions, generations, and displacement trajectories, creating new bonds of solidarity and shared cultural reference that persist beyond the workshop context.
- ▶ Recognition and dignity: the selection of Al Nassef for the CIVIS Portrait Gallery, the formal certificate ceremony at Petra (in the context of the Cultural Heritage Programme), and the inclusion of refugee voices and objects in the Imagining Homeland album all represent acts of institutional recognition that affirm refugees' status as cultural agents and knowledge producers — not merely beneficiaries.
- ▶ Educational access: the online Cultural Heritage Programme (Azraq Camp), the UNIR programme, and the micro-credential initiative represent concrete, tangible improvements in refugees' access to higher education and formal learning recognition.

Value for the University Community

VERIS has also created substantial value for the university communities involved. Student testimonies collected in Bucharest document that engagement with the VERIS methodology and refugee narratives significantly altered students' understanding of migration, displacement, and cultural identity — demonstrating that heritage-based refugee inclusion work has a transformative effect on the broader academic community, not only on direct participants.

Environmental and Technological Innovation

The use of “post-mortem” photogrammetry — reconstructing three-dimensional models of destroyed monuments from archival photographs — represents a significant technological contribution in heritage science. VERIS has demonstrated that this technique, developed at Lausanne on the occasion of the Collart-Palmyre project, can be deployed not merely as an archival tool but as a community engagement instrument: the immersive VR experience of the Temple of Baalshamin, offered as a preparatory stimulus before each embroidery workshop, enables refugees to reconnect with a shared cultural landscape that no longer physically exists. This innovation in the use of digital heritage technology for social inclusion purposes is one of VERIS's most distinctive contributions.

Relevance to the context

VERIS is rooted in a context of acute and growing urgency. As of June 2025, 117.3 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide (UNHCR Global Trends Report). Of these, fewer than 7% have access to higher education — compared to a global average of 42%. Within Romania, a country that has historically

functioned primarily as a transit rather than a destination country for refugees, the integration infrastructure remains fragile and inconsistently implemented, making the JRS partnership and the University of Bucharest's engagement with the Romanian National Council for Refugees especially significant.

External Relevance: Local, National, and International

At the local level, VERIS embedded itself within the lived context of Syrian refugees in Bucharest — a dispersed urban population with demanding daily schedules and precarious legal and economic situations. JRS Romania's logistical and cultural mediation expertise was essential to making the workshops accessible and meaningful in this context.

At the national level, the project's collaboration with the Romanian National Council for Refugees, and the submission of the UNESCO report to the Romanian National Commission of UNESCO, situate VERIS within national policy conversations about refugee integration and cultural inclusion. The project has demonstrated that universities can and should be active institutional partners in this conversation — not merely as observers but as designers and implementers of solutions.

At the international level, VERIS connects to some of the most pressing global agendas: UNESCO's 2003 Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage (and the need to update it for biopolitical contexts), the UNHCR mandate on refugee education, the INEE standards for education in emergencies, and the European Union's broader commitments to social cohesion and the inclusion of non-European communities. The project's participation in the CIVIS Days 2026 — the flagship annual event of a ten-university European civic university alliance — placed it at the centre of institutional conversations about the future of European higher education in relation to social challenges. Also, Collart-Palmyre/Voix de Palmyre Programme will keep on working with JRS with other fundings.

Internal Relevance: University Strategies and Community Engagement

VERIS has been strategically relevant to each of its partner institutions in distinct ways:

- ▶ University of Lausanne: VERIS participated in the development of the UNIR programme (launching September 2026), providing methodological grounding and community relationship capital for UNIL's institutional commitment to refugee inclusion in higher education. Prof. Michel's workshops with students of the UNESCO Chair (10 June 2026) embedded VERIS findings in the next generation of researchers at UNIL.
- ▶ University of Bucharest: the project reinforced the University's positioning as a UNESCO Chair holder and a civic institution engaged with the most vulnerable communities in Romanian society. The UNESCO policy report, developed under the Chair, represents a high-profile scholarly and policy output with direct relevance to the University's institutional mission.
- ▶ University of Glasgow: VERIS deepened the University's engagement with CIVIS Open Lab activity, established productive connections with three other Glasgow-based CIVIS projects (Mirna Slavic's 'Home as Story', Maria Grazia Imperiale's lifelong learning project, and Stephen Forcer's AUPHF work, tackling a common project proposal for Call 2.1), and produced a podcast with UNESCO RILA, and finally established a connection with the Faro Project CIVIS Open Lab as well.

The growing sense of belonging generated by the project — for refugees who feel their cultural heritage is taken seriously by European academic institutions, for students who gain a transformed understanding of displacement through firsthand engagement with refugee narratives, and for researchers who find in VERIS a framework capable of bridging scholarly rigour and social impact — represents one of its most intangible but most important contributions.

Explain how the project has fulfilled the goals and objectives of the European project CIVIS2 (Erasmus+, 2022-2026).

VERIS has been designed, from its inception as a CIVIS Open Lab, to embody and advance the core objectives of CIVIS2 — and more specifically of Stream 1, which targets civic engagement, social innovation, and the strengthening of university–community collaboration for the benefit of vulnerable and underserved populations. The following section addresses each major Stream 1 objective in turn,

demonstrating how VERIS has fulfilled, and in several cases exceeded, what was proposed in the original project application.

Civic Engagement and University–Community Partnership

Stream 1 places civic engagement at the heart of Open Lab activity: universities are expected not merely to study social challenges from a distance, but to become active partners in addressing them. VERIS has fulfilled this objective with exceptional depth. The partnership with JRS Romania — a major international humanitarian organisation working daily with Syrian refugees in Bucharest — has been not a peripheral arrangement but the structural foundation of the project's fieldwork in Romania. The JRS brought irreplaceable expertise in refugee community engagement, cultural mediation, and the logistical challenges of working with a dispersed urban refugee population. The reciprocity of the partnership was demonstrated at the Lausanne workshop roundtable, where JRS practitioners offered frank feedback on the VERIS methodology that refined and improved the project's approach.

The public event at the Théâtre de Vidy, the CIVIS Days exhibition, and the CIVIS Newsroom feature article (September 2025) all represent outward-facing civic engagements that extend the project's reach beyond the academic community to Swiss, Romanian, and European publics.

Social Innovation in Refugee Inclusion

Stream 1 calls for projects that develop and demonstrate social innovation — new approaches to persistent social challenges. VERIS's core methodological innovation — combining “post-mortem” photogrammetric VR reconstruction of destroyed heritage, participatory embroidery, and oral history collection within a theoretically grounded biopolitical framework — represents a genuine contribution to the field of heritage-based refugee inclusion. The methodology has been tested across multiple geographic and community contexts (Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Switzerland) outside VERIS, and in Romania, within VERIS, demonstrating its transferability and adaptability. Its formalisation in the VERIS Toolkit, to be published open-access, ensures that the innovation is shared with the widest possible audience of practitioners, educators, and NGO workers.

The theoretical framework — particularly the concept of 'heritage crime with intangible consequences' and the argument for 'participatory justice' rather than mere symbolic recognition of refugee cultural identity — advances the scholarly understanding of heritage governance in ways that have direct policy implications for UNESCO and for European university alliances.

Interdisciplinary and Cross-Border Collaboration

Stream 1 prizes the ability to build genuine cross-border collaboration that adds value greater than the sum of its institutional parts. VERIS has consistently exemplified this principle. The three partner universities brought distinct and complementary expertise: UNIL's heritage science and VR reconstruction capabilities (Prof. Michel); the University of Bucharest's philosophical and biopolitical framework, and its UNESCO Chair engagement (Prof. Șerban); and the University of Glasgow's education in emergencies expertise, community arts methodology, and UNESCO RILA connections (Dr. Leysen). These complementarities were not incidental: they were built into the project's design and activated at each major event.

The Glasgow mission (March 2026), the Lausanne workshop (May 2026), and the CIVIS Days engagement (June 2026) each required and produced substantive cross-border collaboration — The proposed CIVIS 2.1 application, with Madrid added as a fourth university partner, will deepen and extend this cross-border architecture.

Knowledge Production and Open Access

Stream 1 expects Open Labs to produce knowledge that is disseminated openly and accessibly, beyond academic circuits. VERIS has produced an exceptionally rich knowledge portfolio: the Imagining Homeland album; the VERIS Toolkit (forthcoming open access); the UNESCO policy report (forthcoming UNESCO publication); the academic article on symbolic violence and cognitive toponymy; the UNESCO RILA podcast; the CIVIS Newsroom article; and the Embroidering Memories exhibition. This portfolio spans

academic, policy, cultural, and community registers — ensuring that VERIS's findings reach researchers, practitioners, policy-makers, civil society, and the general public alike.

The micro-credential initiative (with an UNIL–UNIGE joint certificate for Azraq Camp refugees) represents a form of open knowledge recognition: extending formal academic acknowledgement to learners who have historically been excluded from higher education systems.

Impact, Evaluation, and the Recognition of Refugee Agency

Stream 1 requires projects to demonstrate genuine, measurable impact and to develop robust mechanisms for evaluating it. VERIS has pursued a multi-layered approach to impact assessment: the collection of participant testimonies during workshops; the online testimony of Mohammed Alali from Azraq Camp during the Lausanne workshop; the roundtable with JRS practitioners specifically designed to implement feedback and test social impact claims; and the collection of student testimonies from University of Bucharest students who engaged with refugee narratives through the project.

Most significantly, VERIS has insisted that impact assessment itself must be participatory — that refugees must be involved in defining the terms of evaluation, not merely counted as data points in institutional performance metrics. The selection of Wasfi Al Nassef for the CIVIS Portrait Gallery is a concrete institutional expression of this principle: it recognises that community practitioners — those without formal academic affiliations but with irreplaceable lived expertise — are co-producers of Open Lab impact, not merely its recipients.

In sum, VERIS has fulfilled the CIVIS2 Stream 1 objectives not merely by delivering its proposed outputs — workshops, toolkit, album, report, podcast, exhibition — but by demonstrating that the Open Lab model, when built on genuine partnership, theoretical rigour, and sustained community relationship, can generate a form of social innovation that is simultaneously scholarly, civic, and transformative. The Temple of Baalshamin may have been reduced to rubble. But its Tree of Life — embroidered in cloth, documented in albums, reconstructed in virtual space, and carried in the memories of those who were displaced from its shadow — continues to grow.

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