

Cultural Heritage Cluster Conference 7-9 May 2018 Long Report

The Middle East and North Africa have an immense cultural heritage wealth in both physical structures and objects and in terms of human customs and traditions, but ongoing geopolitical tensions across the region make the preservation and safeguarding of this heritage delicate at best. To build a cross-regional network of professional cultural heritage professionals, COSIMENA brought together MENA's leading archaeologists, historians, scientists, curators, and practitioners on 7 and 9 May 2018 in Cairo to celebrate the birth of COSIMENA's 7th thematic Cluster on Heritage.

UNESCO defines 'Cultural Heritage' as the legacy of physical artefacts and intangible attributes of a group or society that are inherited from past generations, maintained in the present and bestowed for the benefit of future generations. As such, cultural heritage is made up of two distinct categories: tangible heritage, which includes buildings and historic places, monuments and artefacts considered worthy of preservation for the future, and intangible heritage. The latter concerns the protection and safeguarding of cultural identities and humankind's cultural diversity. Traditional festivals, oral traditions and epics, customs, ways of life, traditional crafts are some of the core elements of the intangible cultural heritage.

The conference, which lasted two days and a half, was initiated by a one-hour panel discussion where archaeologists and historians informed the audience on cultural heritage's ramifications and highlighted how much this concept evolved over time. The presentations on the second day were held at the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization (NMEC) in Fustat, and organisations and initiatives involved in cultural heritage study and preservation were presented, as well as study programmes. On day three of the conference, which took place at the DAAD premises in Zamalek, regional experts from various fields delved into tangible and intangible heritage by exposing their research work and calling for collaboration.

What is Cultural Heritage?

The panel discussion held on 7 May kick started the Heritage Cluster Conference with central questions: What is Cultural Heritage? What does it encompass? How much and why has this definition fluctuated so much over time? How can we protect the past, how do we choose what ought to be preserved, be it physical or not, and how do we safeguard it for future generations? Leading historians and archaeologists were tasked with answering these during a conversation moderated by Dr. Monica Hanna, who heads the Arab Academy of Sciences' Archaeology and Cultural Heritage Unit.

In his welcome address that preceded the panel discussion, the Director of the DAAD Regional Office Cairo, Dr. Roman Luckscheiter, expressed his pleasure at the presence of these esteemed guests. "Having the professors, junior scientists, researchers, entrepreneurs, practitioners and policy makers from a region of the world that is invaluable in terms of human heritage of culture and civilization is a great honour," he said. To Luckscheiter, defining how



we interpret all aspects of cultural heritage enables us to find ways to protect and preserve this heritage. He also pointed out the relevance and necessity of involving communities in the discussions pertaining to heritage preservation, and to ensure that this heritage is accessible to most. "By setting up this networking platform, new innovative strategies and scientific collaboration can arise to help the world preserve its heritage and bridge the gap between the people and their cultural history," he added. Simon Brombeiss, the German Embassy's cultural attaché, also gave a short address praising the leading authorities on the panel. "I have heard from a number of colleagues that this is the concentrated power of heritage, science and Egyptology brought together here," he said, also praising the Heritage Cluster's regional focus.

Dr. Monica Hanna then turned to the panellists and asked them to define cultural heritage. "As an archaeologist by profession, I have a straightforward approach to cultural heritage," explained Prof. Dr. Stephan Seidlmayer, the Director of the Cairo Department of the German Archaeological Institute. "It is the remains of the past which we find in Egypt and in most countries, and our job is to identify, document and make it accessible, physically and intellectually." Prof. Dr. Moawiyah Ibrahim Yousef, the Jordanian representative to the World Heritage committee at UNESCO, highlighted that several MENA countries are unaware of the massive responsibility derived from having so many archaeological and cultural properties. Depending on the country, different departments are tasked with preserving cultural heritage across the region. For some, like Egypt and Saudi Arabia, it is the Ministry of Antiquities' responsibility to safeguard this heritage, and for others it is handled by the Ministry of Culture. "But in the region, each country has a very different response and awareness of cultural heritage," Yousef added. Dr. Tarek Tawfik, Director General of the Grand Egyptian Museum Project, explains that heritage has ceased being the sole commodity of the rich to become accessible to the wider public. "Until the past few decades, collections in Egypt were gathered by the monarchy and only visited by the elites; it is only more recently that heritage has become within the reach of the general public."

All of history's great periods have been well documented by archaeologists and historians, but the industrial age (19th and 20th centuries) has not been well studied, explained Seidlmayer. "Significant monuments of a very recent past do not fall under the protection of the Ministry of Antiquities," he said. Widening the scope of what is considered cultural heritage worthy of protection and preservation comes with a string of political and administrative issues. "The way how we deal with this heritage is a political process and is not understood by itself," Seidlmayer added.

Prof. Dr. Friederike Seyfried, the Director of the Egyptian Museum and Papyrus Collection in Berlin, explains that the shift in the definition of what cultural heritage encompasses has made it much broader. "It now includes oral traditions, media, photography, and our nearest past becomes our heritage, not just archaeological remains," she said. This approach to cultural heritage is hence much more inclusive than a century ago, which poses problems of conservation and archiving given the sheer mass of information that's available. Prof. Dr. Birgit Schäbler, Director of the Orient-Institut Beirut, questions how elements of heritage which cannot be captured such as oral history, memory and rituals, can be safeguarded in the same way as manuscripts, documents and books - traditionally part of the educated elite. "What



kind of memories are there? Which ones are to be preserved?" she asked, raising one of the most difficult questions of the entire conversation, and conference. "How do we preserve these sources and make history part of the future?"

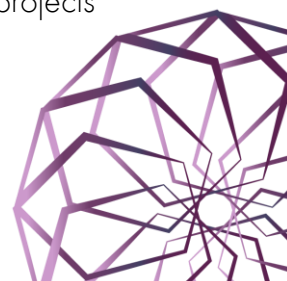
All the panellists agreed that the process of identifying, documenting and disseminating cultural heritage, either tangible or not, needs to be community-inclusive. "We have to involve local communities and take into account their relationship and understanding of cultural heritage," said Yousef. He believes that a top down approach on cultural heritage would entail important heritage losses. Moreover, it has been observed in the region that awareness of the value of heritage within a community results in lesser damage and destruction. Schäbler believes important to study the shifting relations between communities and their neighbourhood. "Studies have shown that if the relations are good between people and the place they live in, then there is a higher rate of survival for monuments, manuscripts and the rest."

An overview of Arab-German collaborations in Cultural Heritage

The next morning, all participants gathered in the newly opened National Museum of Egyptian Civilization (NMEC). Since most of the audience had never visited NMEC before, the director Eng. Mahrous Said provided a good overview. The project was initially conceptualized in 1982 by UNESCO at the end of their Nubia campaign that saved Ancient Egyptian monuments from being flooded by Lake Nasser. The funds that were left were dedicated to the future construction of NMEC and of the Nubian Museum in Aswan. The work really started in 2004, on the shores of the natural Salt Lake in Fustat, on a total area of 135,000 square meters. NMEC consists of two main buildings: the museum and the reception, which hosts a cinema, an auditorium, space for 32 stores, a parking area for 500 cars and 50 buses. The Museum building has 9 galleries, and an education department. The core gallery isn't finished yet but should be open within a year, Said declared. The only gallery open at this stage is a temporary exhibition of crafts, jewellery, textile, woodwork and pottery retracing Egypt's thriving arts and crafts over history. The iconic piece of this exhibition, added just a few weeks ago, is a mother-of-pearl encrusted Minbar dating from the Mamluk area. Said also mentioned that the future capital's history museum will be entirely multimedia based and will be located in the pyramid that crowns the structure, enabling visitors to observe all of Cairo's historical sites with telescopes.

Joint Research and Programmes

Prof. Nizar Abu-Jaber from the German Jordanian University, Dr. Karin Kindermann from University of Cologne and Dr. Felicia Meynersen from the German Archaeological Institute (DAI) all gave presentations highlighting dynamic collaborations between Germany and Arab countries in the field of cultural heritage. In 2011, Abu-Jaber created the Study of Natural and Cultural Heritage Center at his university, to foster understanding and research in Jordan for this field of research. Awarded the Prince Hassan for Scientific Excellence prize in 2015, the centre focuses on advocacy, awareness building, research, and implementation, most of it conducted by Abu-Jaber who runs the operation on his own. The centre has a few projects





that are ongoing. One in particular is looking at reviving ancient Nabatean flood management systems in Petra, when recurrent and violent flash floods have caused some destruction and taken a few lives. The Petra Ancient Terrace project started in 2015, and the final phase that's ongoing is funded by the US Ambassador's fund. "We are rebuilding a flood control system on one of the tributaries draining into the Treasury area," Abu-Jaber explained.

Dr. Karin Kindermann from the University of Cologne gave an overview of the ongoing projects between Germany and the MENA region on cultural heritage projects. As a prehistoric archaeologist, she is involved in a broad geo-archeological project identifying the main migration routes of our ancestors from Africa to Europe. "The Middle East is incredibly important for anatomically modern human dispersal, and our research focuses on two locations: the Sodmein cave in Egypt's Eastern desert that hosts human debris, and an open site in Wadi Sabra in Jordan," explained Kindermann. Sodmein cave, located 40 kilometres northwest of Quseir on the Red Sea coast, contains four meters of human occupational debris, and very well preserved organic material such as bones, plant remains, bark, and burnt bones of large buffalos and elephants. Kindermann believes that this research would benefit from increased collaboration with local universities and stresses the importance of training Egyptian students. "Quarrying activities were threatening the integrity of Sodmein and Egyptian colleagues managed to put an end to it," she said, stressing that collaboration is essential to protect and preserve important heritage sites. Wadi Sabra is located at the East of the Dead Sea Rift in Jordan and is used to reconstruct the paleo-climatic evolution over millions of years. Kindermann explains that this valley could have been an early corridor of migration from Africa to Europe. "Because of the complex political situation in the MENA region, we train young researchers at our institute in Cologne," Kindermann pointed out. They currently have a Syrian student working on her PhD comparing sites in Syria.

Dr. Felicia Meynensen's focuses on crisis archaeology at the **German Archaeological Institute (DAI)**, a discipline that incorporate risk analysis and crisis response to traditional archaeological and information technology. "Methodologies need to be tailored to the context of countries," she said. She focuses on Syria, and her project formulates an answer to how to respond to crisis, making cultural data available as part of a network. From 2004 onwards, Meynensen set up a German-Syrian programme centred around Palmyra to provide further training for Syrian archaeologists who would in turn ensure the safeguard of the site's artefacts. The network, which officially launched in 2016, is coordinated at DAI. The library at the Damascus branch of the project is still functioning. This network has pulled in 20 experts from various institutions in an effort to harness synergies. They work on training, capacity building, project management, and education in collaboration with Jordanian, Syrian and Iraqi colleagues. "DAI isn't involved in reconstruction work, but it generates essential data and sets up the essential information structures for reconstruction efforts, in a kind of zero moment zone," she explained.

Cooperation Facilitating Organisations

The next session provided more detailed information about key cooperation organizations in the field of cultural heritage, namely DAAD, ISESCO, Horizon 2020 and UNESCO.



The DAAD, since it first opened its Cairo office in 1960, has been involved in dynamic and numerous collaboration activities, including PhD programmes, short term scholarships, and post doc programmes. The DAAD offers study trips, summer courses, and tailored scholarships for Master's candidates hailing from developing countries. PhD candidates can apply for scholarships as well, be them long-term or short-term. At a later stage, postdocs can receive financial help to increase the mobility of teachers between Germany and Egypt, and research fellowships to pursue their work in a German university. Over the years, DAAD has established 8 joint-master programmes with partner universities in Egypt (Cairo, Helwan and Ain Shams) and with other universities in the MENA region. For example, the Master's in 'Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency for the MENA region' (REMENA) is offered by the University of Kassel, Cairo University and Monastir University in Tunisia. They range from energy, water, economics, politics, urban planning and heritage conservation.

The Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) based in Rabat, Morocco, was founded in the late 1970s by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to strengthen and promote cooperation among the Member States in the fields of education, science culture and communication. ISESCO has 52 members and appoints on a yearly basis an Islamic cultural capital of Asia, the Arab region and Africa. "ISESCO helps Muslim countries register cultural, historical and natural sites on the UNESCO and ISESCO lists," **Dr. Mohammad Younis** explained. The current action plans include promoting the protection of tangible and intangible cultural heritage and providing capacity building knowledge in this field. The organization is also involved in stifling cultural artefacts' trafficking in areas of conflict, and in encouraging member states to develop a legislation to protect their heritage. In 2017, ISESCO members adopted a resolution in Khartoum for the creation of a strategic guide to develop national laws to protect heritage.

The emblematic organization protecting cultural heritage worldwide is undoubtedly the UNESCO, the only UN agency with a mandate to protect and safeguard culture through six conventions and legally-binding international treaties. "Culture has the capacity to transform societies, through monuments, cultural expressions, traditions and museums, and is a source of cohesion for people," said **Tatiana Villegas-Zamora, UNESCO Regional Bureau for Sciences in the Arab States and Cluster office for Egypt, Sudan and Libya**. From 1954 and the adoption of The Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Even of Armed Conflict all the way to latest adopted Convention to protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions (2015), UNESCO has been at the forefront of cultural heritage protection by working with ministries, setting up heritage inventories, helping in restitution of artifacts, working on legislation and with national police, INTERPOL and customs officials.

Horizon 2020 funds research, technological development and innovation and is implemented by the European Commission. It coordinated national research policies and pools research funding in some fields to avoid duplication. Running from 2014, it will launch calls for proposal until 2020. So far, it has provided an estimated 80 billion euros in funding. While this is an EU funded programme, it is open to countries outside of the EU, including Egypt, which is eligible to receive funding as part of a consortium to get a grant. "Horizon 2020 covers all areas of research, from basic research to market innovations, humanities, nanotech, environment and food," said **Dr. Heba Gaber, Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation**



Officer for the South Mediterranean region. The EU-fund is articulated around three pillars: 'excellent science,' which provide grants for individual researchers, 'industrial leadership' that encourages frontier research, and 'societal challenges' which calls for a multidisciplinary and challenge-based approach to solve economic and societal issues. For the last phase of Horizon 2020 which is ongoing, 30 billion euro have yet to be granted until 2020 through calls for proposal from researchers, universities, research organizations, companies and NGOs.

Best Practice: Joint Programmes

The **University of Cologne and Cairo University** established a joint Master's in Environmental Archaeology, led by **Dr. Rudolph Kuper and Prof. Mostafa Atallah**. It deals with a wide array of fields, including invisible archaeology-the study of intangible properties of archaeological deposits- Egyptology, geology, geography, and botany. The programme is organized as follows: the candidates spend the second semester in Germany during which they attend lectures and take part in excavations from prehistoric sites, and then come back to Egypt and work on famous rock art sites in Dakhla. The idea to create this joint programme first emerged in 2011, when the two professors decided to invest in the future generation of Egyptian archaeologists. The first student joined in September 2013, and the first batch of students graduated in 2016.

The universities **Helwan University and BTU Cottbus–Senftenberg** have established a joint Masters in Heritage Conservation and Site Management (HCSM) back in 2012 within the Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management. **Prof. Dr. Rasha Metawi**, who heads the programme at Helwan University, explained that the Memorandum of Understanding between the two universities was signed in May 2012 and then submitted to the DAAD, which gave it a grant just a month later. The four-semester-programme started in September 2013, and attracted students from a variety of backgrounds, including architecture, archaeology, and art studies. Students need to choose either Helwan or BTU as their home university, and one semester out of the four must be spent in the other. In 2016, Helwan University developed a track on heritage protection in conflict and post conflict recovery that is only taught there. Lately, the university has created a PhD for Heritage and Museum Studies. "An entire department has emerged from one single programme," said Dr. Metwai, who stressed that DAAD granted 10 scholarships for Arab refugee students residing in Egypt, and 5 for Egyptian nationals.

Lastly, **Dr. Mary Kupelian and Dr. Ossama Abdel Meguid from Helwan University** presented the joint Master's programme they established with the University of Würzburg on Museum Studies, the first programme of its kind in the Middle East. Started in 2014, the programme provides Egyptian and international students with a wide array of modules and bridging institutions. It prepares experts in charge of passing on cultural heritage to future generations. It combines practice and theory and involves research in active museums across Egypt. "Thanks to the DAAD, professors from Germany and Egypt travel back and forth seamlessly," said Dr. Kupelian. In the last semester, the student's project had to be in cooperation with a museum, and since most national museums don't have collection management policies, the students have provided 24 so far.





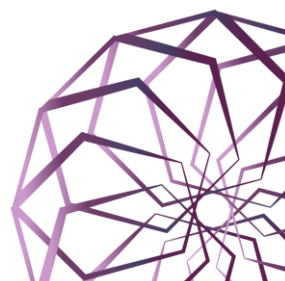
Cooperation Opportunities in Tangible Heritage

On May 9th, multiple presentations were given in the morning on object based and tangible heritage research from Sudan, Egypt, Germany, and Jordan, on varied topic such as pharaonic culture in Sudan, mass-housing in Germany, climate change threats to ancient Egyptian monuments and Dead Sea Scrolls. In addition to exploring the core research conducted by these scientists, this block of presentations followed by a panel discussion aimed to engage and spur new avenues for collaboration.

“Survival of Pharaonic Cultural Heritage in Darfur in Western Sudan” – Dr. Gafar A.F. Ibrahim from Nyala University in Darfur, Sudan, works for the Center for Darfur Heritage and dedicates his research to the survival of Pharaonic cultural heritage in this region of Western Sudan. “The Western Nile Valley is a study no man’s land, and only one German archaeologist has ever worked in the area in environmental archaeology,” explained Dr. Ibrahim. Darfur is strongly related to pre-dynastic Egypt and to the Kingdom of Kush-an ancient Kingdom in Nubia. In 1984, German archaeologists discovered a fortress adorned with engravings and Demotic inscriptions, the ancient Egyptian script preceding Coptic. “This discovery gave further evidence of the spread of cultural heritage from Egypt to Darfur,” he said. Ostrich feathers were used by Pharaohs and the Daju culture alike, Amon Re rituals have been conserved in Darfur traditional dances, and ‘doum’ -a drink made of palm tree fruit is consumed during Ramadan in both countries. “Further excavations and cooperation is a necessity to advance research and study on cultural heritage of ancient civilizations of the region,” Dr. Ibrahim concluded.

“The Climate, Climate Change and it's Impacts on Tangible Culture Heritage of Egypt” – Dr. Hossam Ismail from Assiut University New Valley Branch gave a presentation on the impacts of climate change on tangible cultural heritage in Egypt. He chose the temple of Hibis, located near the Farafra Oasis in the Western desert as a case study. A little under 50 archaeological sites exist in and around this oasis, including Deir el Monira, El-Bagawat, Toleib, Labkha, and Gebel Teir-which has rock art, but they haven’t been studied properly, if at all. Hibis temple, constructed in 660 BC, suffers from subsurface water infiltrations that affect the integrity of the limestone structure. Salt weathering has caused some stones to fall, and some inscriptions have faded and disappeared.

“Qualitative Advantages in Mass-Housing Estates built in the 1960s and 1970s in Post-War Germany” – A perfect example of German-Egyptian research came next in the person of Khaled Z. Mostafa from the Technical University of Munich. This young Egyptian architecture researcher is looking into the qualitative advantages of post-war mass-housing estates in Germany. “5 million mass-housing projects were destroyed across Germany during the second world war, and this plus the 12 Million refugees that came to Germany plunged the country’s cities in a housing crisis,” he explained. 240 mass-housing estates were built to answer this housing need in the 1960s and 1970s, all sporting high rises, high concentration, with at least one school and a shopping centre. “They ask the following question: do these rather recent buildings constitute cultural heritage? Are they worth preserving?” continued





Mostafa. Consequently, his project is looking at the archive element of these settlements, and at creating some glossary for discussion to assess whether it's worth saving.

"The Interpretation of Ancient Texts: Internal Evidence vs. Cultural Historical Model" - Dr. Omar Al Ghul from Yarmouk University in Irbid, Jordan, has been working on a research project on the Dead Sea Scrolls. In the late 1940s and in the 1950s, 35,000 fragments of written text on papyri and parchment were found by Bedouin shepherds and archaeologists in a series of twelve caves around the site of Wadi Qumran near the Dead Sea-in the West Bank of the Jordan River. Dated to the period between the second century BC and the first century AD, the Scrolls are 80% written in Hebrew and 20% in Aramaic. "The bulk of the text were kept in Jerusalem, after the occupation of West Bank and Jerusalem, and taken over illegally by the occupying powers," said Dr. Al-Ghul. He started a project to involve Jordan's researchers in the study of the Dead Sea Scrolls, since very little academic work had been done in Jordan. He applied for a grant, established a library and published 6 books. Because the heavily studied scrolls had been mostly looked at from a religious or ideological lens, removed from their cultural and historical context, Al-Ghul wanted to focus on replacing these scrolls in their proper cultural, geographical and historical framework. "We picked 50 texts to investigate, and we calculated that we need about 10 years to study the para-biblical texts alone," he said, stressing that he does most of the work himself. After his presentation, he explained that he needs experts, people who know Hebrew, Aramaic, the history of languages and religions or comparative religions. In addition, he needs scholarships for the students, for visiting professors and to improve the library. "In Jordan we have no tradition of studying the Bible or the new testament, so everything needs to be set up," he concluded.

Cooperation Opportunities in Intangible Heritage

The second block of presentations all dealt with intangible cultural heritage, on topics ranging from oral traditions and craftsmanship's transmission, the narratives of urbanization and the vernacular.

"Understanding the Transmission of Intangible Heritage: DFG/ANR Dyntran Project - Its Findings and Implications" - Anthony T. Quickel, from Philipps-Universität Marburg, exposed the collaborative research project within which a team of scholars study how intangible heritage is transmitted. Named 'Dyntran' (for Dynamics of Transmission: Families, Authority and Knowledge in the Early Modern Middle East, 15th-17th Centuries), the three-year French-German project brings together two distinct schools: the historically oriented Islamic studies in Germany and the multi-disciplinary field of historians, art historians and religious studies experts from France. Together, they study family history through strategies of transmission, forms of authority in a social context and the role of family-type networks as carriers of knowledge and authority. "We are a diverse group of historians of various backgrounds looking for common ways through which culture, power and heritage were transmitted in that period of study," Quickel explained. For example, some would look at how carpentry skills are passed on across generations, or the oral tradition of hadith (a collection of traditions containing sayings of the prophet Muhammad) and 'waqf' (an endowment made by a Muslim to a religious, educational, or charitable cause), which offers novel ways to discuss intangible heritage.





“UNESCO Convention of Safeguarding Intangible Heritage” – What intangible heritage stands for at UNESCO, was then discussed by **Prof. Annie Tohme Tabet from the Université Saint-Joseph in Beirut**. She focused her talk on the UNESCO Convention tasked with safeguarding intangible heritage adopted in 2003 and ratified by 177 Parties-including 18 Arab States. It aims at safeguarding the uses, representations, expressions, knowledge, and techniques that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals, recognize as an integral part of their cultural heritage. This intangible heritage is found in forms such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe, and traditional craftsmanship techniques. “If we dance, we learn how to move in specific ways and receive this know-how from past generations,” Dr. Tabet stressed. The intangible cultural heritage transmitted from generation to generation isn’t frozen in time, she added, and constantly reinvented and updated by communities-as such, they provide a sense of identify and continuity. For a piece of knowledge or tradition to be considered intangible cultural heritage according to the UNESCO, it needs to be traditional, but also still alive, inclusive, representative and community-based. Intangible heritage faces multiple threats, including forced migration of communities fleeing wars, or when an element from a community is taken out of its context and becomes an object of folklore. Until now, UNESCO has listed 470 intangible cultural heritage elements from 117 countries. Egypt has two elements listed on the UNESCO Convention list: the Upper Egyptian stick dance ‘Tahteeb’ and the ‘Al-Sirah Al-Hilaliyyah’ epic, an oral poem which recounts the saga of the Banu Hilal bedouin tribe and its migration from the Arabian Peninsula to North Africa in the 10th century. “Some Arab countries have been very dynamic and inscribed multiple elements on the list, but others don’t have any, like Bahrein, Kuwait, Sudan and Tunisia. “The safeguard of cultural heritage happens within and by communities only, and nothing can be filed without their contribution = the objective is to put scholars on the side and let the communities tell their identities,” explained Dr. Tabet.

“Early Egyptian Narratives of Urbanization” – **Dr. Haggag Ali from the Academy of Arts in Cairo** has studied the early Egyptian narratives of urbanization that emerged in the Nahda period-late 18th century. In 2011, as a young scholar, Dr. Haggag went back to the Nahda period to understand Egyptians’ heritage, outside of just immediate anger and protestation. He started a collaboration project with Bonn university and this group of young Egyptian and German researchers looked at the Nahda period to find out whether urbanization and modernity have anything to do with equality. This project, which entailed three workshops in Bonn and a summer school, culminated in a publication (2017). But once the project started a comparison exercise between the 2011 revolution and the Nahda, it was rapidly censored.

“Engaging with the Vernacular” – **Prof. Frederic Best**, from the Faculty of Applied Sciences and Arts at **the German University in Cairo**, gave a presentation on engaging with the vernacular, in which he explains how he instils respect for traditional craftsmanship in his students to inspire the creation of new objects. His department introduces students to basic techniques that are relevant to their training as designers, and they can use workshop as production spaces and research facility to carry out experimentations. “Our role is to try and build a bridge btw two different cultures, like local crafts and traditions and modern production methods. How do we breathe new life into tradition?” he asked.



Cooperation Opportunities in the Future of History

This latest block of presentations focused on new conservation methods for both tangible and intangible cultural heritage, using rising technologies as tools of heritage conservation and preservation.

“Interactive Exhibitions and a Modern Sense of History” – Ayman Elsayed from the **Bibliotheca Alexandrina** exposed the benefits of interactive exhibitions as a means to inject some modernity into history. At the Bibliotheca, he has experimented these new techniques of interactive exhibition at the Alexploratorium. “We wanted to find a way to grab kids’ attention and integrate these new tools in our museology,” he explained. There, holograms, web browsers and 3D printed models share the space with live performances and interactive screens, sliding timelines, mobile apps and QR readers. “This all gives you a very different experience than a static display in a Museum,” he added.

“Conservation of Geo-Archeological Heritage, Between Reality and Prospective” – Dr. Kholoud Mohamed Ali, a geologist at **Cairo University**, spoke about novel ways to conserve Egypt’s Geo-archaeological heritage. “This heritage is under threat,” she said, mentioning specific sites particularly at risk such as El-Mokattam, Abo Rawash, the Hasana Dome, the Crystal mountain, the Petrified Forest etc. In Sokhna, the construction of a road destroyed some rock art present there. “In Egypt, many sites have experienced total loss for archaeology and partial loss for geology,” she ascertained. Hence, she proposed building a detailed risk map of the country, using GIS and remote sensing, an initiative that will need to be funded.

“Engaging Public Memory: An Online Database for Modern Heritage in the MENA-Region” – Martin Meyer, a Professor at Technische Universität Berlin and in the TUB Campus El Gouna spoke about an online database for modern heritage in the MENA region. He discussed the mark left by foreign architects in the Middle East’s capitals, from Bagdad to Teheran, and the new architectural currents which emerged from the region from the 1950s. “Rather than just being defined as a tool of colonialism, modern architecture in the MENA region tells the story of an exchange of knowledge, design and ideas in the search of identity,” he explained. Along with peers, Dr. Meyer came up with the idea to create an open-access web database on the model of ‘SOS Brutalism’ that received much acclaim. “These buildings deserve to be documented and widely available. This database would stimulate research and cooperation in the region, and raise awareness on modern heritage preservation,” he said.

“Contribution of Information Technologies and Non-Destructive Techniques to Cultural Heritage Management” – Yasser Elshayeb from **Cairo University** and ERASMUS+ Egypt coordinator, presented non-destructive, non-invasive scientific tools that have been used in cultural heritage exploration and protection. Echolocation is one such tool, in addition to Ground-penetrating radar (GPR), Infrared, sound and ultrasound waves. “We used a GPR inside Tutankhamun’s tomb in 2014 to find out if there was a hidden chamber behind the



wall," he said. It turned out that there wasn't. Muography, an imaging technique that produces a projectional image of a target volume by recording elementary particles was used to explore the Giza pyramids, for a project called bent pyramid that detected the existence of a gallery behind the main entrance and of a big void 20 meters above the grand gallery. These findings were published in the magazine Nature in 2017.

"The Digitale Syrian Heritage Archive Project" - Wassim Alrez from the German Archaeological Institute (DAI) presented the digital Syrian Heritage Archive Project (SHAP). Against the background of the Syrian civil war, the DAI launched SHAP as a cooperation project with the Berlin Museum of Islamic Art to create a digital registry of Syrian cultural heritage. While there isn't much that can be done to directly protect the Syrian heritage, since 2013, extensive analogue data sets have been integrated into the digital research environment of the DAI. "We have processed photography and documents from Palmyra, Raqqa, from the old city of Damascus and Aleppo," says Alrez, who said that the digitalization started in 2015. As a centre piece of this project, the digitalization is conducted by specialized companies, while the processing is done by the DAI staff. "So far, two-third of the 120,000 units have been entered into the database," he said. To reach out to wider audience, the portal is being constructed and will be accessible in English, German, English, and Arabic. Since the research has been supported by public funds, most of the data generated will be accessible to the public, with some data only accessible to researchers. SHAP also organizes trainings, capacity building in IT, in data preservation and in archiving, as well as in practical GIS skills, in order to offer the young generation real job prospects in their homeland.

"Visual Storytelling for Digital Public History" - The last presentation of the day was delivered by Sally Skerrett from the German University in Cairo, who specializes in visual communication and heads GUC's department of graphic design. Her work consists in engaging a wider audience through the medium of digital storytelling, which offers a more memorable experience. "This generation of students is one that communicates primarily through digital media," she explained. Personal archives are few in Egypt, and when she discovered the documentary movie "In Search of Oil and Sand" which is based on Mahmoud Sabit's - a distant cousin of King Farouk - archive from the latest days of the Egyptian Monarchy, she decided to engage the public to help identify people in these archives.

(Report by Ms. Louise Sarant)

