

IMPROVING PRIVATE ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE HUMANITIES IN IRAQ



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This report was prepared in the framework of the project BANUU - Designing new pathways for employability and entrepreneurship of Iraqi students in Archaeology and Cultural Heritage coordinated by Nicolò Marchetti (University of Bologna, Editor) and including Federico Zaina (University of Bologna, Chapters 1 and 2), Licia Proserpio (University of Bologna, Chapter 1), Abbas Al-Hussainy (University of Al-Qadisiyah, Chapter 2), Khalid S. Ismael (University of Mosul, Chapter 2), Carlo Lippolis (CRAST, Chapter 3), Eleonora Quirico (University of Turin, Chapter 3), Bahaa N. Mahmood (University of Baghdad, Chapter 3), Laith M. Hussein (University of Baghdad, Chapter 3), Çiğdem Maner (Koç University of Istanbul, Chapter 4), Hayder K. Al-Hamdany (University of Kufa, Chapter 4), Alaa H. Al-Lami (University of Kufa, Chapter 4). Chapter 5 has been written jointly.

Additional documents regarding the report can be downloaded at <https://site.unibo.it/banuu/en/results>.

The BANUU project is financed by the European Union Erasmus+ Capacity Building Key Action 2 in the Field of Higher Education.

BANUU is an ancient Akkadian verb meaning “to build”. It is in fact, the main goal of the project partners to contribute to the improvement of the private job sector for the next Iraqi generation in the fields of archaeology and cultural heritage through the development of internship activities and private entrepreneurship. This is in line with the European Union Erasmus+ Capacity Building scopes as well as with the Iraqi educational and economic agenda for long-term job market improvement.

During the three years of the project (2020-2023) the BANUU team will collaborate to contribute to the improvement of the students’ employability in the field of Humanities in Iraq by creating new pathways of cooperation between Universities and the public and enterprise sectors.

Our team includes three European universities and research centres – the University of Bologna (UNIBO) which coordinates the entire project, the Centro Ricerche Archeologiche e Scavi di Torino (CRAST) and the Koç University of Istanbul (KU); four Iraqi universities – the University of Baghdad (UOB), the University of Kufa (UOK), the University of Al-Qadisiyah (UOQ) and the University of Mosul (UOM); two Iraqi ministries – The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MOHESR) and the Ministry of Culture represented by the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage (SBAH); five national and international associations – the UNESCO Youth, the Association of Arab Universities (AARU), AlmaCube, Tarek al-Ofuk Company (TOC) and the Sana Al-Amar Company (SAAC). Such a lively environment represents the pillar of the project, thus guaranteeing the necessary scientific knowledge, the official support at state level, and the presence of several international private stakeholders. The BANUU team wishes to express its gratitude for the support and cooperation provided by the representatives of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, the Ministry of Culture and the State Board of antiquities and Heritage.

This report is the result of the tasks and activities conducted in the frame of the first project Work Package (more information on the BANUU project activities can be accessed here: <https://site.unibo.it/banuu/en/project/activities>). The introductory chapter illustrates the state-of-the-art in the three specific fields targeted by the BANUU project to achieve the wider aims. Each field is then explained in details. As a result of the researches conducted in each field, specific recommendation are provided in the final chapter of this report. For more information on the BANUU project’s objectives see <https://site.unibo.it/banuu/en/project/objectives>. For any inquiry about the present report or the project please write to disci.banuu@unibo.it

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Despite its potential, the private sector in the field of Humanities in Iraq remains under-developed

1. INTRODUCTION

Fig. 1 | The spiral minaret of the Great Mosque of Samarra (Wikimedia Commons).



In the last decades Iraq faced deep societal and economic changes mostly due to the dramatic conflicts occurred since 1980 and the harsh consequences of their aftermath. Among others, this process had a strong impact on the relation between national institutions and civil society, also resulting in a sharp decrease of investments in many key sectors of the country's economy. In this regard, the cuts to education caused a major drop in the quality of teaching at any level as well as a gradual detachment of the high education institutes from the job market. Such disruptions were particularly apparent in the field of humanities and specifically in archaeology and cultural heritage. Indeed, as the civil society, also the Iraqi heritage suffered for the geopolitical upheavals in the country from the Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988) until the recent fights against Isis/Daesh (2014–2017).

The Iraqi cultural heritage displays an incredible richness and historical relevance (**Fig. 1**). A wealth of archaeological sites from different periods and civilizations (only partially excavated as a consequence of their extraordinary number), monuments, several museums and galleries which exhibit ancient and modern collections of artifacts, multicultural popular traditions and customs and valuable artistic, musical and literary trends can be found throughout the country.

Besides the destructions caused by military activities, and the looting of the archaeological finds due to the economic crisis which affected the Iraqi population, many religious buildings (mosques, churches, monasteries, convents and shrines), historical places, museums and libraries were vandalized or used for political propaganda. Similarly, public institutions including universities and museums as well as private associations and companies traditionally involved in the management and communication of the cultural heritage suffered remarkable slowdowns or forced closure. These events prevented the training of professionals, the preservation and restoration of monuments and more in general the dissemination of culture.

According to the World Bank (2018) the total damages to cultural heritage and tourism is about 858 million USD.

Even more striking is the overall damage to the educational segment in Iraq reaching 2.7 billion USD, part of which can be linked to the cultural heritage and tourism sectors.

It is worldwide renown that preserving and promoting the cultural heritage and the shared past is a key factor for the social growth of a country and its identity (European Commission 2018). In the light of the above mentioned trends in Iraq trained figures, capable to safeguard and communicate the Iraqi past, are necessary now more than ever.

The estimated needs for the activities which could reintegrate the cultural heritage and tourism into the fabric of society amounts totally to about 1.7 billion USD (World Bank 2018).

Recently, some important steps forward have been made by the Iraqi authorities with the support of several international institutions. In February 2015 the Iraq National Museum officially re-opened, giving to Iraqis and international visitors the chance to admire the Mesopotamian masterpieces. The museum galleries are daily visited by hundreds of young students which can newly benefit from the history and treasures of their past past and of several new spaces including the children room opened in 2019 in the frame of the EDUU project¹. Similarly, in March 2019, the new Basrah Museum, developed with the support of the British Council, opened its doors to the public with three completely renovated galleries². Another museum, the King Ghazi Landscape Museum (**Fig. 2**), is in course of being opened in the Qadisiyah governorate³. This is the first museum focusing on the history of the Mesopotamian landscape and it has been developed by the SBAH and an international team in the frame of the EDUU project.

After some years of general neglect, the reconstruction and the renewal of the Iraqi cultural and tourist backgrounds represent an irreplaceable opportunity to reestablish the Iraqi communities identity. Regarding the potential future interventions, it is necessary to protect the sites and monuments still in danger and to assess by field surveys the damages and destructions, the needs and is-



Fig. 2 | The entrance to the King Ghazi Landscape Museum after restoration (Wikimedia Commons).

sues. These activities require prepared and skilled local professionals to keep safe the cultural heritage and enhance its potentialities.

One of the main issue of the Iraqi labour market is the incredibly high number of public employee. According to the United Nation⁴ and the World Bank⁵ the Iraqi government provides 40% of the jobs, corresponding to 6-7 million employees (corresponding to 85% of the total employees of the country) (Al-Mawlawi 2019). Moreover, in general a private sector workers earns almost 30% less than public workers. This trend involve all the economic sectors of the country including archaeology, cultural heritage and tourism. A need for overturning this unsustainable situation is urgent. Therefore, the aim of this report is to foster the development of the private sector in Iraq.

CURRENT ISSUES

In the light of the political and social situation illustrated before, some problems were identified and analyzed that interconnect the humanities (in particular cultural heritage and archaeology), education and job market sectors (**Fig. 3**).

LACK OF INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE STUDENTS IN THE FIELD OF HUMANITIES

This problem is generated by two different interrelated factors. First of all, in the field of Humanities, BA and MA degree courses in Iraq do not foresee compulsory or elective internship activities in the study plans. This is a structural shortcoming that must be addressed in synergy, foremost with the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MOHESR). Indeed, such major changes are decided at a central level since Iraqi universities do not have full academic autonomy to change

¹ <https://site.unibo.it/eduu/en/museums/didactic-room-for-children-at-the-iraq-museum-baghdad>

² <http://friendsofbasrahmuseum.org.uk/>

³ <https://site.unibo.it/eduu/en/museums/king-ghazi-landscape-museum>

⁴ http://www.uniraq.com/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&layout=item&id=941&Itemid=4&lang=en

⁵ https://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/MNA/Iraq_unfulfilled_promise_report_chap6.pdf

degree structures and study plans. Secondly, universities do not have connections with public and/or private enterprises that can offer these kinds of opportunities for students. It is not in the scopes of the Iraqi teaching and administrative staff to look for connections with the entrepreneurs that can lead to students' internships. This has been proved by recent analysis carried out by the WALADU project (<https://site.unibo.it/waladu/en/results/wp1>) as well as by the IREX report 2017 that have underlined the poor connection between universities and the private sectors and a lack of synergies among the public sector and the consequent necessity for *“Internships, apprenticeships and other practical hands on initiatives which can provide a basis for students to develop skills and gain crucial, real world experience.”* To do so they suggest *“the necessity for universities to increase their role as gateways between students, industry and various programs and offices. They particularly suggest the creation of offices, such as internship offices, to foster public-private connection.”*

As the Iraqi country is blessed with a wealth of historical monuments and archaeological sites, the BANUU team decided to specifically focus on the humanities field of study. In this regards, in the case of archaeology, it is rather complicated for Iraqi students to participate to archaeological excavation or surveys due to the lack of coordination in related activities between the MOHESR and the SBAH. However, the recent Iraq Reconstruction and Investment Plan (February 2018) issued by the Iraqi Government stressed the importance of enhancing the Iraqi cultural heritage and the establishment of a proper sustainable tourism sector through reconstruction, rehabilitation and promotion activities of archaeological sites and monuments across all governorates including.

INSUFFICIENT DEVELOPMENT OF ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES AIMING TO DEVELOP STUDENTS’ TRANSVERSAL SKILLS

In the Iraqi context, universities are seen as places for teaching and basic research rather than engines for innovation, growth and employability. Therefore, students (both BA and MA) are stimulated in gaining theoretical knowledge but not in developing transversal skills such as the entrepreneurial ones that can support them in their career paths. In the ongoing process of rebuilding of the Iraqi national economy, employability possibilities can easily arise in the cultural heritage and archaeological sectors if students are properly stimulated through innovative teaching strategies. To do so, the learning outcomes of the degree courses should be re-written, stressing the key role of the development of the transversal skills also improving the teaching capacity of the academic staff. This is in line with Iraq Reconstruction and Investment Plan (February 2018) issued by the Iraqi Government which highlighted the importance of the development of students’ learning outcomes and teachers’ performance, in particular through building capacity of the local community, teaching force and central administration to deliver and implement expansive quality education services in an equitable manner. In this regards general recommendation have been proposed in the UNESCO - Revitalising Science, Technology and Innovation in Iraq (RSTII 2011-2020) report. In particular Recommendations 7 and 38 underline the necessity for the creation of incubation schemes within selected research centres and universities and granting them the ability to transform into veritable incubation centres with fully equipped facilities in order to contribute to job creation and a reduction of unemployment among qualified university graduates throughout the country. Moreover, they also emphasized the urgency for launching national and regional media- and school-based programmes to enhance public awareness on science, technology and innovation as inputs for development and sources of enterprise and employment opportunities.

NEED TO IMPROVE THE SYNERGIES BETWEEN UNIVERSITIES, PRIVATE ENTERPRISES AND PUBLIC SECTOR

Despite the general awareness among Iraqi University staff (governance, teaching staff and administrative staff) towards the necessity to strengthen university/enterprise cooperation, to date there are no national best practices that can be followed. As recently brought to the fore by an analysis carried out in the frame of the WALADU project (<https://site.unibo.it/waladu/en/results/wp1>), this matter is even more pressing in the field of the humanities, where job opportunities and the number of potential stakeholder in the private sector are remarkably low. Moreover, the Labour Market Report 2017 issued by IREX indicates that *“an essential first step in improving competence of university graduates to meet local market demands is to bring industry into planning and discussions with higher education institutions.”*

Europe already faced this issues since 1980s with the development of the first commercial companies working in different sectors of the humanities chiefly archaeology. Private companies emerged thanks to the joint effort of universities providing the theoretical skills, private companies offering their entrepreneurial experience and the state supporting them with ad hoc legislations.

In the case of archaeological companies, the synergic relations between both the public (through procurement contracts) and private sectors and their activities ranged from archaeological excavations to research, teaching and collaborative actions with museums. In Iraq there is currently no kind of such best practices so that new graduates have few opportunities in terms of finding an innovative space for individual or collective initiative that can be coherent with their educational background. The exchange of such best practices can have a strong social impact in a country with a rich and precious archaeological heritage like Iraq.

While Iraqi National Development Plan 2018-2022 (NDP 18-22) issued by Iraqi Government acknowledge in its societal challenge 7 *“the failure of the state and the society to absorb the youth and provide them with decent work opportunities”* and the *“migration (of many of them) outside the border”* and in the Economic challenge no. 8 it stresses the necessity to enhance the role of private sector in the job market in order to increase its impact on the current GDP (only 35% of the GDP in 2015), no specific actions have been undertaken so far. However, it is noteworthy how Sector Development Objective 4.7.2 highlights the importance of 1) raising tourism activity in the GDP, 2) preserving the historical-cultural heritage and the revival of archaeological monuments and 3) enhancing the private sector role in the tourism investment.

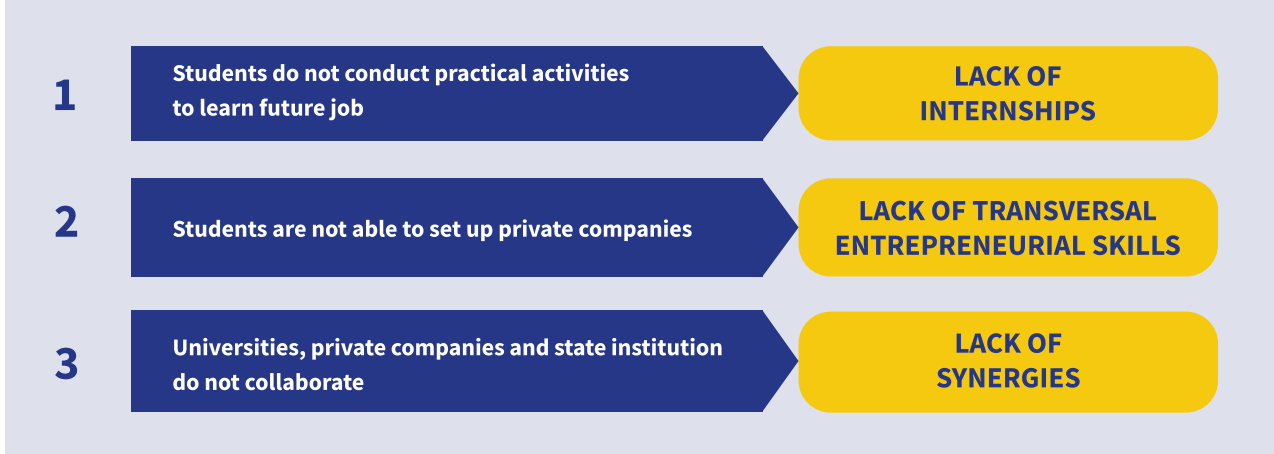


Fig. 3 | The three main issues tackled by the BANUU project.

THE BANUU PROJECT

The above mentioned issues represented the starting points for the development of the BANUU project (Fig. 4). The consortium has the scope of contributing to the improvement of the students' employability in the field of Humanities in Iraq by creating new pathways of cooperation between Universities and the public and enterprise sectors. This will be the result of six specific practical objectives connected with the different WPs of the project:

- 1. Creation of a national framework for designing and implementing internships in Archaeology and Cultural Heritage in Iraq.
- 2. Creation of new pathways to enhance Iraqi students' transversal skills (focus on entrepreneurial skills).
- 3. Piloting of the new frameworks and pathways in 3 specific sectors (for details see below): Preventive Archaeology (PA), Cultural Heritage Management (CHM) and Cultural Tourism (CT).
- 4. Re-drafting of the learning outcomes of Iraqi BA and MA degree programs involving external partners as co-producers of knowledge.
- 5. Strengthening of the relations between HEIs (Universities, Ministry) and the wider national economic and social environment.
- 6. Creating a favourable legal, administrative, and financial environment in which HEIs can draft comprehensive agreements and contracts with external partners.



Fig. 4 | The BANUU project framework.



Fig. 5 | The three sectors to be developed within the BANUU project.



Fig. 7 | Rescue excavation at Tell Mohammed Arab in the Mosul dam area in the 1980s (Wikimedia Commons).



Fig. 6 | A rescue excavation in a European city (Wikimedia Commons).

THREE KEY-SECTORS TO BOOST THE STUDENTS' EMPLOYABILITY IN THE FIELD OF HUMANITIES IN IRAQ

Based on the previous issues the BANUU consortium decided to focus on three relevant sectors in the field of humanities: Preventive Archaeology (PA), Cultural Heritage Management (CHM) and Cultural Tourism (CT) (Fig. 5). As underlined in the paragraph below these three sectors are highly intertwined, ensuring that their combined development also leads to mutual benefit.

The development of these three fields is also in line with the EU regional priority "University-enterprise co-operation" (Category 3 – Developing the Higher Education Sector within Society at large⁶). Therefore, each step of the project has been designed in order to match this priority in different but interrelated ways.

PREVENTIVE ARCHAEOLOGY

Preventive archaeology is state-sanctioned, for-profit archaeological survey and excavation carried out in advance of construction or other land development (Figs. 6-7). These actions occur on sites about to be destroyed but, on occasion, may include in situ preservation of any finds or protective measures taken to preserve an unexcavated site beneath a building. Urban areas with many overlaid years of habitation are often candidates for rescue archaeology.

These conditions could include, but are not limited to, highway projects, major construction, the prospective flooding of a proposed dam, or even before the onset of war. Unlike traditional survey and excavation, rescue archaeology must be undertaken quickly and according to specific schedules (Demoule 2012).

Preventive archaeology developed in Europe and the US since the 1970s-1980s and it now a fully recognized commercial activity regulated by specific legislations at country as well as international level. Despite the urgent need for the safeguard and documentation of endangered heritage, in Iraq this sector has not been introduced yet.

CULTURAL HERITAGE MANAGEMENT

Cultural heritage management (CHM) is the vocation and practice of managing and communicating cultural heritage (Fig. 8) (Newman et al. 2010). It draws on different practices including conservation, restoration, museology, archaeology, history and architecture.

CHM has traditionally been concerned with the identification, interpretation, maintenance, and preservation of significant cultural sites and physical heritage assets, although intangible aspects of heritage, such as traditional skills, cultures and languages are also considered. The subject typically receives most attention, and resources, in the face of threat, where the focus is often upon preventive or rescue archaeology. Possible threats include urban development, large-scale agriculture, mining activity, looting, erosion or unsustainable visitor numbers.

The public face of CHM, and a significant source of income to support continued management of heritage, is the interpretation and presentation to the public, where it is an important aspect of tourism. A considerable and highly diversified number of cultural institutions and companies is attested nowadays in Iraq. However, the majority of them are state-run and clustered in Baghdad, and in most cases suffered for lack of funding. The handful of private companies working throughout the country are not enough supported by the governmental institutions.

⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/programme-guide/part-b/three-key-actions/key-action-2/capacity-building-field-higher-education_en



Fig. 8 | The refurbished National Museum of Iraq in Baghdad (Wikimedia Commons).



Fig. 9 | The ziggurat of Ur (Wikimedia Commons).

CULTURAL TOURISM

Cultural tourism is the subset of tourism concerned with a traveller’s engagement with a country or region’s culture (Fig. 9), specifically the lifestyle of the people in those geographical areas, the history of those people, their art, architecture, religion, and other elements that helped shape their way of life (Richards 2007). Cultural tourism includes tourism in urban areas, particularly historic or large cities and their cultural facilities such as museums and theatres.

It is generally agreed that cultural tourists spend substantially more than standard tourists do. This form of tourism is also becoming generally more popular throughout the world, and a recent OECD report has highlighted the role that cultural tourism can play in regional development in different world regions (OECD 2009).

According to Richards (2007) cultural tourism can be defined as “the movement of persons to cultural attractions away from their normal place of residence, with the intention to gather new information and experiences to satisfy their cultural needs.”

From this point of view, Iraq has enormous potential, thanks to its numerous historical centers such as Baghdad, Najaf, Basrah, Samarra or Karbala and the hundreds of archaeological sites and natural places. In addition, proper infrastructures for tourism development are already available in several cities such as Baghdad and Najaf. However, the political turmoils and the complex bureaucracy prevented the development of cultural tourism so far.

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The image is a split-screen aerial photograph. The left half shows a dry, brownish landscape with a river winding through it. A small, dark, rectangular structure is visible in the middle of the river. The right half shows the same landscape but with the river flooded, creating a large, blue, irregularly shaped area that covers much of the dry land. The text is overlaid on the left half of the image.

Preventive
archaeology
offers a brand
new way for
improving private
entrepreneurship
in the field of
Humanities in Iraq

2. PREVENTIVE ARCHAEOLOGY

Fig. 10 | A site partially flooded by the artificial reservoir of Delmej.

INTRODUCTION

Iraq hosts some of the most globally significant cultural heritage in the world. Although there are no official estimates to date, over 10,000 archaeological sites have currently been documented in the field and several thousands have been identified through advanced analysis techniques such as remote sensing.

Archaeological exploration by national and international researchers boasts a long history of success and great discoveries. However, the outbreak of subsequent conflicts since 1980s until today, the effects of natural erosion and silting processes, the problems related to the construction of infrastructures as well as the extension of farmland deeply impacted on the archaeological sites throughout the country (Fig. 10).

The purpose of this chapter is to understand the current state of conservation of archaeological sites and national level, the efficiency of the cultural heritage management system, the effectiveness of current legislation and the necessity to provide fresh solutions including the introduction of preventive archaeology.

THE IRAQI STATE BOARD OF ANTIQUITIES AND HERITAGE: HISTORY AND STRUCTURE

This section offers an overview on over a century of history of the protection and management of the cultural heritage of Iraq. In particular, it focuses on the activities and the organization of the most important Iraqi institutional body in this field: The State Board of Antiquities and Heritage (SBAH).

HISTORY OF THE SBAH

The State Board of Antiquities and Heritage (SBAH) is the official Iraqi national institution in charge of preserving and managing the archaeological sites, the heritage buildings and the national museums. It was established in 1923 as part of the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities and it became active in 1936.

The establishment of the SBAH and the creation of the

National Museum of Iraq is tightly related with that of the British archaeologist Gertrude Bell (Al-Hussainy and Matthews 2008). Ms Bell played a major role in developing and helping to administer the modern state of Iraq, as well as to boost the archaeological researches in the country, using her unique perspective acquired after years of travels and relations with tribal leaders throughout the Middle East. As stressed by Al-Hussainy and Matthews (2008, 92), *“Under her overall supervision a wealth of archaeological research took place in Iraq, some of it building profitably upon the highly skilled German work at Babylon and Ashur, while other projects such as American-British excavations at Kish showed an overall lack of technical expertise in the approaching these large and complex archaeological sites, coupled with little concern for methodical publication of results.”*

Over the decades, thanks to the collaboration of Gertrude Bell and other international researchers with the Iraqi authorities, a new generation of Iraqi archaeologists emerged, most of which trained in Europe and the USA where their learnt the most modern techniques of excavation and research. The international collaboration and the level of preparation and organization of the SBAH grew mainly in the post-war period and reached its peak between the 1960s and the 1980s. Up to 1990 the lively Iraqi archaeological environment and the uniquely rich heritage attracted international expeditions from Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Denmark, USA, Japan, even the Soviet Union and Poland (Foster et al. 2005). These initiatives were monitored and approved by the SBAH, many of whose senior officials studied for their PhDs in the UK and elsewhere outside Iraq.

From 1990s onwards due to the internal conflict and the resulting internal and external pressures and difficulties, the SBAH suffered, along with almost all Iraqis, through the years of UN sanctions. With international collaborations reduced to a minimum, the academic standards and language capabilities of staff within the SBAH steadily declined.

The current situation witnesses a slow but gradual recovery of the overall situation. Starting from the 2010s in particular, the SBAH has massively promoted the hiring of new inspectors of antiquities to protect archaeological sites.

THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE SBAH

The main SBAH headquarter is located in Baghdad, while several local SBAH offices are present in each of the governorate capital, headed by a regional director. Beside the main seats, each governorate hosts also several branch offices, managed by the local SBAH officers. They are supported by a special police force that has received a specific archaeological training. In order to safeguard the Iraqi heritage in a more efficient way, some of the main archaeological sites are protected by keepers and chief keepers. This organization shows how, since its creation, the SBAH has always been at the forefront in the documentation and preservation of Iraqi cultural heritage.

At the top of the hierarchical system are the SBAH officers (Fig. 11), public officials generally with a BA degree in Archaeology and a further specific training, in charge of supervising entire areas of the region and coordinating all the other heritage operators.

In order to supervise and safeguard the sites more effectively, the SBAH employs keepers, usually people living in the vicinity of the archaeological areas. Each keeper controls one or maximum two sites and has to report to a chief keeper, who is usually in charge of coordinating the job of more keepers. The SBAH officers have periodic meetings with the keepers to be informed about any possible issue concerning the sites. The main duty of the chief keepers and keepers is to guarantee that no illegal activities take place at the sites. This basically means: no looting, no constructions, no farming. In the majority of cases, the keeper lives nearby the site that he is in charge of safeguarding, or maximum within a few kilometres.

The SBAH and the sites’ keepers are supported by the archaeological police, a branch of the state police that receives a specific archaeological training at the Baghdad police academy, focusing on the protection of archaeological sites and heritage monuments.

The number of SBAH, keepers, chief keepers and archaeological police may vary from governorate to governorate, according to the dimension of the governorate, the number of archaeological sites and heritage monuments and the offices.

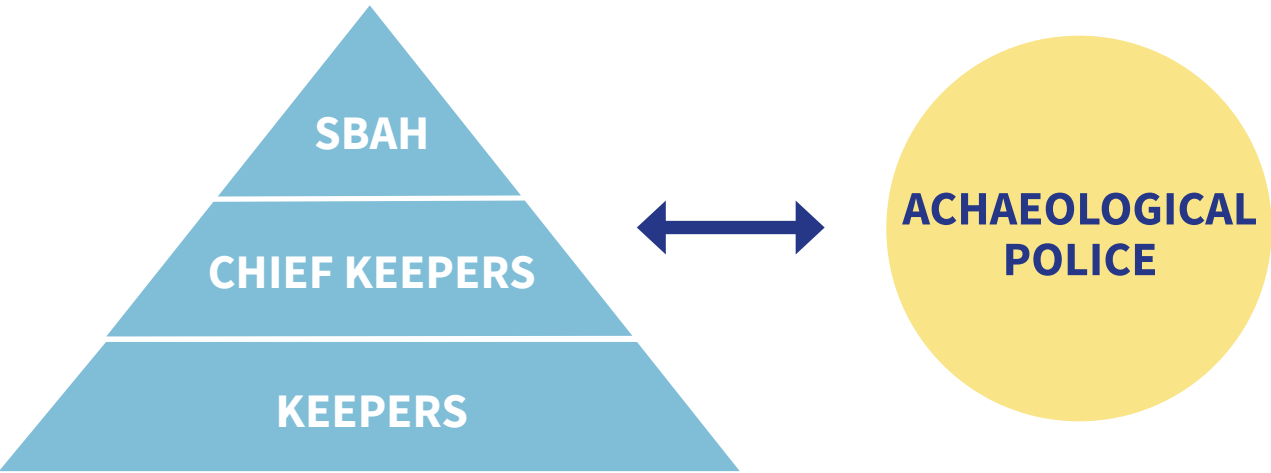


Fig. 11 | Schematic representation of the organizational structure of the SBAH.

45 YEARS OF RESCUE EXCAVATIONS IN IRAQ (1975-2020): AN OVERVIEW

45 years of emergency excavation activities carried out by SBAH and by international institutions have been analyzed. The period of time considered is based on the availability and quality of data. These were obtained from the official documents of the SBAH and supplemented by the reports published in the two main scientific journals on the archaeology of Iraq: *Sumer* which is the official scientific journal of the SBAH and *Iraq* which is the official scientific journal of the British Institute for the Study of Iraq (former British School of Archaeology in Iraq).

The analysis of the last 45 years of activity shows a clear trend. From the late 1970s and during the 1980s, in fact, we observe an intense effort both by the SBAH and by foreign archaeological missions in rescue excavations throughout the country. This trend peaked in the first half of the 1980s and then gradually decreased from 1985 to 1989. From the analysis of the data collected in the following three decades (i.e. 2000-2020), only 31 rescue excavation projects have been carried out (Fig. 12).

By cross-correlating these data with the type of rescue excavations carried out, it emerges that they were carried out mainly in the framework of large engineering projects such as the construction of dams (Al Baghdadi, Haditha, Hamrin and Mosul) concentrated, mostly between the late 1970s and first half of the 1980s. Another type of activity conducted almost exclusively by the SBAH between the late 1970s and mid-1980s concerns long-term restoration projects in important archaeological sites such as Babylon, Hatra, Ashur, Nineveh and Samarra or in historical centres such as Baghdad, Basrah Mosul and Tell Afar.

The activities of the SBAH took place throughout the chronological period considered, while the international expeditions have worked in the field almost only in the 1980s and in the frame of large-scale projects such as the construction of dams (Figs. 13-14) and then again, after a long halt, from the 2010s.

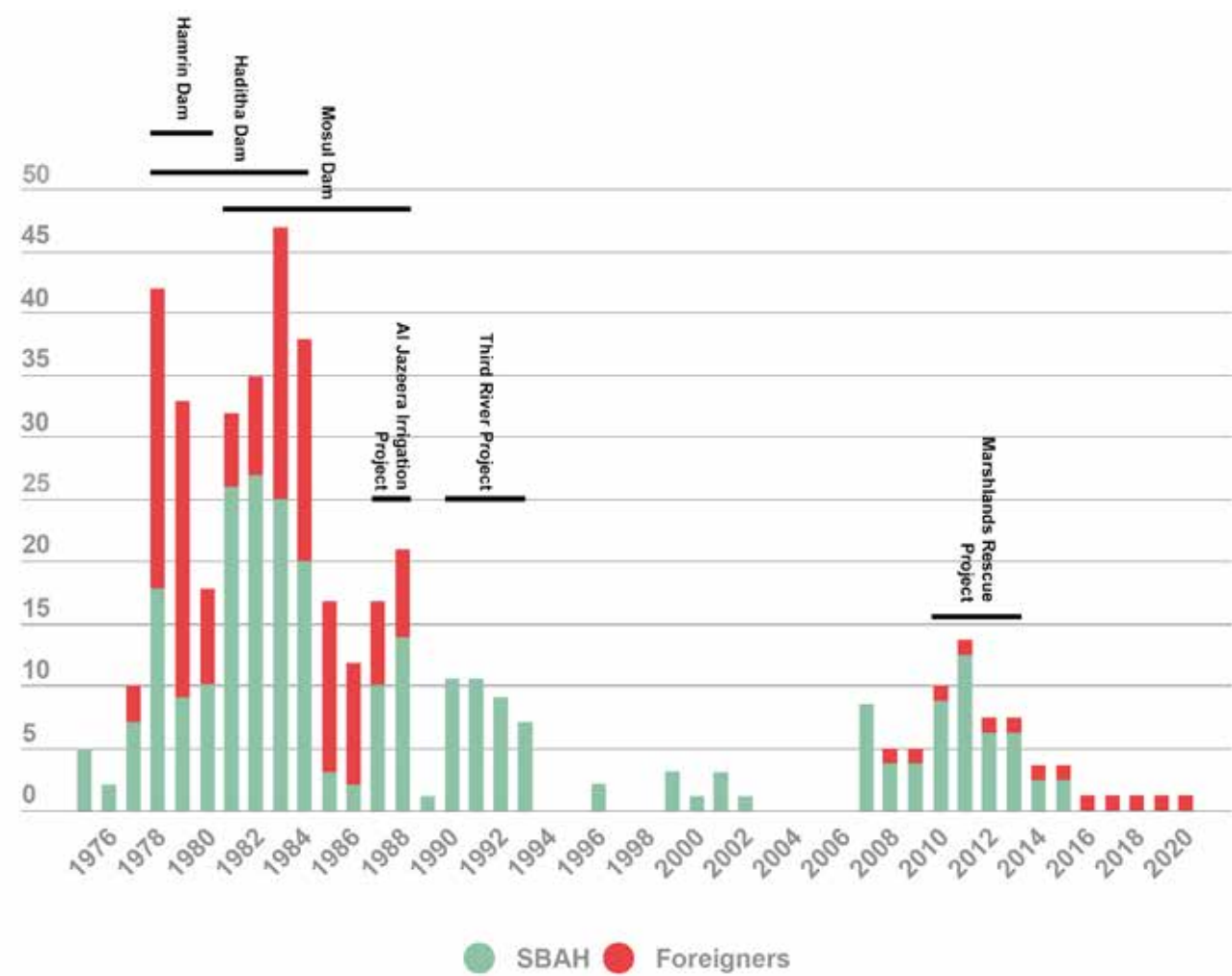


Fig. 12 | Timeline of the number of rescue excavations and surveys carried out in Iraq between 1975 and 2020.

A new season of intense rescue archaeological activity started in 2007 and continued through at least until 2014 boosted by the Marshland Rescue Archaeological project and the Delmej Rescue Excavation project. Moreover, minor projects such as the survey and rescue excavations in the area of the Najaf airport, jointly conducted by the SBAH and the German Archaeological Institute (DAI) witness the return of foreign expeditions in the country.

Other types of rescue archaeological projects such as excavations for the construction of roads (Fig. 15), buildings of irrigation canals represent less than 10% of the total and were carried out only by the SBAH during the whole chronological period taken into consideration.

It is noteworthy that rescue excavation projects targeted archaeological sites regardless their chronology. This datum is important to understand how the approach was risk-oriented instead of period/culture-oriented.

CURRENT LEGISLATIONS TO MANAGE AND PROTECT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

We analyzed the legislation on cultural heritage in Iraq for two reasons: 1. To understand if there are any flaws

that have allowed the destruction of archaeological sites and heritage monuments in Iraq; 2. To understand the provisions regarding rescue excavations and whether such excavations should be carried out only by state bodies (SBAH and universities) or also by private entities.

NATIONAL LEGISLATION

The cultural heritage of Iraq is documented, managed and protected according to the Constitution, the Antiquities & Heritage of Iraq Law. The following analysis aims at understanding who can be in charge documenting, managing and protecting archaeological sites and heritage monuments and what kind of strategies can be applied to accomplish these tasks.

According to Articles 35 and 113 of the Iraqi Constitution (2005), the antiquities are protected by federal authorities, in collaboration with regions and governorates. In particular Article 113 states that: “Antiquities, archaeological sites, cultural buildings, manuscripts, and coins shall be considered national treasures under the jurisdiction of the federal authorities, and shall be managed in cooperation with the regions and governorates, and this shall be regulated by law.” However, the concrete role of these authorities is



Figs. 13-14 | Rescue excavations at the archaeological site of Tell Mohammed Arab in the Mosul dam.



Fig. 15 | Rescue excavations by the SBAH at the archaeological site of Tell el-Arris (view taken in 2016).

still under debate (Davis 2014).

The SBAH, is the official Iraqi national institution in charge of protecting and managing the national heritage sites and the national museums. It was established in 1923 as part of the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities and it acted since 1936 in compliance with the Antiquities Law No. 59 then amended in 1974 (n. 120) and 1975 (n. 164). In 2002, Law No. 55 for the Antiquities & Heritage of Iraq was issued, replacing the previous ones.

The SBAH has a Director General seated in Baghdad, while each governorate is run by a local director. Below the directors are the inspectors in charge of managing a sector of the region. A further level in the SBAH hierarchical framework consists of guards or keepers supervising a single site and often coordinated by chief keepers controlling two or more keepers. The number and distribution of inspectors, keepers and chief keepers may vary from governorate to governorate. Moreover, the SBAH officials are assisted in their daily activities by Archaeological Police, specifically trained.

With regard to the documentation of archaeological sites and heritage monuments, article 13.1 states that archaeological excavations, surveys and restorations can be carried out by the "Official Antiquities Authority" (i.e. the SBAH). This statement is confirmed in the introductory

section of "Chapter 5 – Excavation for Antiquities" stressing that "Only the Antiquity Authority is authorized to undertake Excavation for Antiquity in Iraq, it is entitled, herewith, to grant permissions to the scientific committees, scientists and the Iraqi, Arabic and foreign institutions, after the indication, of their archaeological capacity, scientific and financial sufficiency." In essence, the only entities that can carry out archaeological activities in Iraq are the SBAH, and national and international institutions (universities and research centers) that have not only the necessary scientific but also economic skills. This element underlines how in general the funding for the excavations must come from the same bodies that carry out the excavation.

In some cases, however, it is possible that a public and private body must provide financial support for rescue excavations to public or private, national and international scientific institutions. This situation is explained in Article 9.4 stating that in case archaeological evidence emerges during any kind of public or private activity, "the Official Antiquity Authority shall be committed to undertake excavations, therein, which shall be financed by the executive authority, putting a dead line that must be adequate from the scientific and project time schedule point of view". Therefore, currently rescue excavations can be conducted only by the SBAH.

With regards to the protection and management of the Iraqi heritage, the current legislation (Law No. 55) provides substantial guidelines.¹ The prohibition for any private or public entity to manipulate or destroy archaeological sites or heritage monuments is clearly specified in Article 3.2, that underlines: "the owner of a land where an immovable Antiquity is, shall not have the rights to dispose, dig, vandalize or change the features on or under the soil". This first statement is also supported by Article 5.3, mentioning the necessity of a buffer zone around sites and monuments to prevent encroaching. According to the law, also the local communities should participate in the process of safeguarding and documentation of archaeological sites and heritage buildings. Among others, as specified by articles 7, 12 and 19, anyone who is aware of the presence of an archaeological site on its land has to register it to the authorities within 24 hours.

Article 2.3, also mentions the necessity of restoration works to prevent erosion and deterioration of archaeological sites, heritage buildings and artefacts. But the most comprehensive and detailed guidelines for heritage preservation are resumed in Articles 9 and 15. The former (Paragraph 9.3) states that "The concerned authorities shall be committed to conserve the Antiquity, Heritage and Historical Sites when the mentioned authorities are about to make state industrial, agricultural or residential projects and other projects like: city and the village planning, beautification, expansion, irrigation canals and the road paving....". Further restrictions to the permission to use land where archaeological sites or heritage buildings are located can be also found in Articles 9.5 and 9.6. Article 15 lists a series of prohibitions, including: to cultivate or build (15.2, 15.3, 15.5), to remove anything from the archaeological sites (15.4) and to damage archaeological sites and monuments (15.6). Article 17 stresses and makes the question of the illegal possession of antiquities linked to looting activities even more bitter. The penalties and fees for contravening to the abovementioned articles are listed in Articles 38 to 50.

INTERNATIONAL LEGISLATION

In addition to the national legislations, Iraq has also ratified international protocols to strengthen the protection of its own heritage, such as the 1954 Protocol to the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (UNESCO 1954, but without ratifying the second protocol, see Matthews et al. 2019), the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (UNESCO 1973) and the 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (UNESCO 1972).

These laws focus on the methods of protection and management of cultural heritage, while they do not consider both the methodologies of archaeological documentation and the actors involved.

CURRENT THREATS TO ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES IN IRAQ

We have analyzed the state of conservation and the types of risks and damages that currently threaten archaeological sites in Iraq to verify the need to propose recommendations to improve the documentation and safeguarding strategies.

Figure 16 shows how the area with the highest number of endangered archaeological sites in Iraq the clusters south of Baghdad and includes the regions of Baghdad, Babil, Kerbala, Wasit, Qadisiyah, Najaf, Thi Qar, Misan, Muthanna, Basrah. Following the outbreak of the gulf war and then the war against ISIS, current academic and popular narrative have spread the perception that looting and climate change are the most pervasive and dangerous threats to the Iraqi cultural heritage (Emberling and Hanson 2008; Stone 2015).

However, recent studies focused on selected Iraqi governorate like Qadisiyah (Marchetti et al. 2018; Zaina 2019), Wasit (Lippolis 2018) and Najaf (Maner et al. in press) already demonstrated that the real risks and types of damage are urban sprawl and agricultural activities. For this report we have expanded the scale considering over 4,941 archaeological sites in Iraq using the online open access web GIS FloodPlains (www.newg.orientlab.net) developed by the University of Bologna, the SBAH, the CRAFT and the CAMEL centre of the University of Chicago in the frame of the EU-funded EuropeAid Eduu project (www.eduu.uniibo.it). The aims is to provide an updated perspective over the entire country.

The analysis of the sample has allowed to confirm trends already emerged at the regional level, namely that the destructions caused by cultivations (75% of the sites) and canalization systems (59% of the sites) represent the most dangerous threats for archaeological sites.

Another major destructive human-made activity is the construction of dams or water reservoirs. Beside the well-know examples of the Dokan, Haditha, Hamrin and Mosul dam a very little known but emblematic case is that of the Delmej reservoir. This enormous hydraulic infrastructure (616 Km² in total) was part of a long term project of economic development carried out between the late 1960s and the early 1970s in the area across the Qadisiyah and Wasit provinces. Almost 210 Km² of the current QADIS survey area have been submerged by the Delmej reservoir (Fig. 17). By cross-relating multi-temporal satellite imagery with the archaeological sites in the Web GIS FloodPlains, we indentified 146 flooded archaeological sites of different dimensions and periods. The impact of these threats stresses the importance of developing more efficient policies to document and safeguard the Iraqi cultural heritage.

A less destructive but still remarkable threat is represented by looting. This illegal practice is the result of the long political instability and witnessed different cycles

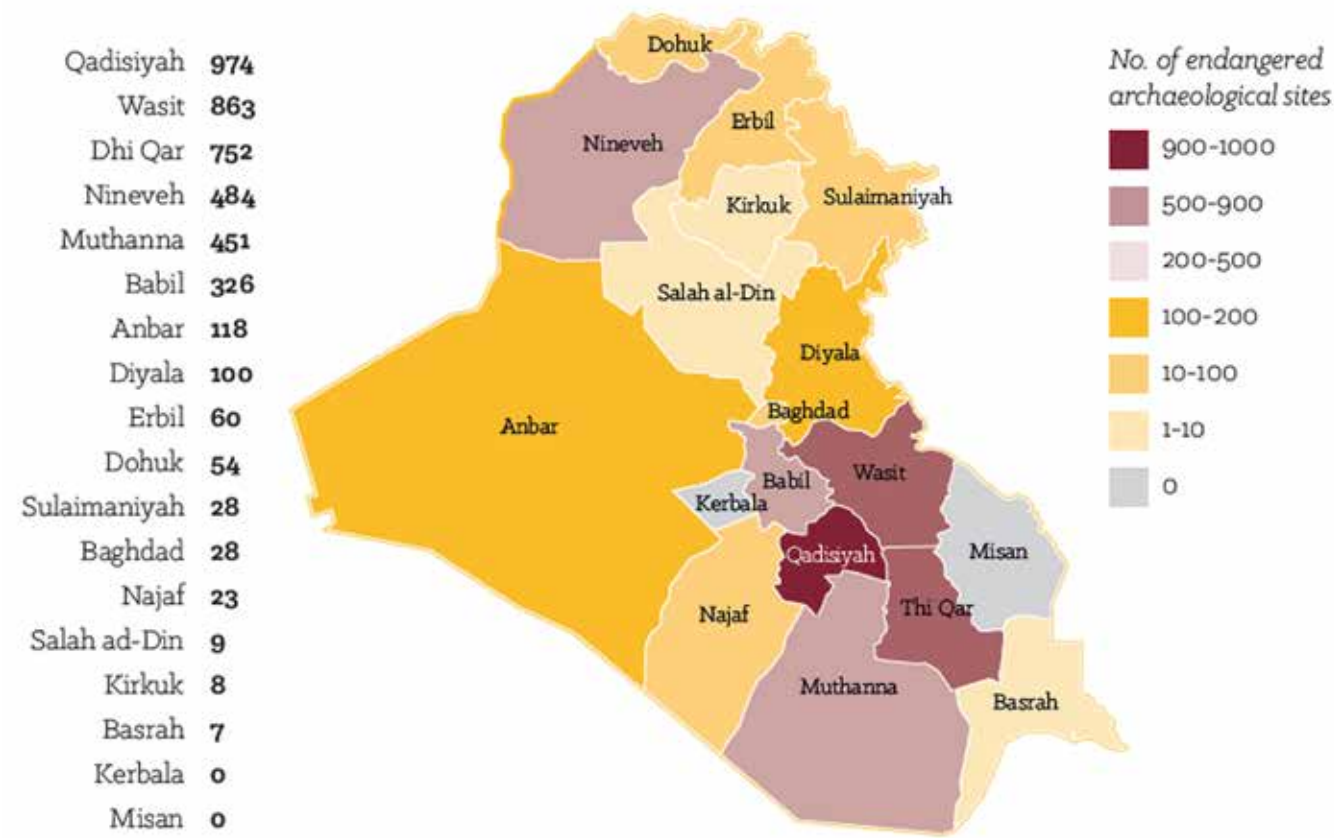


Fig. 16 | Approximate number of endangered archaeological sites by region in Iraq (Stone 2008; 2015; Al-Hamdani 2008; <http://newg.orientlab.net/>; <https://eamena.arch.ox.ac.uk/>).

¹ We made use of the official UNESCO English translation of the original Arabic text.

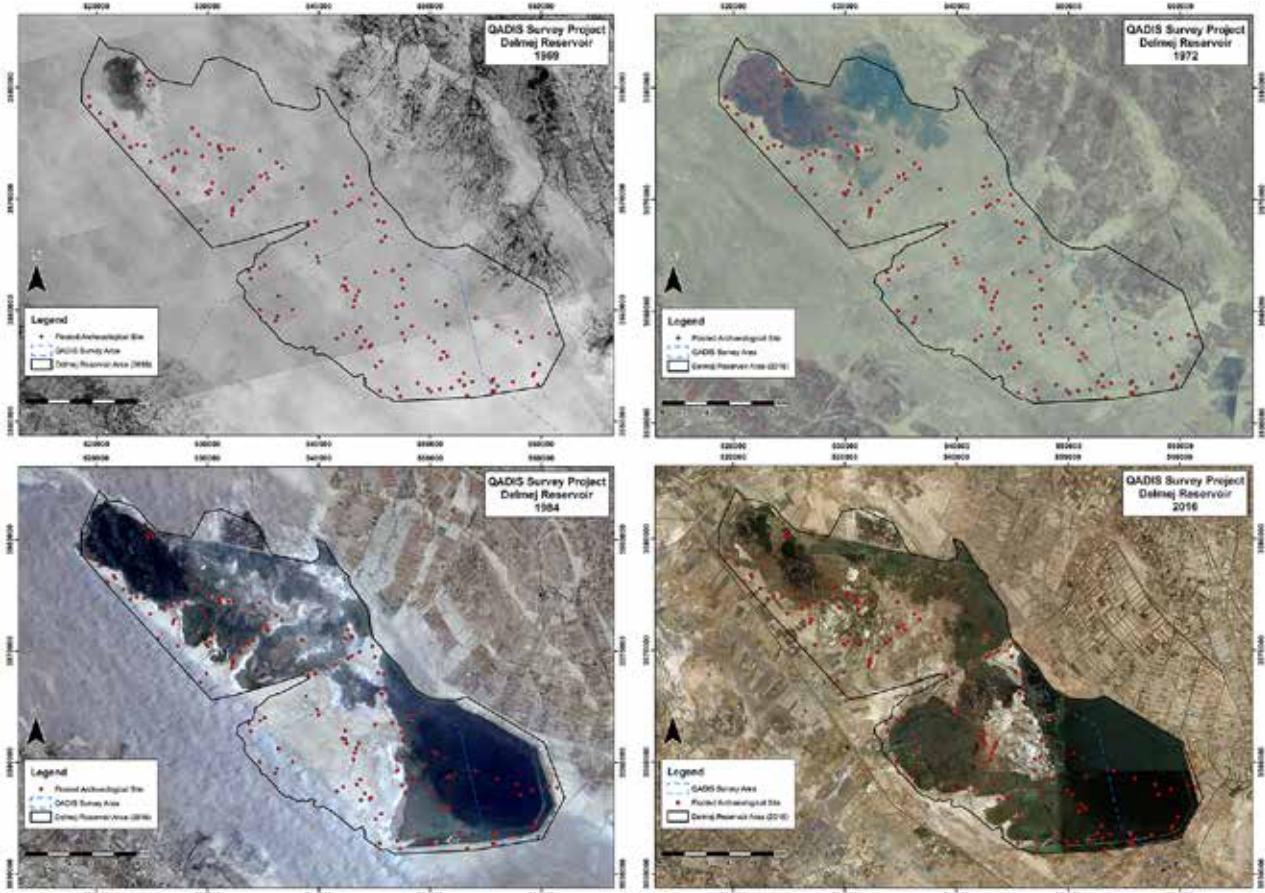


Fig. 17 | Temporal evolution of the archaeological sites flooded by the Delmej reservoir (Marchetti et al. 2020).

of intensity. In total 746 archaeological sites within the sample considered are affected by looting. One of the symbols of this catastrophe is the ancient megacity of Adab. During the 2017 and 2018 seasons, an Italian-Iraqi joint team investigated the impact of looting at the site with the aim of updating the previous evidence and training the local authorities in safeguarding methodologies

(Marchetti et al. 2018). The team integrated different sets of satellite images, then enhanced through drone survey, ground-truthing investigation and surface scraping at selected spots. The results were stunning: hectares (out of more than 400) of the site had been looted, with more than 18,000 looting pits documented (Fig. 18).

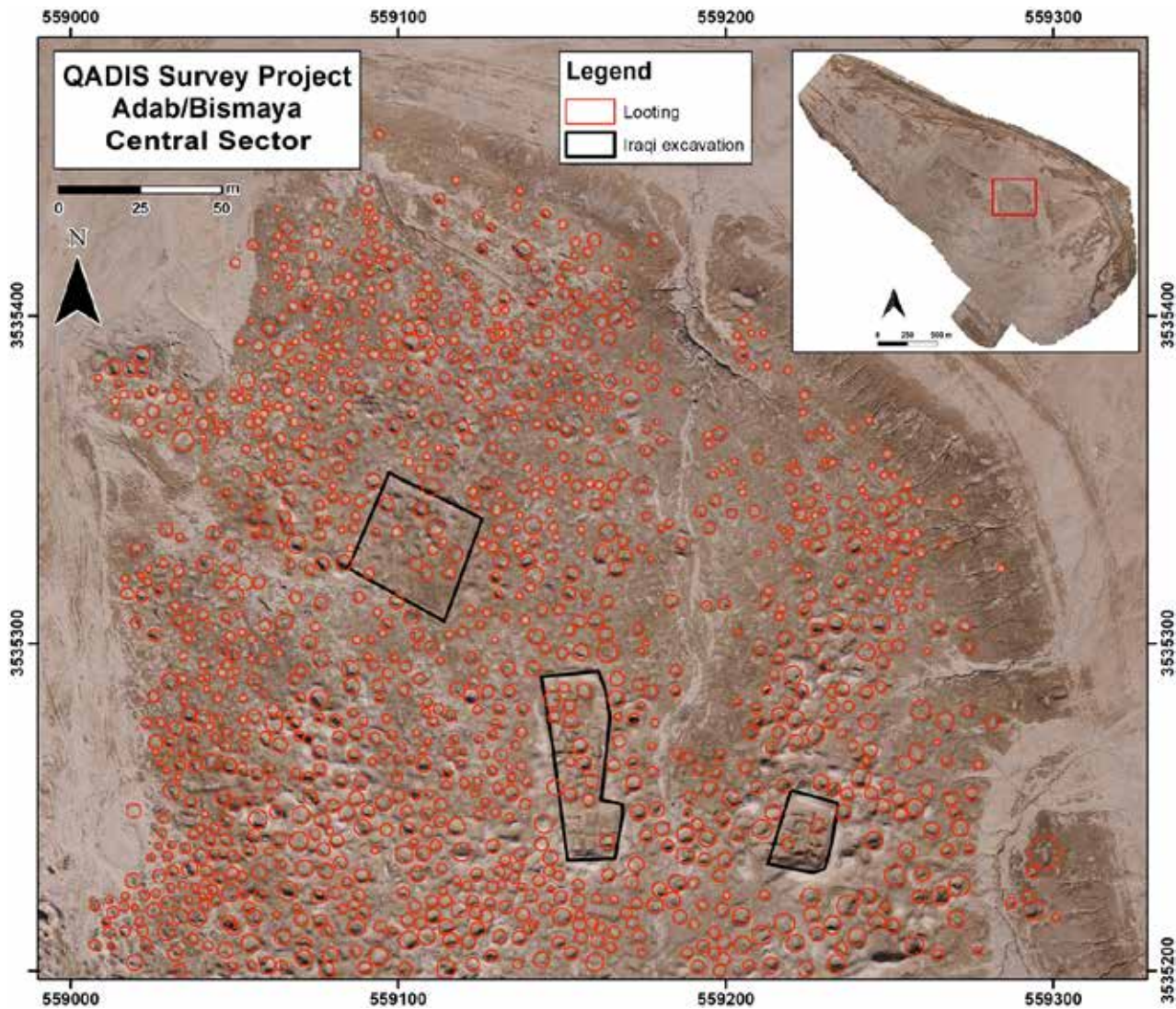


Fig. 18 | Looting pits at the site of Bismaya/Adab (from Marchetti et al. 2018).

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The rich mosaic
of heritage
organizations
in Iraq represents
an opportunity
for students to
develop their
entrepreneurial
skills

3. CULTURAL HERITAGE MANAGEMENT

Fig. 19 | On the of the main halls refurbished in the National Museum of Iraq in Baghdad (Wikimedia Commons).

INTRODUCTION

Despite the long years of conflicts the many cultural state and private institutions are currently active in Iraq (Fig. 19). This chapter provides a comprehensive view of the different type of institutions, associations and organizations specialized in the conservation and communication of cultural heritage in Iraq also shedding light on best practices and issues. Specific recommendations drawing from these result are provided in chapter 5.

MAPPING THE CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS IN IRAQ

The analysis of the present Iraqi cultural management system provided a preliminary list of museums, private and public cultural institutions, foundations, profit and non-profit associations and archaeological and architectural monuments which offer for the first time a comprehensive picture of the cultural institutions and associations in Iraq (Figs. 20-21). These are widespread throughout the national territory and they represent the starting point for future educational trainings or investment and enhancement projects. Some of the assessments drawn in the present analysis must be considered as preliminary, due to the difficult collection of appropriate information and resources about Iraqi cultural institutions or places of cultural value, economic procedures and tourism facilities. Little information can be obtained through official and certified channels, which is one of the main issues within the Iraqi cultural environment, since complete and easily accessible websites or social networks profiles are missing for the majority of Iraqi

institutions. The example of the museums is particularly critical. Indeed, the absence of websites make it difficult to get any information on the exhibitions features, opening hours and ongoing activities and projects. Even the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage hasn't got an official website and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism offers digital information about tourism and cultural heritage by web links currently deactivated or no recently updated.

Despite the methodological difficulties, some considerations about the current limits and needs of the Iraqi cultural management and heritage enhancement by economic, financial and governmental support can be here presented.

Besides an under-developed banking sector, an excessive bureaucracy, the lack of official prolonged collaborations between public and private institutions and of clear management procedures, one of the greatest obstacles to the managerial (mainly private) growth is the limited access to capital. As expressed by A. Tabaqchali (2018): “Entrepreneurs face extremely limited access to or availability of bank lending and local investors. In the rare cases that either of these options are available — i.e. banks and investors — they demand high collateral and immediate high returns in the form of interest payments or dividends. These limit investments and business options to those that generate quick returns rather than encourage ongoing investments in the form of reinvested earnings that generate sustainable businesses. [...] The development of these mechanisms in Iraq requires considerable time and the introduction of new laws, regulations, and policies.” Moreover, the greatest sources of cultural development come from the economic foreign support, which is mainly destined to non-profit projects.

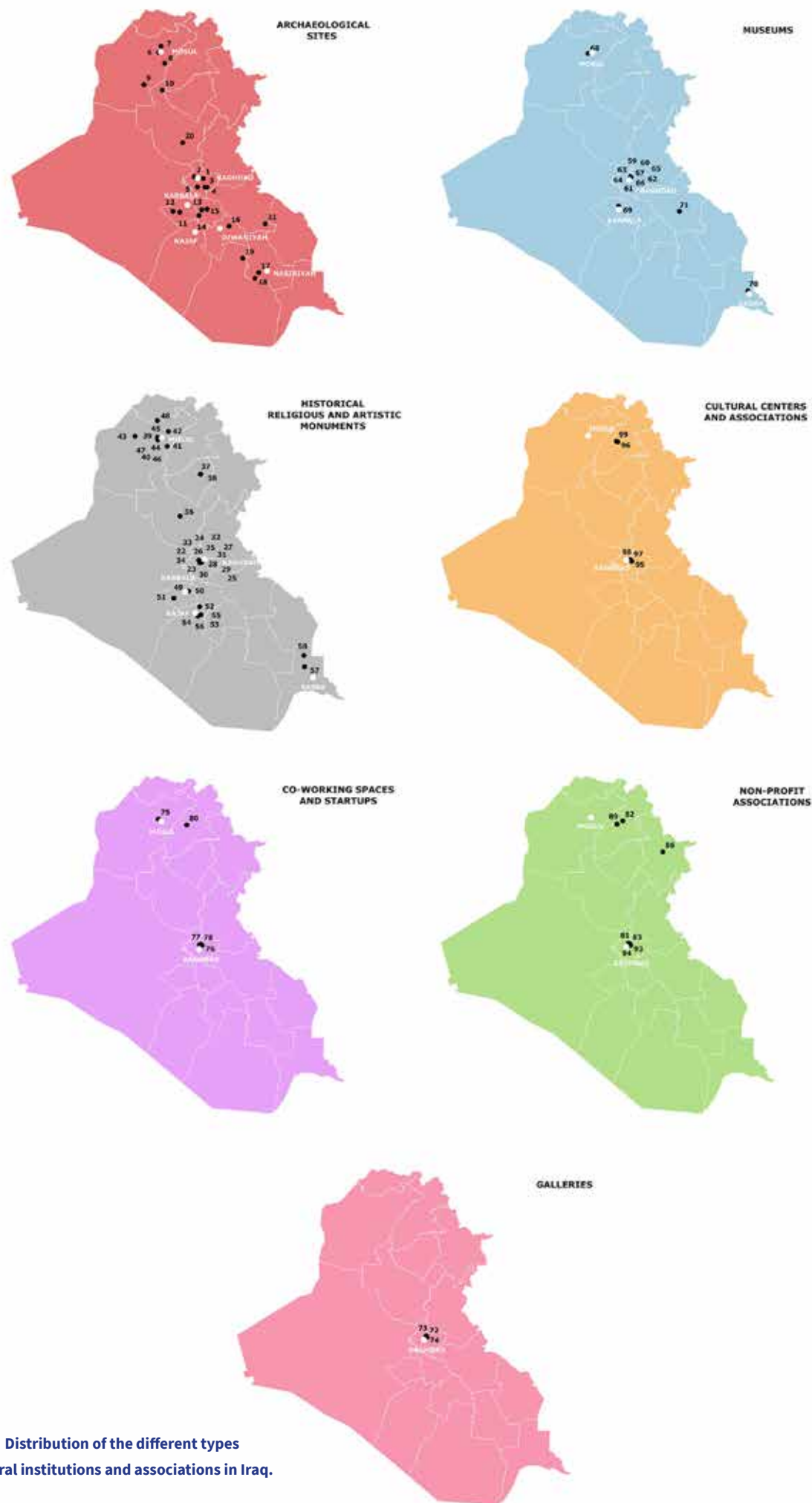


Fig. 20 | Distribution of the different types of cultural institutions and associations in Iraq.



Fig. 21 | Detail of the distribution of the different types of cultural institutions and associations in Baghdad

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AND MONUMENTS

The selection included archaeological sites and monuments representing the entire Mesopotamian and modern Iraqi history, from the Sumerian, Babylonian and Assyrian periods up to the Ottoman time and the modern Iraqi history (Figs. 22-23). The Iraqi Ministry of Culture manages the national archaeological sites and historical buildings through the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, a governmental institution which operates since 1923 (see chapter 2). The historical religious buildings such as the Kadhmain Mosque and the Khulafa Mosque in Baghdad, the Islamic religious centres of Karbala and Najaf or the Askari Mosque at Samarra, currently hosting ritual activities, are managed by the Ministry of Endowment and the Religious Affairs. The management of the most recent monuments (such as the Freedom Monument, the Martyrs Monument and the Save-Iraqi Culture Monument at Baghdad) are entrusted to the local municipal authorities.

The Iraqi cultural heritage has been gravely damaged or completely destroyed by the recent conflicts and the conditions of insecurity. The archaeological sites have been heavily looted, as a consequence of the lack of appropriate and continuous supervisions. Some sites have also often been the real objective of military attacks, as in the case of the Al-Askari Shrine in Samarra, bombed in 2006, or the neo-Assyrian North-West Palace at Nimrud, vandalized by the Isis soldiers in 2015. Other archaeological and artistic places have been occupied by military bases.

The well-known example is the archaeological area of Babylon: here, after the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the coalition forces built a large military base; the prolonged use heavily damaged the archaeological strata and favored the collapse of part of the nearby ancient architectural remains. Moreover, the situation of political and military insecurity often prevented the fast and necessary restoration interventions (UNESCO Country Programming Document For The Republic Of Iraq 2011 – 2014, 8; Russell 2010).

The Iraqi cultural heritage condition needs a coordinated global management planning involving the main Iraqi governmental institutions (the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage). The active cooperation between these stakeholders with the local authorities, the museums, the university researchers, the non-profit associations and the local communities could lead to a successful management improvement and enhancement of the Iraqi heritage (Matthews et al. 2020, 130). Moreover, the Iraqi authorities need the involvement of local and international professionals and institutions to promote the widespread application of international standards for the protection of the cultural heritage (UNESCO Country Programming Document For The Republic Of Iraq 2011 – 2014, 8).

The Coordination Committee for the Safeguarding of the Cultural Heritage of Iraq (ICC Iraq), established in 2004 by the cooperation between Iraqi authorities and



Fig. 22 | The archaeological site of Hatra (CRAT)



Fig. 23 | The archaeological site of Seleucia on the Tigris (CRST)

UNESCO, heads the institutional efforts for the enhancement of the Iraqi cultural heritage, and “aims to review national, international and/or multinational activities and initiatives supporting cultural heritage rehabilitation efforts in line with the priorities set by Iraqi authorities” (UNESCO Country Programming Document For The Republic Of Iraq 2011 – 2014, 24).

Between the main protection actions recently adopted, the Iraqi Government promoted the training of specialized forces for the monitoring of archaeological sites, such as a special branch of the Iraqi police, under the control of the Ministry of Interior (UNESCO Country Programming Document For The Republic Of Iraq 2011 – 2014, 24). These police branches participated also to training courses gave by the Italian professionals of the Nucleo Tutela Patrimonio Culturale dei Carabinieri.

Moreover, until 2003, the Iraqi government employed more than one thousand salaried guards to protect the archaeological sites under the supervision of the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage and the regional Antiquities Directorates. The next step should be the creation of educational courses to train the guards (as well as university students of archaeology and cultural heritage) as site guides for tourists, with the aim of enhancing the tourists access, enriching the opportunities for tourists and locals (Matthews et al. 2020, 133-134).

As regards the Iraqi heritage protection projects, the maintenance and restoration operations have recent-

ly increased, mainly by the efforts of international non-profit foundations in cooperation with the Iraqi authorities, first and foremost UNESCO and World Monument Fund. The UNESCO Office for Iraq promotes and supports education and cultural activities in the country and successfully conducted a great number of cultural heritage projects, such as the restoration of the Al-Askari Shrine in Samarra and of the Erbil Citadel. In 2017, in cooperation with the Iraqi Ministry of Culture, it launched the *Response Plan for the Safeguarding of Cultural Heritage in the Liberated Areas of Iraq* (2017-2019) to which the ‘Revive the Spirit of Mosul’ project belongs (<https://en.unesco.org/fieldoffice/baghdad/about>).

The World Monument Fund, an American private non-profit association, currently coordinates in Iraq the *Future of Babylon Project* to conserve and restore the ruins of Babylon and participates in the return to Iraq of looted artefacts. It also organized trainings for Iraqi archaeologists, restorers and authorities and directed numerous conservation programs at Erbil, Amedy and Mosul (<https://www.wmf.org>).

The present plan for the Iraqi cultural enhancement (The Iraqi National Development Plan) also deals with tourism development; the tourism revitalization is considered as an irreplaceable tool for the economic relaunch, the improvement of the dialogue between cultures and the modernization of the entire country (UNESCO Country Programming Document For The Re-

public Of Iraq 2011 – 2014, 25).

The evidence of these efforts is the creation, announced in 2013, of the first Iraqi national park, the *Mesopotamia Marshland National Park*, a wetlands area extended for many thousands of square kilometers and located in southern Iraq, which shows an extraordinary ecological, archaeological and anthropological value. Indeed, the marsh area around the national park is inhabited by several local tribes which still practices their traditional customs and many ancient archaeological sites are here located; the preservation of this heritage is strongly supported by the Ministry of Tourism which manages the institution administration (<https://www.bradtguides.com/mesopotamia-marshland-national-park/>).

The Ur site archaeological and tourist management represents a further example of successful development plan: despite many logistical difficulties, due to the economic crisis and the military turmoils, during the last two decades some projects of maintenance and restoration involved Iraqi and international authorities: some architectural remains have been restored or completely reconstructed (such as the so-called Abraham’s house), the site has been partially refenced, a reception office and paved walkways have been built, and golf buggies are available for visitors (Hann-Dabrowska-Greaves 2015, 312-314).

A further element to be considered in order to enhance the archaeological and artistic heritage concerns the natural setting: some archaeological and artistic sites are located in amazing landscapes such as the At-Tar Caves (a complex of 400 caves near the Lake Razzazaha, 45 km southwest of Karbala), Ashur (an Assyrian city located on a promontory overlooking the Tigris, 110 km south of Mosul), the Rabban Hormizd Monastery (carved out in the mountains near Ali Qosh, north of Mosul) or the Adam’s tree at Querna (75 km northwest of Basra, located where the Tigris and Euphrates meet); the managerial renewal of these sites needs to consider together the archaeological historical and natural values in order to increase and enrich their developments.

UNIVERSITIES

The Iraqi higher education system includes 26 public universities, 47 technical institutes and 28 private colleges under the general management of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. The Iraqi modern universities were established from the second half of the twentieth century. During the last 20 years, a considerable increase affected the university system, with the foundation of 14 new universities. As expressed by F.M. Sabah (2013, 257) “Higher education institutions are key actors in the production and dissemination of knowledge through research and instruction, and therefore bear a unique social responsibility for fostering values, citizenship, and civic engagement. They are also producers of human capital, which is demanded by employers in the labor market and critical to social and economic advancement”.

Moreover as reported by C. Raban “Iraq’s higher education sector is not a single indivisible entity: there are significant differences (and the opportunities and challenges differ) across Iraq, and between the public and private sectors”. The private universities have recently increased in contrast to public universities which are significantly under-resourced (Raban 2019, 34). Additionally, the Iraqi universities, mainly the public ones, seem to display a systemic excessive bureaucratization, which complicates new procedures and modern processes, and several humanities sectors show a widespread future precariousness for students.

As previously stated, international research institutions and universities provide continuous support in protecting and enhancing the Iraqi cultural heritage and promoting formative trainings, the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut (*Iraq Program*), the British Museum (*Iraq Emergency Heritage Management Training Scheme*), the UCL (*Nahrein Network*), the Centro Ricerche Archeologiche e Scavi di Torino (the Italian-Iraqi Cultural Centre of Archaeological Sciences and Restoration trainings projects) amongst many others (Matthews et al. 2020, 130). Moreover, the direct collaborations between Iraqi and foreign universities, as in the case of the University of Bologna’s EDUU and WALADU EU-funded Projects, are still sporadic. As regards the Iraqi public institutions, the relationships

between the archaeology university departments and the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage are increasingly intensifying through joint professionals trainings directed to university students and officials of the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage; these activities can be the starting point of future intensive collaborations.

MUSEUMS

During the First Gulf War of 1991, the Iraqi archaeological museums closed, including the National Museum in Baghdad (Fig. 24) which only reopened in April 2000. The renewed conflict in 2003 caused significant architectural damages and extensive lootings in the museum. Since 2003, strong efforts have been made by the Iraqi authorities and international assistance institutions to restore and renovate the museum building and to reinstate the stolen artifacts. During the closing the restoration laboratories had been completely restored and thanks to Italian architectural projects and economic supports the set-up of the Assyrian Galleries and the Islamic section has been completely renovated. The Mosul Museum, the second most important archaeological museum in Iraq, was also looted in 2003, but fortunately a large number of artifacts were already safe at Baghdad. The museum was under renovation works when it was occupied by ISIS terrorists in June 2014 which also damaged and destroyed several

artifacts. In response to the recent continuous attacks to the country heritage the Iraqi cultural institutions officially reopened the National Museum in Baghdad in February 2015, the Nasiriyah Museum in March 2015, the Basrah Museum in March 2019 (Fig. 25), and they are currently working on the reopening of other local museums throughout the country. The national archaeological museums, under the management of the Ministry of Culture, are directed by a single official administrative authority (the director of the Iraq Museum, currently Dr. Amira Edan) which locally operates through the activities of the local directors. The main institutions are starting to adopt new exhibition practices and to develop educational projects with the support of international museum and heritage professionals as seen in the National Museum of Baghdad (Matthews et al. 2020, 135). This institution could be an illustrative model for all Iraqi archaeological and artistic museums. The museum exhibits the ancient Mesopotamian archaeological and artistic masterpieces covering the past 7,000 years, including Sumerian, Akkadian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Seleucid, Parthian, Sasanian and Islamic artifacts. This institution plays an active role in the Iraqi community, by offering educational trainings for locals, professionals, young students and children (<https://www.theiraqmuseum.com/pages/about-the-museum.html>). A didactic room for youngest visitors has



Fig. 24 | One of the main halls of the National Museum of Iraq in Baghdad (Wikimedia commons).



Fig. 25 | One of the main halls of the Basrah Museum (Wikimedia commons).

been opened in January 2020 within the EDUU project framework (Fig. 26). Moreover, important efforts have been recently made for updating and enriching the skills of museum professionals: in 2019 Italian restorers from the ISCR (Istituto Superiore per la Conservazione ed il Restauro) of Rome organized training courses at Baghdad intended for museum restorers. The National Museum of Modern Art at Baghdad is another institution which demonstrates an active enhancement of cultural activities by holding educational workshops about Iraqi art traditions and promoting cultural relationships with foreign institutions (Hann-Dabrowska-Greaves 2015, 144). Out of Baghdad, the Mosul Museum shows recent important managerial efforts after the lootings and destructions in 2014: the second most important Iraqi archaeological museum reopened officially in 2019 with the first art exhibition “Return to Mosul”. Another active group of Iraqi institutions is represented by the university museums: among them the Institute of Fine Arts Museum or the Natural History Museum at the University of Baghdad which holds scientific and artistic programs and projects to promote a widespread community development (<http://en.uobaghdad.edu.iq/>). Currently, the majority of Iraqi museums show significant efforts to increase and improve their activities. One of the most evident problems which could prevent such development

is the lack of online accessible information. Indeed, the websites or the social networks public pages, if existing, are often only in Arabic and rarely updated.

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

The non-profit associations are certainly the most active and widespread organizations which currently operate in the Iraqi cultural heritage background, especially as regards the restoration and the safeguard of monuments and sites. In fact, several cooperation projects have been recently activated between Iraqi and international non-profit foundations and local authorities, mainly for the restoration of monuments and archaeological sites which suffered serious damages during the latest conflicts. The most famous cases concern the valuable activities carried out by great international foundations such as UNESCO and World Monument Fund. In addition, there are many non-profit Iraqi associations that in the last years actively worked for the cultural heritage enhancement, including both protection and restoration activities, the tourism relaunch and the community involvement through workshops, conferences and cultural activities. Among them the Ruya Foundation, an Iraqi registered non-profit, non-governmental organization, which has recently created an accessible art space with a library and a projection space in Baghdad (<https://>



Fig. 26 | The children room opened in 2020 at the National Museum of Iraq in Baghdad (EDUU project).

ruyafoundation.org/en/). The *Iraqi Culture and Arts Projects Association* is another valuable example which is aimed at developing and promoting Iraqi fine arts, music, theatre, literature, archeology and tourism activities. A similar networking activity is carried out by the *Iraq Civil Society Solidarity Initiative*, a forum which gathers and connects works of local associations and initiatives (<https://www.iraqicivilsociety.org/>). *Voices for Iraq* is an independent, charitable association dedicated to the development of Iraqi education, the protection of natural environment and the preservation of the cultural heritage; the institution has direct relationships with Iraqi scholars, journalists, academics and archaeologists in order to promote projects aiming at the organization of discussion groups, forums and lectures (<http://voicesforiraq.org/about/mision/>). Some non-profit organizations work specifically in economic sectors: for example, the *Development Iraq Organization* supports the development of Iraqi economy, society, education and culture in public and private sectors by improving business, financial and banking investments in education and culture sectors by trainings and technical assistance (<http://deviraq.org/>). The *Ziusudra Archaeological Organization* operates specifically within the southern Iraq archaeological context in order to enhance the local heritage, by organizing archaeological conferences, travels in archaeological sites and in the marshlands areas, visits in the museums, by collaborating with the local public institutions (<https://t.me/ziusudra>). Two illustrative examples of Iraqi heritage successful management strategies by the support of local and international non-profit organizations are presented here. The first one determined the reopening of the Basrah Museum

through the help of a UK non-profit association, *Friends of the Basrah Museum*, who raised the funds for the new galleries set-up by public and individual contributions. The organization worked in close cooperation with the Basrah provincial administrative institutions which obtained substantial funds from the regional oil companies. The Museum is becoming an important cultural space for the southern Iraqi community by providing educational and specialized trainings. Most of the exhibited objects have been sent from Baghdad by the agreement between the Director of the Basrah Museum and the Director of the Iraq Museum in Baghdad, supplemented by some finds from Basrah region (<http://friendsofbasrahmuseum.org.uk/>). The second case is the ongoing project named *Urim Initiative: Creating a Sustainable Preservation Plan for the Ur Archaeological Site*, a non-profit Italian-Iraqi organization, supported by the *Fondation Assistance Internationale* (FAI) and fundraising initiatives, launched in 2018. The aim is the renovation of the preservation plans for the ancient site of Ur in cooperation with the local Department of Antiquities, based on the requirements of the UNESCO declaration of the site of Ur as part of the “Ahwar of Southern Iraq: Refuge of Biodiversity and Relict Landscape of the Mesopotamian Cities” (which includes the Central Marshes in Maysan and Dhi Qar, Huweiza in Maysan, East Hammar in Basrah, West Hammar in Dhi Qar and the archaeological sites of Ur, Uruk and Eridu). The new plan is developing by Iraqi heritage experts and Italian archaeologists of the Sapienza University of Rome with the official permission and support of the Iraqi authorities (<https://www.iraqicivilsociety.org/archives/8766>).

CULTURAL CENTRES

“The organization of conferences and workshops on Iraq’s heritage can be a vehicle for bringing together stakeholders with national and international expertise, advice and support, as well as for raising and sustaining public awareness” (Matthews et al. 2020, 130). Many cultural centers handle this specific aspect. Among them the Italian-Iraqi Cultural Centre of Archaeological Sciences and Restoration at Baghdad represents an illustrative example of these formative activities. It was founded in 1969 by the *Centro Ricerche Archeologiche e Scavi per il Medio Oriente e l’Asia di Torino* with the purpose of creating an ongoing joint cultural cooperation between Italy and Iraq and preserve and enhance the Iraqi archaeological and artistic heritage, by planning archaeological excavations, restoration projects and the application of new methodologies in the field of cultural heritage in cooperation with the Iraqi authorities. Since the reopening in 2016, the Institute held workshops, language courses, conferences, book presentations, concerts and photographic exhibitions. The training courses mainly focused on the methodology of the archaeological research and on the techniques of preservation and protection of the archaeological and artistic heritage (<https://www.centroscavitorino.it/index.php/en/safeguard-of-the-cultur->

[al-heritage/the-italian-iraqi-cultural-centre-of-archaeological-science-and-restoration-baghdad](https://www.centroscavitorino.it/index.php/en/safeguard-of-the-cultural-heritage/the-italian-iraqi-cultural-centre-of-archaeological-science-and-restoration-baghdad)).

Similar activities are organized by the Iraqi Institute for the Conservation of Antiquities and Heritage (IICAH) which works in Kurdistan (Erbil). This institution aims to preserve the cultural heritage of Iraq through the education of the local community, by collaborating mainly with the schools (<https://www.artcons.udel.edu/out-reach/global-engagement/iraqi-institute>).

ART GALLERIES

Regarding the spread of culture among the Iraqi community, this function is carried out also by the private art galleries. Three cases, located in Baghdad, are here presented: the *Dijla Art Gallery* (<http://www.dijlaart.com/>), the *Madarat Gallery* and the *Hewar Art Gallery* (<http://www.hewarartgallery.com/>) (Fig. 27), which were founded during the 1990s as Iraqi contemporary art specialized centers with permanent private collections and temporary exhibitions. Their cultural activities are aimed at displaying the Iraqi art pioneers and new artists; moreover, they organize cultural events, conferences, concerts and meetings directed to the Iraqi community: they represent efficient cultural and educational spaces.



Fig. 27 | The Hewar Art Gallery in Baghdad (Facebook).

START-UPS AND CO-WORKING SPACES

A new young private entrepreneurial culture emerged in Iraq during the last two decades. This innovative background is represented by two main branches: the start-ups and the coworking centers (Tabaqchali 2018). Concerning the recent startups initiatives, few cases seem to be related to the cultural contexts. However they can be used as models for cultural innovative tools in order to promote the heritage development. Some startups work specifically in the commercial sector providing items which are related to the traditional productions. *Hili* for example is a physical and online store which sell hand-craft items inspired by the Mesopotamian heritage and realized by local artisans. *Zuqaq13* produces clothing and other souvenirs influenced by Iraqi and Arabic artistic culture (Tabaqchali 2018). *EDUBA* is a technological app which supports specifically the educational development; it's an electronic system which aims to give a fast access to all information and needs to educational and academic projects (<https://eduba.app/main/>). Finally, some institutions support specifically the entrepreneurship development. One of the most interesting examples is *TechHub*, a coworking and community space for Iraqi startups, which provides local entrepreneurs with infrastructures, facilities, and easy access to a wide network of potential Iraqi and international investors and collaborations (<https://www.techhub.iq/>).

These examples show how the participation of young Iraqis to the local technological and cultural growth is successfully increasing, especially within innovative coworking spaces where recurring training courses, conferences, public readings, concerts, movies shows and books presentations take place. The opening of *The Station* (Fig. 28), the first coworking space for young entrepreneurs in Baghdad, in 2018, is the more illustra-

tive example of these new community needs and of the young Iraqi entrepreneurial background. This private institution organizes events, workshops, conferences and talks for innovators and entrepreneurs members, to create within the private sector a real cultural collaborative community (<https://the-station.iq/>).

Also Mosul represents an active place where the young entrepreneurial activities have recently grown significantly. Here in 2014 the first coworking community on education, innovation, entrepreneurship and technology was founded: the *Mosul Space* (Fig. 29). The community arose in the Mosul University in order to share new entrepreneurial ideas among students. The principal aims are to improve youth technology, entrepreneurship, innovation and education skills, providing the appropriate environment, adequate relationships and the connection to important international networks (<http://mosulspace.org/>).

Several initiatives have been recently promoted by the Iraqi government to support small and medium private-sector enterprises, through the Central Bank of Iraq and of a number of private and public banks, with the aim to make available several types of loans to all Iraqis for creating new job opportunities and encouraging the economic growth. One of the most innovative financial programs starting from 2015 is the Central Bank's *1 Trillion Dinars Initiative* whose goal is to endorse mainly young Iraqi entrepreneurs with innovative projects, by giving them accessible loans between 5 and 50 million Iraqi dinars and, under certain conditions, up to one billion dinars. Until 2019 the governmental initiative financed 2704 commercial projects, 469 industrial projects, 102 agricultural projects and 996 tourist and educational projects (<https://gds.gov.iq/iraqi-government-finance-schemes-to-support-smes-and-business-innovation/>).



Fig. 28 | The Station (Facebook).



Fig. 29 | The Mosul Space (Facebook).

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The number
of invaluable
heritage places
demonstrates
the potential
of Iraq as a
cultural tourism
destination

4. CULTURAL TOURISM

INTRODUCTION

The potential of Iraq as a cultural tourism destination is demonstrated by number of invaluable ancient monuments and archaeological sites spread throughout the country (Fig. 30). Key places of the ancient history of Mesopotamia such as Babylon, Nippur, Nineveh, Ur, Hatra or Seleucia as well as monuments like the Minaret of Samarra, the old-cities of Baghdad and Najaf are only some examples of the enormous cultural touristic potential of Iraq.

In this chapter we analyze the current situation of the touristic sector in Iraq in general and then focusing on the most developed areas of the country in terms of touristic facilities and infrastructures. The last paragraph provide a short overview of the current legislation in Iraq regarding the touristic sector.

CURRENT SITUATION OF CULTURAL TOURISM JOB MARKET IN THE REGION AND IRAQ IN GENERAL

Currently tourism in Iraq is conducted almost only for religious purposes. Indeed, the country hosts several pilgrimage sites related to Shia Islam such as Najaf and Karbala. Despite these limitations, Iraq has the potential to become a perfect location for other types of tourism including cultural tourism and eco-tourism. This also demonstrated by the fact that Erbil was chosen as "Arab Tourism Capital" in 2014 by the Arab Tourism Committee.¹

Yet, Kerbala and Najaf are nowadays the most popular destinations in Iraq due to the location of religious places in the country. The two cities are considered a thriving tourist destination for Shia Muslims and the tourism industry in the city boomed after the end of Saddam Hussein's rule. However, due to the US sanctions on Iran, the number of Iranian tourists dropped significantly.

TRENDS IN THE TOURISTIC SECTOR IN IRAQ

The Investment Map of Iraq 2019 has recently stressed the central role of tourism in the economy of Iraq with 112 active or potential investments throughout the country (Investment Map of Iraq 2019). The new wave of investments is particularly welcome by national and international organizations such as the World Tourism and Travel Council, which underlined the necessity restart the sector after the long years of conflict (2020). Indeed if we are still far from the 1995 data when the tourism sector directly contributed with about 9 trillion of dinars and 1.3 million of employees, the slow regeneration of the Iraqi economy brought in 2014 (before ISIS) the contribution of tourism to Iraqi wealth to about 5 trillion of dinars with 528,435 employees, and in 2019 to 14 trillion of dinars with 626,500 employees (6.8% of the total employment Fig. 31). It is noteworthy that 1 out of 4 net new jobs were created by the tourism sector over the last five years (WTTC 2020).

However, the 97% of inbound arrivals come from Iran (89%), Pakistan (4%), India (3%), Azerbaijan (1%) for religious purposes. During the last two decades only the religious tourism survived and even grew up, unlike the international and local cultural tourism which disappeared and now needs important and intensive economic and managerial efforts.

Another significant datum is the sharp increase in tourist spending in Iraq (World Bank 2016). This trend further demonstrates the potential of the touristic sector in Iraq and the benefit that the development of sub-sectors such as cultural tourism and ecotourism could bring both in terms of employments and tourists expenditure.

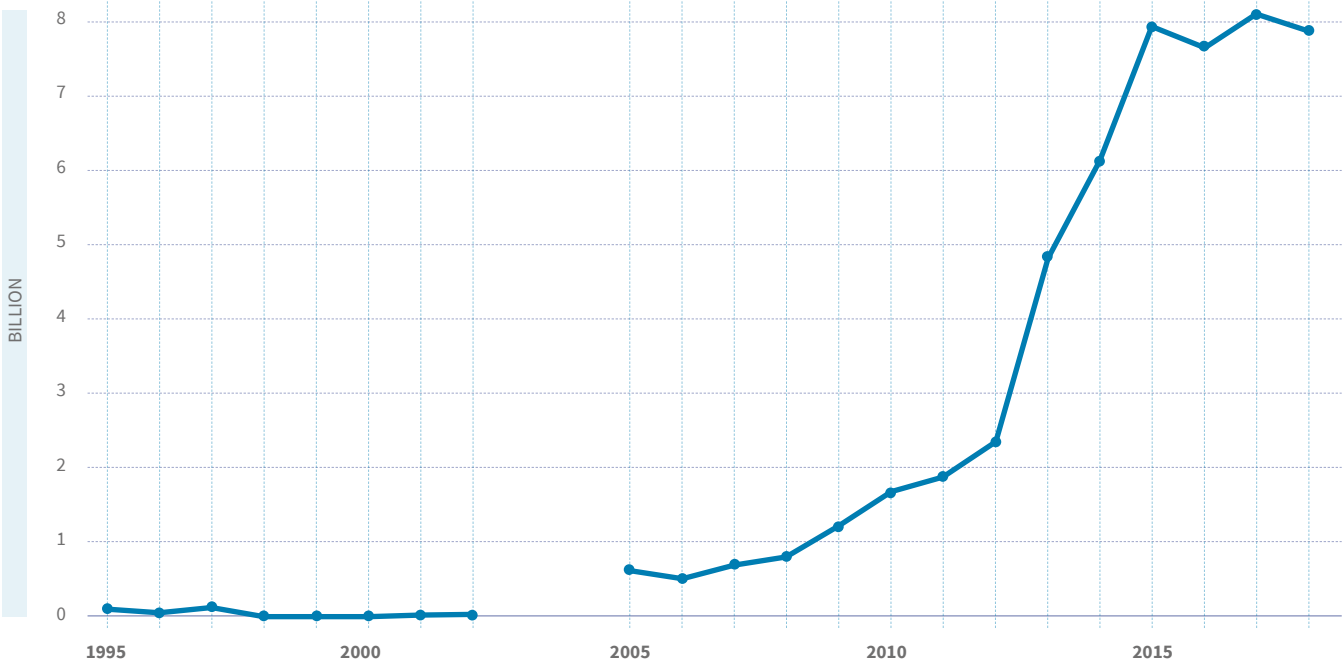


Fig. 31 | International tourism expenditures in Iraq (in USD).



Fig. 32 | One of the activities of the Bil Weekend company in the Iraq marshlands.

¹ <https://unpo.org/article/15167>

POTENTIAL PLACES FOR CULTURAL TOURISM AND CURRENT ISSUES

Cultural tourism is currently considered at the sideline of the touristic sector, with religious tourism favored especially in the so-called “holy cities”. Therefore, very few tourism private companies work in the field of cultural tourism, sometimes offering visits to cultural places and archaeological sites near the main cities or, more rarely in the countryside.

Among the most striking evidence of the crisis of cultural tourism in the country is the al-Madain, a monumental archaeological area near Baghdad, once an appreciated tourist destination, now badly damaged and neglected. Another example is Babylon, near the modern city of Hilla, one the most famous cities of the ancient world, and symbol of the entire Mesopotamian civilization, visited by thousands of Iraqi and foreign tourists in the past, set of festivals and cultural events, almost abandoned for a few years during the economic crisis following the Second Gulf War and now slowly regenerating.

Further popular cultural places include the old cities of Samarra and Wasit, two of the most ancient Islamic cities in Iraq), the old central districts of Baghdad, which include historical architectural masterpieces such as the Mustansariya Madrasa, the Abbasid Palace, the Qushla, the Khan Murjan and the Zubayda Tomb, and the Kirkuk Citadel or the Wadi al Salaam Cemetery in Najaf, one of the largest cemeteries in the world which contains the remains of millions of Muslims. These cultural places, as well as many others, may become the starting points for tourism enhancement and cultural promotion.

The majority of private companies including cultural places in the offer, generally work at local level while cultural tourism enhancement at national level has been address by enterprises. In this regards, a best practice may be represented by the *Bil Weekend* company (Fig. 32; see location in Figs. 1-2 of Chapter 3) , the first tourism startup operator in Iraq, promoting cultural tourism through visits to heritage sites, tourism sports activities, group camping trips, museum visits and adventures trips of natural sites. This a travel and tourism startup based in Baghdad, aim at enhancing Iraqi cultural heritage as a critical factor for country development.

CURRENT TOURISM SITUATION AND POTENTIAL IN THE KUFA-NAJAF AND HILLA REGIONS

There is a well-developed infrastructure for tourism in the Kufa-Najaf region. Each year these two cities host millions of guests (mostly from Iraq), which creates especially in the high season a intense touristic flow.

TOURISM DATA IN NAJAF-KUFA AND HILLA REGIONS

The three cities and their region are provided with a high number of touristic infrastructures including hotels, guest houses, restaurants, travel companies, airline agencies, gift shops, shopping centers, suqs. Markets and shopping centers are generally available in both heritage and modern styles (Table 1).

Type of tourism infrastructures	City	Quantity
Airlines agencies	Najaf (airport)	22 permanent + 10 during high seasons
Travel companies	Najaf-Kufa	50-60
Travel companies	Kerbala	60-65
Travel companies	Hilla	30
Hotels and apartments	Najaf-Kufa	100 suitable and classified hotels (total number of hotels =35)
Hotels and apartments	Kerbala	150 suitable and classified hotels (total number of hotels = 400)
Hotels and apartments	Hilla	4
Restaurant (4 stars)	Najaf-Kufa	10
Restaurant (4 stars)	Kerbala	10
Restaurant (4 stars)	Hilla	5

Table 1 | List of toursim infrastructures in Najaf, Kufa and Hilla.



Fig. 33 | General view of the Wadi Al-Salaam cemetery (Wikimedia commons).

The current touristic potential is mainly based on religious tourism. The shrines, related museums, mosques and cemeteries in Kufa-Najaf represent the major income in tourism for this region. However a wealth of historical and cultural sites is also present in the two regions under analysis (Table 2).

Each year more than 2 million visitors come to the Kufa-Najaf region almost only for religious purposes. The 70% of these tourists are coming with organized tours (fixed time period and precise residence place), 20% of

the tourists are coming with organized tours and have free options and 10% of the tourists are individual visitors. Table 3 shows the visitor’s data is listed according to high - middle and low seasons. Visitors numbers for the last three years (2017-19).

The main countries from where tourists are coming from include, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, Lebanon, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bahrain, Qatar, Turkey, Azerbaijan. Further countries from which tourists come to Iraq are: UK, USA, Canada, Australia and Russia.

Type of tourism infrastructures	City	Quantity
Religious sites	Najaf-Kufa	10
Religious sites	Kerbala	6
Religious sites	Hilla	8
Historical and cultural sites	Najaf-Kufa	6
Historical and cultural sites	Kerbala	5
Historical and cultural sites	Hilla	6
Museums	Najaf-Kufa	2
Museums	Kerbala	2
Museums	Hilla	2

Table 2 | List of potential cultural touristic places in Najaf, Kufa and Hilla.

Number of tourists	Number of visitors
High season (2 months/year)	15000 – 20000 visitors/day
Moderate season (4 months/ year)	5000 – 6000 visitors/day
Low season (6 months/year)	1500 – 2000 visitors/day

Table 3 | Visitors number according to high, middle and low seasons.



Fig. 34 | General view of the Bahr Al-Najaf (Wikimedia commons).



Fig. 35 | An abandoned Ottoman house in the old city of Kufa (photo by the Banuu project members).

POTENTIAL PLACES FOR CULTURAL TOURISM

There is a huge demand for properly trained tourist guides. However, most of the people who are working in this market are not equipped with the needed skills, e.g. language skills, knowledge and tourism background. The enterprises don't know how to attract tourists to visit cultural and archeological sites in addition to the religious sites.

A variety of people with different educational backgrounds are working as tourist guides. However, some of them have not even a university or other degree. Most of the people in the tourism branch have a degree in administration, economics, civil engineering, IT, and languages.

The three cities offer a wide range of cultural places. Despite the heavy urban sprawl and the massive destruction, the old-city of Najaf has still hidden treasures that could become destinations for cultural tourism. Indeed, beside the well know shrines and mosques, several typical 19th century Ottoman houses are still standing, although major restorations are needed. Another decaying witness of the long history of Najaf are the city walls, now largely demolished or overshadowed by modern buildings.

Just outside the city, the Wadi Al-Salaam cemetery (Fig. 33), the largest in the world may represent a major cultural attraction for tourist. Close to the cemetery the Bahr Al-Najaf (sea of Najaf, Fig. 34) is a large natural lake with a rich environment the potential of which is largely unexploited.

The city of Kufa is another major cultural place in Iraq and the region with over 1400 years of history. Along with Samarra, Karbala, Kadhimiya and Najaf, it is one of five Iraqi cities with a primary religious role for Shiite Muslims. Today twinned with Najaf, the city of Kufa is undergoing a major urban renewal which is threatening most of its heritage. However, a proper renovation of the few standing heritage buildings remained in the city could

provide substantial benefit in terms of cultural tourism. Among others, Dar al-Himar (the palace of the govern) next to the Great Mosque, has been recently restored but it was never properly open to the public. The potential of the city is also underline by a proposal for the development of an archaeological park by an Italian private company was produced in 2011, but never implemented.² As for Najaf, several nice 19th century Ottoman houses and the local suq (Fig. 35) are still spread in the centre of the city and along the Euphrates bank. With some restorations, these places could be turned into museum, restaurant, shops etc. The Euphrates itself, and the long promenade may became potential attractions for tourist. Today few boat provide tour along the Euphrates, a business which could be highly improved.

Hilla also enshrines a wealth of hidden cultural places. It was chosen as the cultural capital of Iraq in 2008 because of its large cultural gatherings, as well as the many talents in all fields of culture and art, particularly poetry, writing, music and vocals. The old-city still preserves several typical 19th century Ottoman houses as well as some of the last Jewish synagogues of Iraq.

CURRENT LEGISLATION IN THE FIELD OF CULTURAL TOURISM IN IRAQ

The current legislations include only details on Visa issues. For some countries the Visa is available at a low costs at the airport in Najaf and Baghdad, while most of the countries need to apply for a Visa in their own country.

A special circumstance for the Visa availability is the Imam Hussein Arbreen event. Visa application is available in the airports, however only during high season period (30 days expiry).

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² <http://www.carloleopardi.com/it/projects/parco-archeologico-kufa/>

The way ahead lies
in three keywords:
Development
of synergies,
promotion of
new strategies,
enhancement
of heritage

5. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Fig. 36 | A co-working space in Baghdad (Ruya Foundation).

In this final chapter, we illustrate the recommendations proposed by the Banuu project team for each of the three sectors analyzed. We first provide tailor-made recommendations divided according to the relevant target groups: Universities, private sector, state level. Then, we offer some transversal recommendations that apply to all the sectors. These recommendations are driven by three key-points:

- 1. Development of synergies between the three target groups;
- 2. Promotion of medium and long-term strategies;
- 3. Enhancement of the Iraqi cultural heritage which represents the richness of the country.

The final goal of these recommendations is that of supporting the development of the private job market in Iraq in these three sectors (Fig. 36).

PREVENTIVE ARCHAEOLOGY

The analysis provided in chapter 2 shows the importance of introducing preventive archaeology in Iraq, in order to safeguard cultural heritage and to guarantee new jobs in the private sector for new generations of students of archaeology. In order to implement this sector we propose the following recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UNIVERSITIES

IMPROVING ARCHAEOLOGY-RELATED SKILLS

Rescue excavation presents specific dynamics and timing. For this it is necessary to introduce the BA and MA degrees in Archaeology and Cultural Heritage of specific courses that provide fundamentals of preventive archaeology, taught by university teachers or external professionals (Fig. 37). In addition, internship activities must be integrated to the courses (for their development see below).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRIVATE SECTOR

CREATING PRIVATE PREVENTIVE ARCHAEOLOGY COMPANIES

In Iraq, the control, management and intervention for the preservation of cultural heritage by local authorities is not sufficient to cover all potential risks deriving from the construction/development sector. The same problem is present in most of the western countries and in the light of this, we propose a strategy for enhancing the rescue and management of cultural heritage in the Qadisiyah province in an efficient and sustainable way. This issue can be addressed introducing preventive archaeology in Iraq. In the past thirty years, professional private archaeological companies¹ emerged in Europe as a response to the urgent need of archaeological survey and excavation to be carried out in advance of construction or other land developments. Excavations had long been organized by academic institutions, but since 1980 onwards, there appeared, in western Europe, preventive archaeology led by private enterprises (Demoule 2012)². A recent overview estimated that currently preventive archae-



Fig. 37 | Training of students in archaeology on the use of a total station (CRAST).

¹ Rescue archaeology has been well developed in several western countries including UK (<http://www.bajr.org/>), France (<https://www.inrap.fr/>) and Italy (<http://www.archeologiapreventiva.beniculturali.it/>).
² For an overview on the different national approaches to preventive archaeology in Europe see Bozóki-Ernyey 2007; Novaković et al. 2016.

ology, mostly carried out by private companies, represents almost the 90% of total excavations in Europe (Demoule 2012). The growing success of preventive archaeology also contributed to increase public awareness on the importance of cultural heritage (Demoule 2012).

The workflow of preventive archeology activities in Iraq may be as follows (Fig. 38):

- In case of public and private works, the developer (either a public or private company/person) must inform the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage (SBAH) before the start of the planned works. If an area already registered as of archaeological interest is present, the application is automatically rejected, unless a superior public interest is there.
- The SBAH provides the client with a private professional archaeologist (PPA) to oversee during the execution of works (preliminary evaluation of the archaeological risk and cost estimates). The PPA is paid by the SBAH, which receives the corresponding amount in advance from the developer. The SBAH selects the PPA from a list of private professional archaeological companies, which had previously been officially recognized by the SBAH itself according to verified parameters of quality and efficiency in the field of archaeology.
- The PPA immediately reports to the SBAH if cultural remains are encountered during the works. The SBAH decides about the significance of the finds: if it is a major, monumental one the works may be stopped for good; if it is an average one, excavations may be started in the area interested by the works at the expense of the developer. Through the SBAH, a private professional archaeological company may be hired to carry out archaeological excavations and upon their termination the area is given back to the developer. This solution is always applied also in the specific case mentioned under 1. above.
- At the end of the works, the PPA and/or the company submit a final report to the SBAH according to predetermined standard. Once validated, the SBAH pays the final installment to the PPA/company.
- These suggestion must be read in a long-term framework of improvement of the general management of Iraqi cultural heritage in the face of a newly starting wave of economic development. The violent events that have characterized the last decades and the price that the Iraqi heritage had to pay underline the urgent need for a modernization in line with international practices to be done in full collaboration between public (SBAH, Local councils, Universities) and private (developers) bodies.

RECOMMENDATIONS AT STATE LEVEL

PROVIDING LEGISLATION SUPPORT

In chapter 2, we emphasized the lack of proper legislations to support preventive archaeology in Iraq. This gap should be filled first through specific policy papers. These papers should illustrate both the procedure (explained above) for creating private preventive archaeology companies and the regulation for conducting excavation in full accordance and with the permission of the authorities.

CULTURAL HERITAGE MANAGEMENT

The analysis provided in chapter 3 underline the importance of improving cultural heritage management in Iraq, in order to better communicate the rich heritage and to guarantee new jobs in the private sector for new generations of students of archaeology and cultural heritage. In order to implement this sector we propose the following recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UNIVERSITIES

IMPROVING CULTURAL HERITAGE MANAGEMENT-RELATED SKILLS

This can be accomplished through the introduction within the BA and MA degrees in Archaeology and Cultural Heritage of specific courses that provide foundations of cultural tourism, political ecology as well as foreign languages, taught by university teachers or external professionals. In addition, internship activities must be integrated to the courses (for their development see below).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRIVATE SECTOR

DEVELOPMENT OF START-UP SPECIALIZED IN CULTURAL HERITAGE MANAGEMENT

The collaboration between national and local stakeholders and between public and private entities is a fundamental step toward the cultural heritage managerial improvement. The official institutions (such as the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage and the universities) represent the central and irreplaceable reference authorities within the heritage protection and training processes. Moreover, new entities are actually increasing their position: private cultural centers, co-working spaces and startups enterprises could support the cultural renewal thanks to the professional expertise, the wide network of national and international relationships, the stronger connection with the civil society and the less bureaucratic procedures.

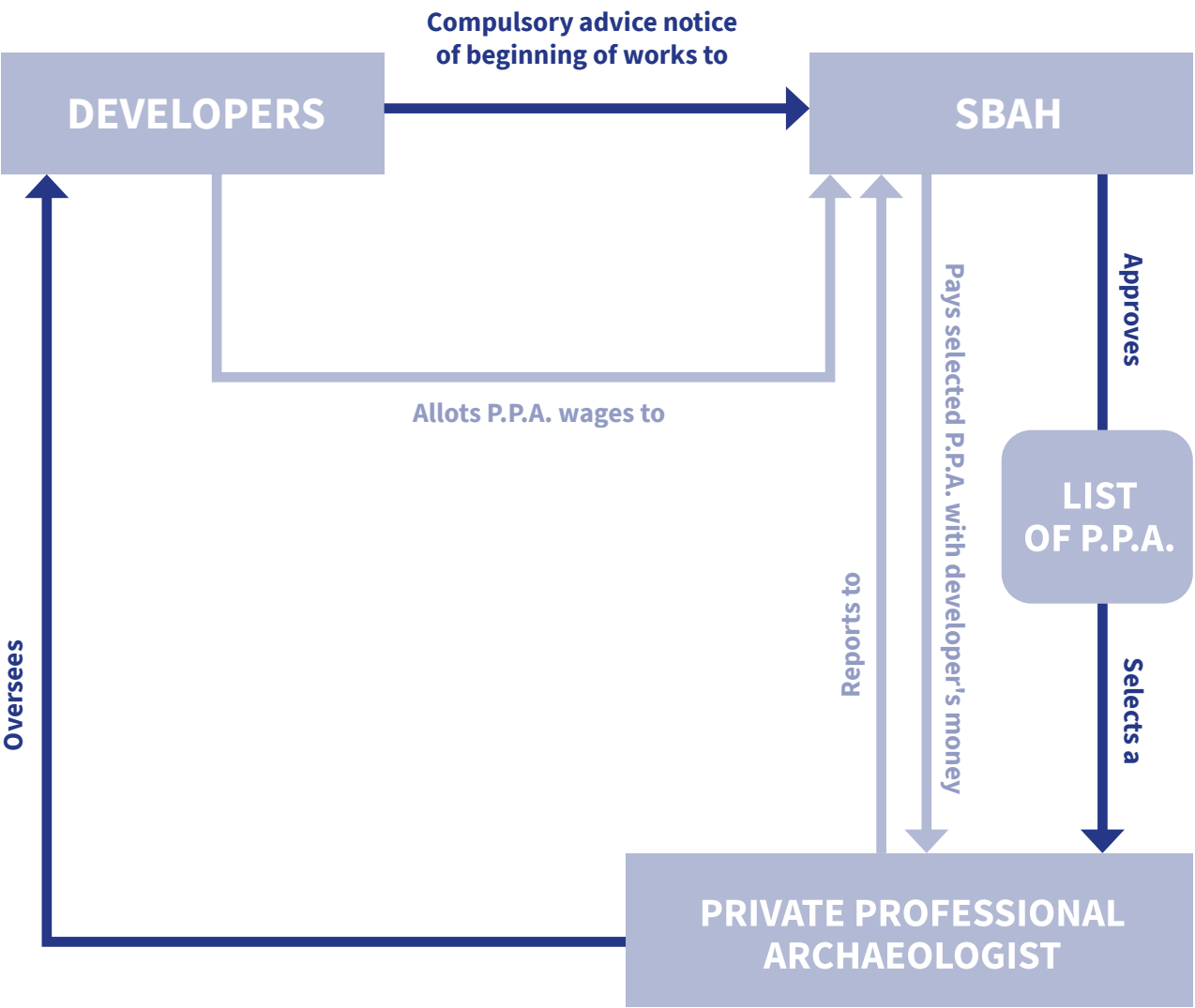


Fig. 38 | Proposal for Preventive Archaeology in Iraq. Theoretical workflow (from Marchetti et al. 2018).



Fig. 39 | The reconstructed Isthmar gate of Babylon (Wikimedia commons).



Fig. 40 | The marshlands in Southern Iraq (Wikimedia commons).

CULTURAL TOURISM

The analysis of current problems regarding cultural tourism in Iraq allows us to propose the following recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UNIVERSITY/TRAINERS

DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHING PATHS FOR TOURIST GUIDES

This can be accomplished through the introduction within the BA and MA degrees in Archaeology and Cultural Heritage of specific courses that provide foundations of cultural tourism, political ecology as well as foreign languages, taught by university teachers or external professionals. In addition, internship activities must be integrated to the courses (for their development see below).

Moreover, in order to keep students and prospective guides updated as well as to attract new students, universities should organize held conferences, fairs, workshops, training programs, exhibitions.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRIVATE SECTOR

DEVELOPMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL TOURISM PACKAGES

Example of cultural tourism packages could be:

- Tours and tour packages (1 day, 2 days, 3 days), which include the major archaeological sites near the cities of Najaf-Kufa and Hilla such as Babylon, Kish, Borsippa and Al-Hira (Fig. 39).
- City tours on specific topics (1-2 days), including also the heritage buildings and the archaeological heritage in Najaf, Kufa and Hilla. These tours should serve specifically the local and national tourists to create also a flow of tourists in times of crises, when foreign people cannot travel to Iraq. Additionally there should be also such tours for foreigners.

DEVELOPMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL TOURISM PACKAGES

Example of cultural tourism packages could be:

- Tour with a Mashoof on the Euphrates, or canal tours, which would lead through the villages and the picturesque landscape with palm trees, mudbrick buildings and buffalos (Fig. 40). This type of tourism packages would create new job opportunities and generate workplace also for young people from the villages. Another indirect impact would be that of the cleaning of the canals.

IMPROVING MERCHANDISING AND PROMOTING EVENTS

In order to integrate the tourism packages specific merchandise including souvenirs related to the heritage of Iraq (tangible and intangible) could be created and sold. This is also connected to the concept of “fair trade” and the development and design of local “hand-made” products (Fig. 41).

RECOMMENDATION AT STATE LEVEL

CREATING STATE CERTIFICATION FOR TOURIST GUIDES

Official certificates for private tourist guides should be developed at national level. This would allow students of archaeology and cultural heritage to be hired or to create their own cultural tourism guide company. In addition, in order to further protect and guarantee the rights of the new guide a the establishment of a chamber of tourist guides is necessary.

TO FACILITATE TOURISTS VISAS AND OTHER PROCEDURES

Tourist from any country worldwide, should be facilitated when arriving in Iraq, by for example obtaining the VISA at a good cost directly at the airport and without the necessity of a formal invitation.

TO FACILITATE THE REHABILITATION OF INFRASTRUCTURES

The state should allocate funds for the construction, improvement, and rehabilitate museums (religion, cultural, and historical) and support the infrastructures of tourism through websites for example (hotels, traveling agencies, IT services, restaurants, etc.).

TRANSVERSAL RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations can be applied to all the three sectors and concern all the three target groups, namely universities, private sector and the state.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR UNIVERSITIES

FOSTERING ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS

It is necessary to integrate, within the BA and MA degrees in archaeology, specific courses that provide foundations of entrepreneurship, taught by private sector experts, teachers or external professionals. In addition, internship activities must be integrated to the courses (for their development see below).

CREATION OF CAREER CENTERS

As regards the job opportunities for Iraqi students, a successful link between the universities and the public and private labor market is represented by the Career Centers (connected with the universities administrative offices). The Centers help to improve the students' professional abilities and to develop the students' academic skills through the organization of courses, workshops and seminars in cooperation with the university faculties. Additionally, they create integrated databases for graduates to facilitate the contacts with private companies and thus to increase the communication and employment opportunities. Career Centers can be established through the training of a small group of administrative staff members and by dedicating equipped spaces within each university.

RECOMMENDATION FOR THE PRIVATE SECTOR

STRENGTHENING UNIVERSITY/INSTITUTIONS/PRIVATE SECTORS RELATIONS

Also the collaboration between the Iraqi universities or institutions and the Iraqi and international archaeological teams currently engaged in excavation expeditions could activate interesting projects of professional trainings.

A growing and well-liked process of entrepreneurship enhancement might have the answer. Innovative tech enterprises have emerged across the country, offering business trainings, appropriate spaces and linkages to community members. The increase of the job opportunities, also in the cultural environment, needs a powerful collaboration between the higher education system and the entrepreneurship ecosystem. If the public universities start integrating incubators and private organizations within the campus programs, the job opportunities for Iraqi young graduates and their economic and professional participation in the national cultural revitalization might increase.

RECOMMENDATION AT STATE/LEGISLATION LEVEL

ALLOCATING MORE FUNDING TO SUPPORT START-UP PROJECTS

In order to increase the number of private companies in the three sectors, specific funds should be allocated by the state to support the initial cost.



Fig. 41 | A typical Iraqi mudhif (Wikimedia commons).

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