

Egypt Pavilion

18th International Architecture Exhibition
La Biennale di Venezia 2023

20.05 - 26.11 2023



La Biennale di Venezia

18. Mostra
Internazionale
di Architettura

Partecipazioni Nazionali

NILAB

Nile as
Laboratory

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NiLab. Nile as Laboratory

Commissioners

Ministry of Culture Arab Republic of Egypt
National Organization for Urban Harmony
Egyptian Academy in Rome

Curators

Ahmed Sami Abd Elrahman, Marina Tornatora,
Ottavio Amaro, Moataz Samir, Ghada Farouk Hassan

Participants

Ain-Shams University, Faculty of Engineering (Egypt)
Università Mediterranea di Reggio Calabria (Italy)



@NiLab_eg

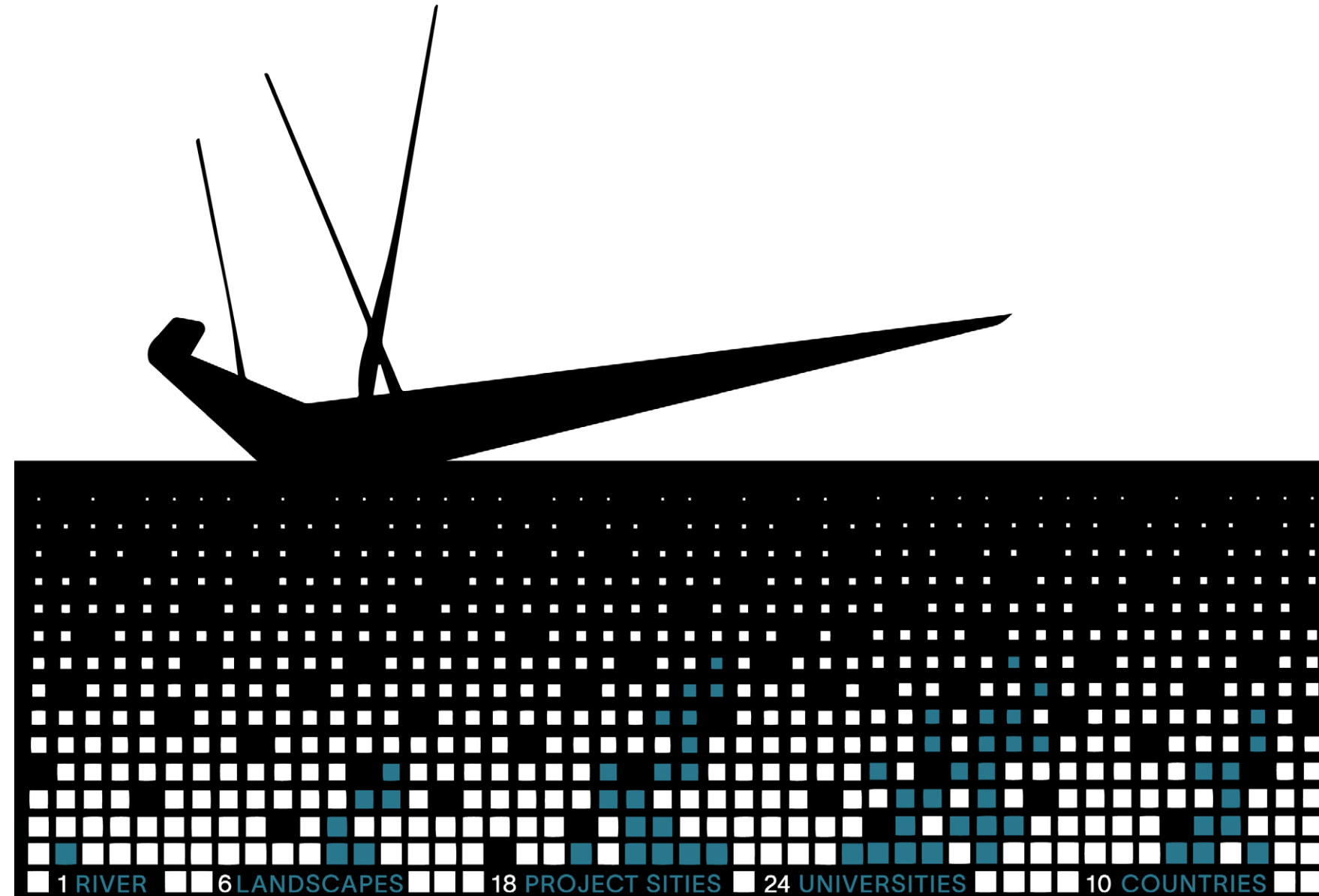


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The following images are taken from the video "Contemporary Grand Tour on Nile" produced for the Egypt Pavilion, 18th International Architecture Exhibition La Biennale di Venezia, 2023

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| NA_01 UMEÅ UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE, SWEDEN + GERMAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN DESIGN PROGRAM,

EGYPT _Cornelia Redeker

_Yosra Malek Manar

Karam _Hassan Hussein

_Sara Abu Henedy

_Ibrahim Samy _Bassant Adel _Ethar

Amr _Youssef Ayman | NA_02 LA

SAPIENZA, ROMA, ITALY _Fabrizio Toppetti

_Viola Bertini _Elisa Donini _Giuseppe Geraci _Marco

Rosati _Cristian Sammarco _Maria Virginia Theilig

_Francesco Tosetto | NA_03 MANCHESTER SCHOOL OF

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UNIVERSITY, UK _Loris Rossi _Laura Pedata _José Ángel

Hidalgo Arellano _Nicolas Turchi | AG_04 IUAV, VENEZIA, ITALY +

FUTURE UNIVERSITY IN KHARTOUM, SUDAN _Mauro Marzo

_Sandro Grispan _Gabriele Catanzano _Mattia Coccozza _Robert

Vicentini | AG_05 AIN SHAMS UNIVERSITY, FACULTY OF

AGRICULTURE + FACULTY OF ENGINEERING, URBAN DESIGN

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Tuqa Galal _Omar El Henedy _Malak Hazem

_Mennatallah Saleh _Mohamed Selim _Rana

Shams _Yara Soliman | AG_06 UNIVERSITÀ DI

CAMERINO + UNIVERSITÀ DI UDINE, ITALY

_Luigi Coccia _Claudia Pirina _Sara Cipolletti

_Giovanni Comi _Pietro Ferrara _Alessia Guaiani

_Simone Porfiri _Ettore Vadini | UR_07 AIN SHAMS

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AND FUTURE CITIES LABORATORY FOR

SUSTAINABLE URBAN SOLUTIONS (SFCL) – EGYPT

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Khalil _Nadine Mohamed _Donia Mostafa | UR_08

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TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY PRAGUE, CZECH

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_Tommaso Lolli _Elisa Maruelli _Luca Preis _Dai

Yichang _Liu Yudi _Qin Ya _Song Zirong _Zakir

Hussain _Ummi Fathima _Xie Wanyi | UR_09

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ITALY + PARSONS UNIVERSITY NEW YORK, US

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_Cristiana Penna _Eric Franklin Romeo _Maria

Lorenza Crupi _Matteo Milano _Arwa Ehab Abbas _Malak

Haytham Weshahy _Wegdan Hossam Faydullah _Yomna

Walid Ali _Menna Medhat Qubtan _Omar Mohamed Elhamer

_George Rafik Azer _Esraa Ahmad Farrag _Sara Amr Kandil

_Zena Zahran | IS_10 UNIVERSITÀ DI CAMERINO, ITALY +

UNIVERSITÀ DELL'AQUILA, ITALY _Luca Galofaro _Stefania

Manna _Rok Kuzman | IS_11 ÉVORA UNIVERSITY ARCHITECTURE,

PORTUGAL + IUAV, VENEZIA, ITALY _João Magalhães Rocha

_Marco Ferrari _Jorge Duarte de Sa _Antonio Luis Alves _Claudia Sofia

Batista | IS_12 UNIVERSITÀ FEDERICO II, NAPOLI, ITALY + ENSA PARIS

MALAKUAIS + ENSA STRASBOURG, FRANCE _Orfina Fatigato _Angela

D'Agostino _Christelle Lecoeur _Mathieu Mercuriali _Giuseppe D'Ascoli

_Giovangiuseppe Vannelli _Simona Capaldo _Francesco De Falco | IN_13

UNIVERSITÀ DI ENNA KORE, ITALY _Gianluca Peluffo _Domenico Faraco

_Gabriele Filippi _Antonio Lagorio _Paola De Lucia | IN_14 FACULTY OF

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Mickovski _Ana Rafailovska _Tamara Djerkov _Mila Gavrilovska _Dimitar Milev _Frosina Stankovska

| IN_15 UNIVERSITÀ DI PARMA, ITALY _Enrico Prandi _Giuseppe Verterame _Riccardo

Rapparini _Alessia Simbari _Luca Bosco | AR_16 GRENOBLE SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE,

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Gabaly _Ahmed Ramadan _Dalia Magdy _Mohamed Mubarak _Nada ELBeik _Nada Mokhtar

_Nourhan Mohamed _Zena Zahran | AR_17 VALLADOLID UNIVERSITY + SEVILLA

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_Carlos Rodríguez Fernández _Flavia Zelli _Emma González Biro _Cristina González Ordóñez

_Florence Lalande | AR_18 UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI PALERMO, ITALY _Zeila Tesoriere _Renzo

Lecardane _Marco Cannata _Pietro Torregrossa _Martina Scozzari | TEAM WORK _Cristiana Penna

_Ali Elgabaly _Mohamed Selim _Menna Othman _Yasmina Safwat _Salma Mohamed Ali _Malak

Tarek _Yara Soliman _Tasneem el naggar _Nour el Khayat _Donia elboghdady _Nour Zikry _Arwa

Ehab Abbas _Malak Haytham Weshahy _Wegdan Hossam Faydullah _Yomna Walid Ali _Menna

Medhat Qubtan _Omar Mohamed Einamer _George Rafik Azer _Esraa Ahmad Farrag _Abdelaziz

Abdelfattah _Lina Reda Elbaz _Salvatore Iuliano _Giuseppe Oliva _Evelin Rullo | SOCIAL MEDIA

AND WEB COMMUNICATION _Ludovica Amaro _Donia Elboghdady | VIDEO _Ahmed Yasser

_Mohamed Selim _Aly ElGabaly _Fady Iskandar _Mark Baher _Yasmina Safwat _Osama Elhagan.

NiLab Nile as Laboratory

Ahmed Sami Abd Elrahman,
Marina Tornatora, Ottavio Amaro,
Moataz Samir, Ghada Farouk Hassan

NiLab is a Laboratory for the knowledge and development of ideas and projects along the Nile River, an emblematic opportunity to reflect on the theme of water in the broader context of climate change.

Never as in Egypt, the presence of a waterway has been identified with the history of civilization in its cultural, scientific, and humanistic aspects. Its extraordinary geographical dimension traces natural and man-made landscapes and feeds cities, productive systems, reserves, and agricultural landscapes.

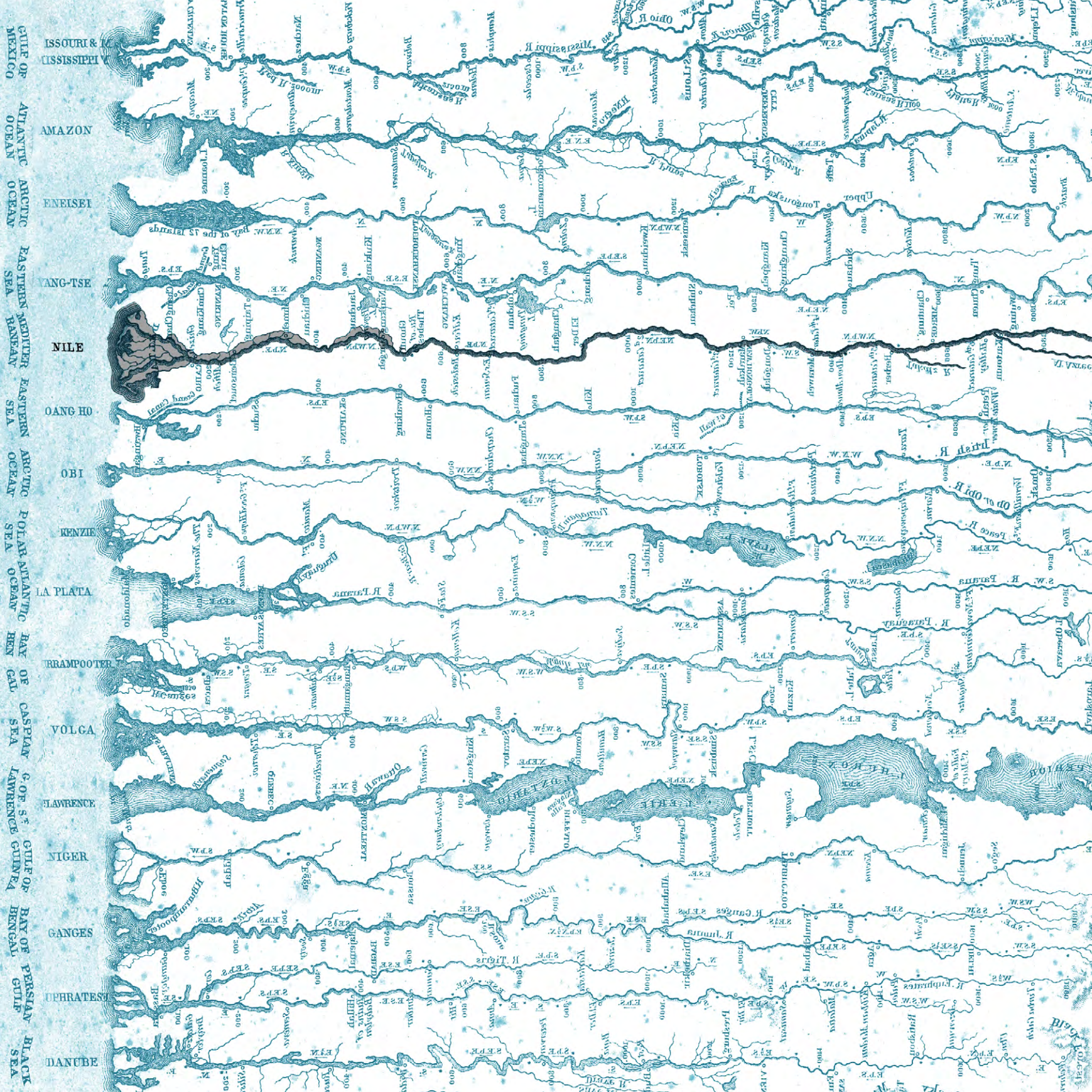
Any alteration of the Nile River can cause a destruction of the millennial balance between living species and the historical and natural landscape, especially in an age where major territorial and productive transformations risk disturbing the established natural balance, causing entropy and decay.

The themes, corresponding to six landscape sections – *Nature, Agro, Urbe, Infrastructure, Industry, Archaeology* – were developed within eighteen areas of design intervention, identified for a common international comparison between Egypt and the planet.

Together with the Faculty of Engineering of the Ain-Shams University in Cairo (Egypt) and the dArTe Department of the Mediterranea University of Reggio Calabria (Italy), who have been collaborating for years in research and teaching activities, 24 international universities have been invited to build NiLab. In this laboratory, students, teachers, and researchers discuss possible future scenarios along the river.

The aim is to produce a reflection on design strategies as a contribution to major urban and landscape emergencies, fulfilling the needs of the broader contemporary context, where projects are required to provide new reflections on architectural tools and languages.

Mountains & Rivers, Colton, G.W; 1856
The Colton firm published this map in their world atlas from 1856 to 1880 and perhaps later.
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An Open Project Lab on the Nile

Marina Tornatora, Ottavio Amaro

Located in the Mediterranean area, which is continuously facing increasingly epochal ecological-environmental crises, Egypt, with its Nile region, has once again become emblematic of the possible consequences of the ongoing phenomena of drought, sea rise, energy crisis, and the potential weakening of its settlement and territorial system.

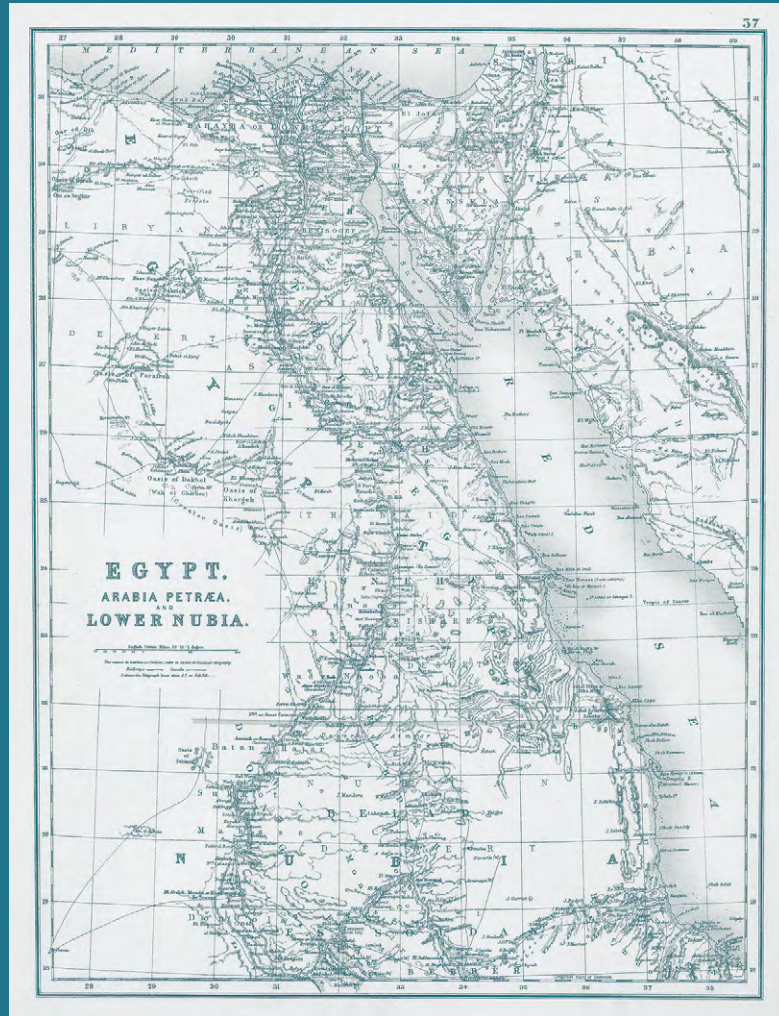
Bearing the burden of 11 African countries with ever-increasing populations, including Egypt, with more than 80 million people exploiting 98% of their water needs from their river, the Nile represents both a resource and a problem.

Egypt has continuously performed territorial actions to prioritize economic and productive interventions involving the delta since the post Second World War period, with a keen eye on globalization processes, often far from the sustainable use of local resources. This risks impoverishing entire geographic areas with significant imbalances between city and countryside, widespread settlement systems in agricultural villages, and further marginalization by extending suburbs in urban areas.

In light of such planetary changes, NiLab. Nile as Laboratory invited eighteen research groups, drawn from twenty-four Egyptian, European, and non-European universities, to reflect on design and architectural strategies along the Nile River. This context is a unitary and paradigmatic geographic sphere with a strong identity in the history of civilization, concerning cultural, scientific, and humanistic aspects, despite the current territorial imbalances.

NiLab. Nile as Laboratory intends to prioritize the academic sphere in the belief that the projects constitute the necessary field of research, a moment of knowledge, and the meeting point between theory and practice. The central theme is water, in its human and design-related significances and concerning how it interacts in historical and contemporary landscape contexts. The river is proposed as a body in the natural and urban landscape with a changing form, where design can configure contemporary spatiality with different relationships between the built, natural and man-made elements. The relationship between soil and water, between constructions and water, becomes the binder of places' interpretation through design experimentation as a product of knowledge.

Three sites are proposed for each of the six themes - *Nature, Agro, Urbe, Infrastructure, Industry,*



Egypt, Arabia Petraea and Lower Nubia. Nile Valley.
BARTHOLOMEW 1898 old map

“Nature has never been concerned with creating beauty. We are the ones who feel psychologically touched by what we think is beautiful. We feel the creative force behind the form, and this affects us both emotionally and physiologically. The ancient Egyptians did not strive to make their temples beautiful as an end in itself. Their level of understanding of the whole universe, higher than ours, and their attempt to make the temple a small mirror of it made this happen automatically”

Hassan Fathy ¹

¹ Fathy H., Cosa è una città (What is a City), in "Casabella" n. 653, 1998 pag. 56

Archaeology – making up a possible synchronous synthesis of current scenarios along the Nile.

Concerning *Nature*, despite the major changes that have modified and often compromised the identity of the river's flora and fauna, there are still important nature reserves, nurturing that mythological and religious imagery at the root of ancient Egyptian civilizations, identified with the presence of certain animal species. Today more than ever, this heritage of biodiversity and naturalistic identities must be protected on a scientific, environmental, and landscape level, considering climate change and drought phenomena.

Agro is the theme identifying the area's character along the river, organically linked to the spatial-temporal transitions of nature, obscured by a system of infrastructures (dams, morphological changes, etc.) that have transformed some identity features. The agricultural activity is nonetheless primary for subsistence and the production of the majority of Egypt's alimentation and creates challenges regarding production, landscape and innovation related to new environmental challenges and the sustainable use of the water resource.

Urbe, the territorial imbalance implemented primarily in the postwar period, through the depopulation of the countryside and the creation of large urban concentrations towards the Nile Delta, has led to the construction of endless hybrid city suburbs in a condition of non-city and decay. The combination with the trend that had already begun with the importation of European urban models in the late 19th century and continued in contemporary times with building and architectural globalization leads to urban degradation and eradication. Moreover, uncontrolled expansion into the countryside and desert, abandonment of historical centers, and polluting transportation threaten to destroy the identity of an Islamic city with public space, collective places, buildings, and technological systems in close relationship with the place and its environmental specificity alongside its distinctive elements.

Concerning *Infrastructure*, although the Nile still holds its historical role as a line of transportation and exchange between the entire settlement system developing along its course, the relationship between land and water needs to be reconsidered. Port systems, crossings, as well as embankments, and fishing-related activities, can allow the original recovery of the meaning of living along the river, together with the landscape balance, which is too often compromised by polluting and invasive interventions.

Industry has grown in the logic of globalization, often at odds with territorial and landscape sustainability.

It is now experiencing a condition of reconversion on both the technological and environmental levels. The proposed theme addresses the need to redesign old, polluting, and invasive industrial areas to privilege, both in terms of research and production, the innovative systems of green industry linked to local resources, and advanced technological development in harmony with urban and natural settlement systems.

Archaeology along the Nile, both on a monumental and general level, narrates a cultural heritage of humanity strongly linked to the place in its essence of water, soil, and desert. Therefore, actions on this design theme can re-establish meaningful relationships with the settlement systems, which have developed in a spreading and often indifferent manner over time. This is coupled with the cultural need for tourism enhancement concerning services, accessibility, and an overall more innovative supply.

In this context, the eighteen sites identified along the river's course, from the Aswan Dam to the Delta, represent a paradigmatic system of territorial and landscape conditions to perform design reflection on the variables contemporaneity poses. This journey is taken by adopting inverse perspectives, from the river and the land, in search of relationships and interactions between memory and innovation.

In addition to representing a critical analysis system for the transformations of the last decades in extraordinary sites, the projects address future scenarios to re-establish balances between nature and the environment, along with visions that, without sacrificing the aesthetic and expressive language of places and architecture, represent new living conditions.

Water, energy, biodiversity, pollution, reconversion processes, and soil enhancement are all variables of infrastructural and architectural scenarios to look at innovative and scientific processes without losing sight of the intertwining of memory and the project's ability to engage with existing resources to design the new forms of landscape and territory.

In other words, a new awareness emerges, concerning the relationship with nature, history, and the environment, within the complexity of the post-industrial reality and a society increasingly oriented toward communication and immateriality scenarios.

Within this context, the projects appear as possible narratives of stages of a new contemporary *Grand Tour*: agricultural scenarios that recognize the iconographic power of the geometrizations of rural plots, relating to

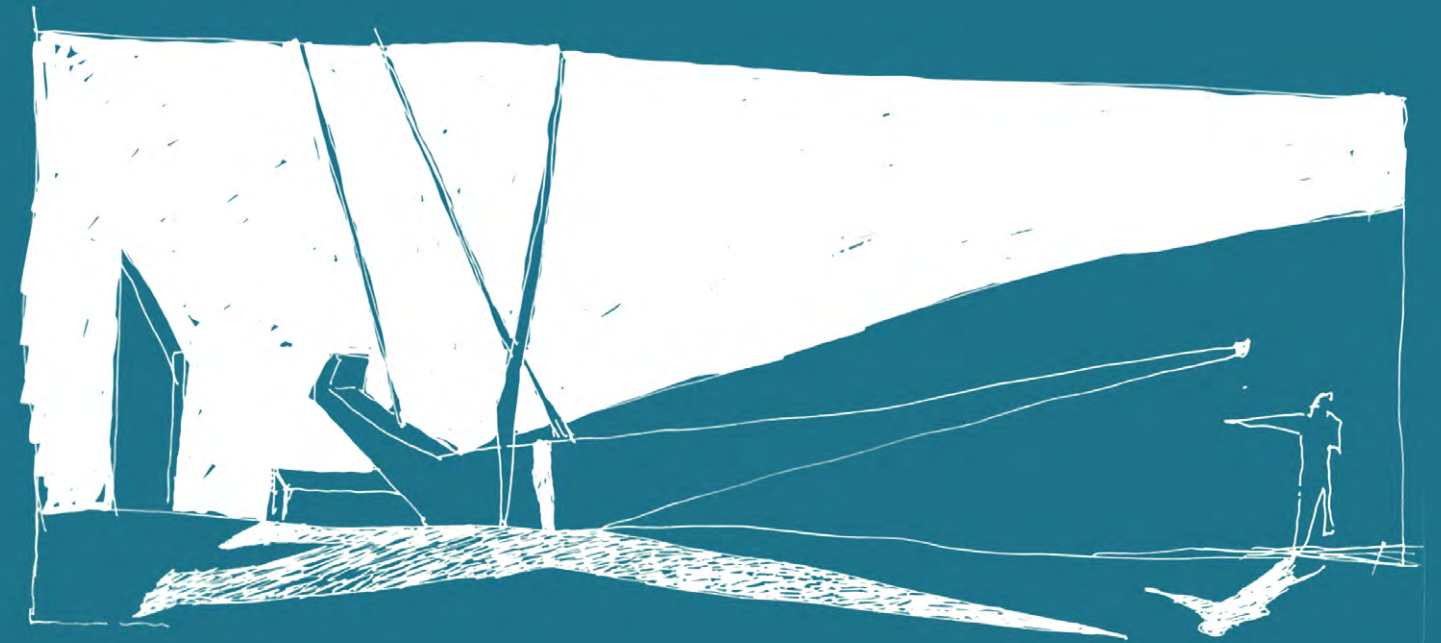
² Marot S., *The Return of the Landscape*, in *Desvigne & Dalnoky*, Motta Architettura Milano, 1996, p. 7

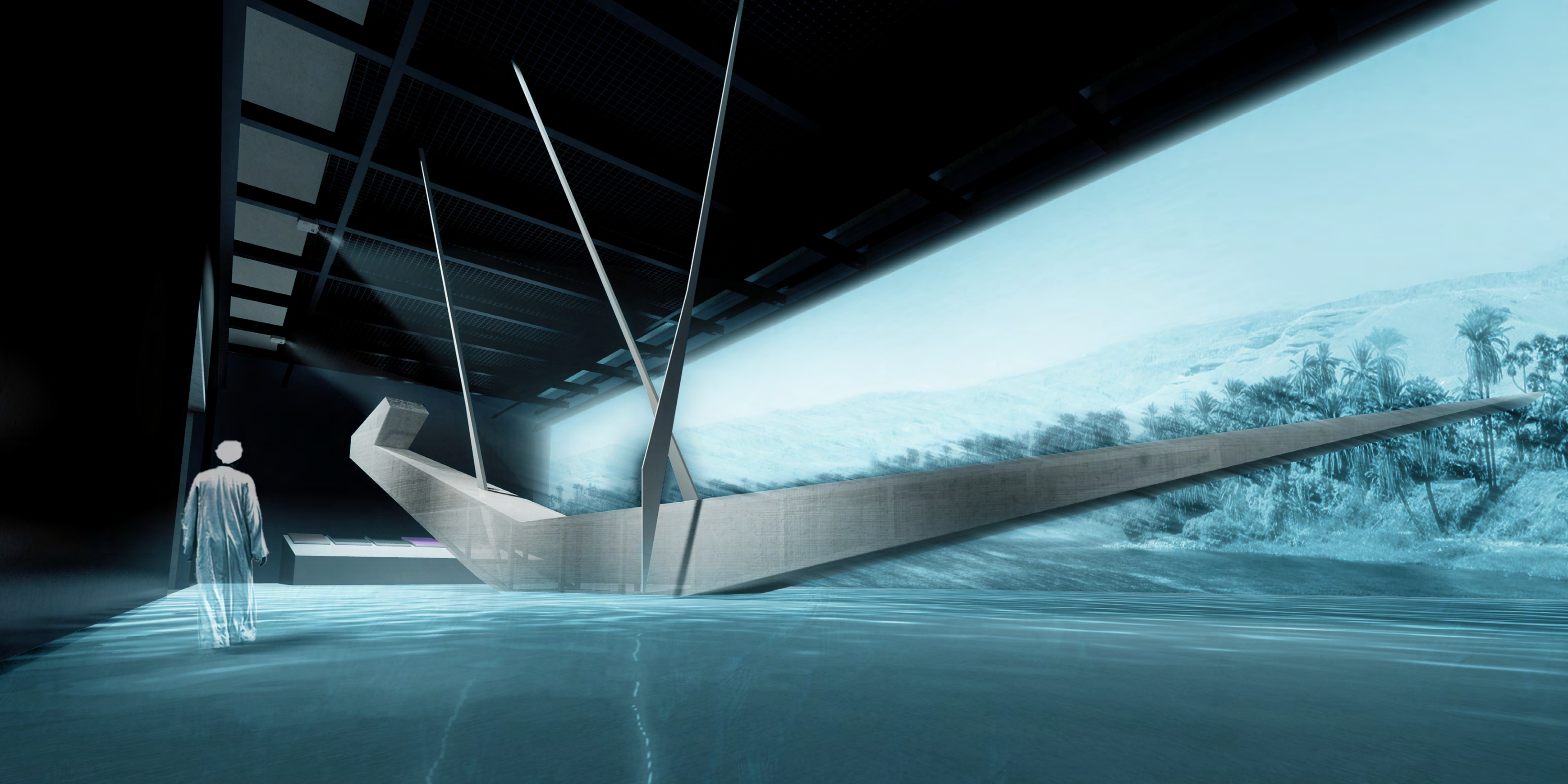
the urban ones within a design idea that seeks reciprocal boundaries. This is compounded by innovation 'sanctuaries', such as research centers and ecological infrastructures at the service of nature. The impressive Nile's 144-island archipelago emerges as a habitat for biodiversity and a new green map of the river's course, complementing archaeological landscapes' powerful and evocative character. They make up a true 'second nature' whose history must be enhanced beyond its monumental aspects. Moreover, the large residual voids from industrial reconversion processes are turned into opportunities to rediscover environmental balances and new proportions within the city, evoking resilience that re-proposes new interactive edges with the river and new forms of infrastructure. Finally, the urban system pursues a symbiosis with nature on the topic of sustainability, regenerating large building densities through the injection of green areas, the creation of voids and public spaces together with typical settlement systems of the Islamic city, often succumbing to globalization-driven models.

The elaboration of projects is a necessary step of the research work, as a synthesis of knowledge, investigations, and experiences through drawing, leading to project ideation. The attempt is to operate the anamnesis mentioned by Sébastien Marot, "... looking at the territory and public space as a land of ancient culture or a palimpsest bearing the more or less evident sign of all the gestures that, in memory, have contributed to shaping that specific landscape, and nothing else. In these contrasting or universal traces layered over time, anamnesis deciphers intentions and potentials to be safeguarded and transmitted." - ²

Punctual responses, along with the *utopia of reality* (E.N. Rogers), are the outcomes of workshop and design experiments distributed differing by schools and research areas, re-weaving plots and threads with the history of places in the awareness of current global and local radical transformations.

In this sense, the Nile tends to a new unitary dimension, with the sites of the Laboratory as the starting points to take concrete action for the regeneration and re-signification of its presence in a possible future.





Nature

- NA_01
Dahab Island
- NA_02
Karaman Island – Sohag
- NA_03
Philae Island – Aswan

Agro

- AG_04
Edfu – Aswan
- AG_05
El Fawal Island – Behira
- AG_06
Sa El Hajar – Gharbia

Urbe

- UR_07
Naqada – Qena
- UR_08
Tell El Amarna – Menia
- UR_09
Downtown – Cairo

Infrastructure

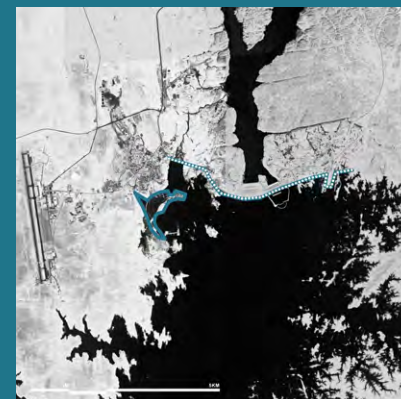
- IS_10
Naqada – Qena
- IS_11
Magra El Oyoun – Cairo
- IS_12
El Qanater El Khayreya

Industry

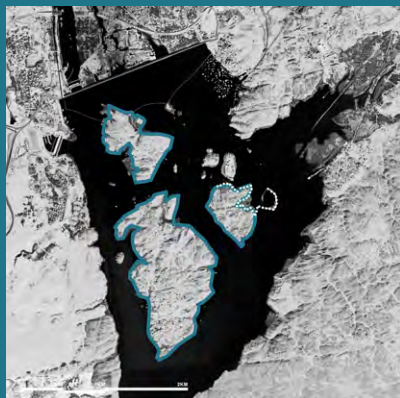
- IN_13
Ezbet El Borg – Damietta
- IN_14
Naga Hamady – Qena
- IN_15
Helwan – Cairo

Archaeology

- AR_16
Abydos Temple – Sohag
- AR_17
Elroda Nilometer – Cairo
- AR_18
Qaitbay Citadel – Rosetta



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Credits

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Participants

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Ahmed Yasser (Film Director)
Mohamed Selim (Production/Art Direction)
Aly Elgabaly (Production/Art Direction)
Fady Iskandar (D.O.P)
Mark Baher (Colour Grading)
Yasmina Safwat (Drone Footage Material)
Osama Elhagan (Production)

Catalog Design

MAY Communication & Events

Special Thanks

Prof. Omar Elhusseiny (Dean of Eng – Ain Shams University) for funding the film.
Laboratory Landscape_inProgress (Mediterranea University of Reggio Calabria, Department dArTe_Architecture and Territory) for funding and coordinating the COMMUNICATION and the GRAPHIC DESIGN of the catalog and the exhibition.
iFly Egypt - Media Company for supporting the film with some drone materials.
Kazak Cairo – Design company for funding and manufacturing the objects of the exhibition: BOAT and TABLE.



Ahmed Sami Abd Elrahman

Professor and Practitioner

Egyptian professor and practitioner, Unit Head of Architecture Program at Faculty of Engineering – Ain Shams University, Cairo. He is also the Coordinator of Double Degree with Mediterranean University of Reggio Calabria – Department Architecture and Territory, Italy & Faculty of Engineering – Ain Shams University, Egypt.

Ahmed is a founding partner of Design & Build Studio (DBS) in Cairo, he has experience in sustainable development with particular emphasis on large scale residential projects, waterfront development, local development, coastal planning, and public participation. He was a great experience in in Egypt, Africa, and Gulf area, in addition to his practical experience through his work with international entities such as World Bank, UNDP and UN-HABITAT.

He is a member of the editorial technical office of ASEJ: Ain Shams Engineering Journal – Elsevier. He is the author and co-editor of three books and book chapters. He also has many research papers published in the international peer-reviewed press.

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webofscience.com/wos/author/record/
AAW-9008-2020



Marina Tornatora

Architect and PhD

Architect, associate professor in Architectural Design at the Department of Architecture and Territory – dArTe – within the *Mediterranea* University of Reggio Calabria. She is a member of the Doctorate Board and responsible for international relations. She coordinates the *Double Degree Program* with the Ain Shams University from Cairo, and she became *Visiting Professor* at the London Metropolitan University (2019). The focus of her theoretical, design and teaching activities is the relationships between city, landscape and architecture, that are evident in her numerous publications, curated exhibitions, as well as the interventions in workshops and conferences developed also within the Research Laboratory *Landscape_inProgress* (LL_inP) founded together with Ottavio Amaro in 2014.

Some of her recent publications: *DESTRATIFICATION '29 '65 'sk14 '2020*, 16th Biennale di Venezia 2018; *99FILES, Brutalism Skopje* 2019; *H2O_Scapes. Agro Urbe Nature; Learning from Pavilion*.

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Associate professor in Architectural and Urban Composition at *Mediterranea* University of Reggio Calabria, (Italy) – dArTe Department and member of the PHD course in Architecture. Since 2014 he is a scientific coordinator with Marina Tornatora of the research laboratory *Landscape_in Progress* (LL_inP), involving research and projects on Lanscapes next to come. He has carried out also research at the Le Corbusier Fondation in Paris. His projects and drawings have been exposed in various exhibitions: *Architetti italiani under 50*(Italian architects under 50) – Milano Triennale, 2005; *Progetto sud – Città di Pietra*, 10th Biennale di Venezia, 2006; *ITALY IS NOW – Tokyo*, 2011; *Macedonian pavilion- 16th Venice Biennale*, 2018. In 1989 he was awarded the prize *For the theory, image and study of utopia*.

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He has several experiences in teaching with various universities such as *Mediterranea* University, *Politecnico di Milano*, *German University in Cairo* and *GUC Berlin* campus. He is a professor of design studio, for the Double Degree program, at Ain Shams University in Cairo and professor of design at *Coventry University* in Cairo. Beside, his professional experience has been characterized by collaboration with national and international architecture studios, in which it allowed him to work on various scales [Macro, Miso, Micro]. His approach is focusing on the regeneration of the Mediterranean Cities through an alternative socio-spatial scenario that outline a paradigm of urban decomposition and re-composition of the contemporary cities where memory, space and time are the tools for interpretation and intervention.

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