**Research fellow project**

**Title:**

Visitors’ centers in Iraq as cultural landmarks and engagement magnets for local audiences

**Coordinator:**

Prof. Nicolò Marchetti

**Description of the project:**

KALAM. Analysis, protection and development of archaeological landscapes in Iraq and Uzbekistan through ICTs and community-based approaches is a four-years project founded by the Volkswagen Foundation (in partnership with the Compagnia di San Paolo, Riksbankens Jubileumsfond, The Wallenberg Foundations) within the joint funding initiative "Global Issues – Integrating Different Perspectives on Cultural Heritage and Change and coordinated by Prof. Nicolò Marchetti of the University of Bologna in partnership with the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich (Germany) and University of Mosul (Iraq) and the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan. KALAM aims at proposing effective methods and protocols for the analysis, protection and development of archaeological landscapes in Iraq and Uzbekistan, two countries which have not yet collaborated in the field of cultural heritage. This approach is conceived to be potentially applicable to any other endangered cultural landscape. The general structure of the project includes the coordination of the four partners in research and field activities held both in Iraq and Uzbekistan divided into three major tasks:

- Task 1: Consequences in the use of ICTs in relation to cultural heritage;

- Task 2: Threats to heritage;

- Task 3: Contributions of cultural heritage to an economically and socially sustainable future.

Within Task 3, following a preliminary assessment of the value of cultural heritage among local communities, the project aims at the creation of new visitors’ centers at Nineveh (Mosul-Ninawa), Afak (Al-Qadisiyah) and Amara (Maysan). These will act as cultural landmarks and engagement magnets for local audiences for the protection of Iraq archaeological landscapes and cultural heritage. The planning phase will also include an economic evaluation of sustainability in accordance with local institutions and organizations. In more details, in the northern sector of Nineveh, with the selection of an archaeologically void area, a newly constructed building will host the visitors’ center of the archeological park of the ancient Assyrian capital. The building has been constructed, thanks to the collaboration between the universities of Bologna and Mosul and personnel of the SBAH, by using traditional and sustainable technics, such as stone for the foundation layer, mudbrick and mud plaster for the walls, avoiding the use of concrete. The visitors’ centers located in the towns of Afak and Amara in southern Iraq have as principal objective the enhancement of the surrounding archaeological landscape in mainly rural areas.

These activities within the larger framework of the KALAM project aim at uniting scholars and communities for the development of innovative and more inclusive practices for the analysis, preservation and management of the archaeological landscape.

**Plan of the activities:**

In accordance with the fixed aims and the previously conducted tasks, the program of activities to be conducted by the research fellow will have three major objectives.

The first objective consists in the planification of the exhibition of the three visitors’ centers after a first survey of the buildings. The project’s partners will cooperate with local communities and authorities for the realization of the plan. The arrangement of the exhibit will take under consideration the needs of the local communities and criteria of economic and environmental sustainability. This phase will take place in the first half of the first year (1st semester).

The second objective includes the production of contents for the exhibition halls of the three visitors’ centers, based on the previously agreed plan and on the results of the KALAM’s other tasks. The results of the assessment on the value of cultural heritage among local communities will have a significant impact on the choice of the subjects. This phase will be concluded at the end of the first year of research (2nd semester). During the first year the research fellow will have an active role of coordination and will pursue research activities both in Europe and in Iraq.

The third objective includes the acquisition of the material based on the exhibition plan and, then, the set-up of the halls of the three visitors’ centers. Local communities will be involved in the different phases of work. During the first half of the second year the Nineveh’s visitors’ center will be arranged and officially opened to the public (3rd semester). During the second half of the year the visitors’ centers of Afak and Amara will be staged and inaugurated (4th semester). At the end of the project the research fellow will conduct an evaluation of the obtained results.

The different phases of the project will be conducted by the research fellow at the Department of History and Cultures of the University of Bologna along with some research periods in Iraq during the two years.

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| **PERIOD** | **TYPE OF ACTIVITY** |
| 1st semester | Exhibition plan of the three visitors’ centers, coordination with local authorities and institutions. |
| 2nd semester | Study and preparation of contents for panels and exhibits. |
| 3rd semester | Purchase of the materials and set-up of the halls at Nineveh. Inauguration. |
| 4th semester | Purchase of the materials and set-up of the halls at Afak and Amara. Inauguration. Final evaluation. |