

## **Workshop 'Bahariya Oasis' – Summarized Report**

As the start of our activities in the generously DAAD funded program GERMAN ARAB TRANSFORMATION PARTNERSHIP the first workshop took place in March, 24<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

Based on the prolonged co-operation of BTU Cottbus, Faculty 2 and universities in the Arab World in the field of urban design and architecture, this program offers the chance to enhance joint work with Egypt – in particular with our partner for years: the Faculty of Architecture at the Cairo University in Giza.

11 students from BTU Cottbus, 25 students from CU Cairo-Giza, professors, assistant professors, lecturers and external experts from Cottbus, Cairo and Amman worked together for nearly one week, focusing on architectural tasks and solutions in the oasis of Bahariya in the town of Bawiti.

After being welcomed by Prof. Dr. Dalila El-Kerdany at Cairo University, the archaeologists Dr. Tarek El Awadi and Prof. Dr. Fekri Hassan introduced us to the "History and Archaeological Sites in Bahariya", such as the temple of Alexander the Great, several tombs of local leaders during pharaoh dynasties or the Golden Mummies and "Ancient Water Systems", mainly the foggara system, a formerly used irrigating tool.

Theoretically prepared, the following tour guided by a representative of the local Egyptian archaeologist's team led through parts of the oasis and to the mummies' museum and solidified knowledge of the historical context of the region.

During the bus journey to Bahariya, our first check-in at Bawiti and our early tour through the nearby Black and White deserts, all members of the group got perfectly into contact, interacted at ease and exchanged opinions and cultural assets (...mentioning as well lessons in singing and dancing, and, surely, discussions about cultural differences, questions about the recent changes and the expected future of Egypt).

The following working days were structured via input lectures from professors, research assistants and guests. Prof. Bernd Huckriede opened the discussion with his lecture on "Sustainability" and "modern examples of Abobe Architecture", Prof. Inken Baller sensitized for "Contextual Design and Building in Existing Structures", Dipl.-Ing. Barbara Witt introduced us to the interrelation of "Garden\_Courtyard\_House" and Prof. Ingo Helmedag was referring on "Abode\_Mud\_Clay – Abobe Architecture in History".

Further on, walks in the project area, field studies, interviews with the local community, analysis via pictures and sketch drawings were used as methodological tools. Four German-Egyptian student groups were instructed by mixed supervising teams. Discussing one general concept per group, detailed tasks were shared among the students in a self-organized way.

Parallel to the content-addressed backing, the friendly and introverted atmosphere in our guest house in Bawiti - the International Hot Springs Hotel, run by Peter Wirth - supported team spirit and working as well.

On Thursday morning – after a night with little sleep and maximum utilization of drawing tools, computers and electricity devices – the presentation of our workshop results took place and met our expectations in a very good way. Inspired by the impressions of the place, the great interaction of participants, the perfect organization of our Egyptian counterpart and the shared interest in the architectural outcome, professors of both universities agreed on an ongoing project work and pronounced a bilateral student competition.

Back in Cairo, we enjoyed a final dinner together.

For the German participants another wowing day remained: visiting Cairo with spots of architectural and cultural interest, such as the pyramids and a walk through the Islamic Old Town guided by Dr. Ralph Bodenstein from the German Archaeological Institute.

With a last view over the skyline of Cairo with its domes, minarets and housing structures as seen from Al-Azhar Park and a last meeting of students from Cairo University at that place, we finished our visit in Egypt.

We all did not just spend a highly inspiring time, exchanged contact data and small presents (very nice personalized sketchbook – many thanks to our Egyptian colleagues and friends!), but also can definitely say, that the workshop enriched participants with lasting impressions in a professional, cultural and personal way.

## Workshop statements / quotations:

...it was a great experience for me, how we managed to work together (Egyptian and German students and professors), the diversity in the teams, how I got to know the structured way you guys think and design through it (was interesting), and knowing that architecture students suffer everywhere and not just in Egypt was really satisfying "hehe".  
hope we can do more workshops together, either here or in Germany...

*Mostafa Zohdy, student of architecture at the University Cairo-Giza*

...was zu Anfang als "English-language-based" Workshop angefacht war, endete in einem kulturell buntem und bereicherndem Treffen ägyptischer und deutscher Studierender. Professioneller Erfahrungsschatz, Wissen und Arbeitsmethoden sind gleichermaßen ausgetauscht worden wie persönliche Erfahrungen, Denkweisen, Freude. Der Workshop brachte tolle Ergebnisse und wir alle hoffen, erneut mit den Ägyptern zusammenzukommen um diese weiter verfolgen zu können...

*Mathaeus Nierzwicki, student of architecture at BTU Cottbus*

...für mich hat sich im Bahariya - Workshop eine neue Gedankenwelt eröffnet, Verständnis über Kultur, Tradition, Lebensweise und Architektur, die ohne das wirkliche Erleben des Landes mir wohl nie so nahe gekommen wäre. Es war eine sehr wertvolle Woche, in der wir zusammen mit den ägyptischen Studenten viele Gedanken ausgetauscht haben, aber auch unglaublich inspirative Orte wie die Oase oder die Weite der Wüste gemeinsam zum ersten Mal erleben durften. Besonders beeindruckend waren für mich die Kontraste vom laut-schreiend-buntem Basarleben in Kairo und der klaren Stille einer Moschee oder der Oase...

*Sophie Höfig, student of architecture at BTU Cottbus*

...the Workshop Bahariya was truly a unique experience for me. A brilliant atmosphere that mixed fun, learning and mingling with two different cultures - the German one and the one in the deserts itself - all at once. I learned new things about urban planning, about the old systems of architecture in my own country and about living in the desert. But the learning experience didn't stop there, we were taught a different approach of learning through the German staff, how they handled things in a manner that might be a little different to what we are used to. I've made new friends, got to be taught by new respectable professors and had a camping experience for the first time in my life as well. I have endless impressions that can be all concluded in the word <<amazed>>...

*May Essam ElSamra, student of architecture at the University Cairo-Giza*

...es war schön und sehr interessant vor Ort zu Entwerfen - auf ägyptische Art und Weise, nicht nur klimatisch betrachtet, sondern auch kulturell - es ist mir ein ganz großer Kontrast aufgefallen, trotz der hohen Privatheit, des stark familiären Lebens und evtl. Religionsdiskrepanzen haben wir uns immer wieder mit sehr kommunikativen und hilfsbereiten Menschen getroffen - keine Spuren von Abgeschiedenheit, die unsere Arbeit stark erleichtert haben - vor allem bei der Analyse, und als wir nach der Funktion oder dem Sinn von einigen für uns seltsamen Sachen gesucht haben. Auf jeden Fall war es unvergleichbar mit dem Entwerfen vom Tisch aus im Atelier :-)

Und aus meiner Sicht hatte die Reise einen besonderen Mehrwert durch die Teilnahme von Ägyptern: obwohl wir ab und zu an eine unterschiedliche Arbeitsweise gestoßen sind und zu „bekämpfen“ hatten. Durch das "Zusammenleben" kann man besser und vor allem schneller ein nicht-touristisches Verständnis und für das Land und die Haltung der „Einheimischen“ begreifen...

*Veronika Sliacanova, student of architecture at BTU Cottbus*

1- I think it was very interesting to work with the German students, I learned a new drawing technique via them and we knew more about the German culture.

2- I have learnt how to write notes ( architectural notes ) about sites which I have never visited them before.

3- sadly ... entertainment took time more than working time.

4- I guess we needed more time for the presentation preparation.

5- I think if we took the lectures at morning it would be better.

6- Experience: how to redesign and develop a historical region with the context and material in this region...

*Ahmed Ezzat, student of architecture at the University Cairo-Giza*

It was a wonderful, useful and successful workshop...The journey was interesting and the project as well. It was a great thing to exchange experiences with students from another country.

The program was fine and the sequence of lectures and walks was good, that led us to know the oasis and to have good analysis of the current situation. Although the time for work was too little, the final results were very good for a one day project.

At the end...the whole journey was amazing and the experience we gained was very good. And to me... it was very nice to exchange cultures with the German colleagues and being friends with them as well...

*Mohammed el-Dibawy, student of architecture at the University Cairo-Giza*

...first of all I liked the sequence of the workshop, the Safari and exploring the area at the beginning was really useful and helped us get to know each other although the time given for the actual work was not enough.

Working with Germans opened my mind for a new ways of thinking, analyzing & presenting of course, and the whole culture exchange was really useful and enriching.

The competition idea made us work really hard and we had like totally different concepts for the area development that was really great if we combined all of this together.

It was a very enriching experience, and I really liked the workshop...

*Muhammed Besheer, student of architecture at the University Cairo-Giza*

...I really had a great experience from the workshop and here are the main things I've learned:

EDUCATIONAL :

1. The methodology of teaching ,, how to define problem and the ways to solve

2 - the deep interaction between the staff and the students

3- how to observe and make a real use of site visits ,, and not only relying on the theoretical lectures .

Non EDUCATIONAL :

1- The accurate time planning ☺...

*Sameh Shaalan, student of architecture at the University Cairo-Giza*

## Workshop Participants

Teaching & Organizational Staff:

**Brandenburg University of Technology (BTU) Cottbus:** Prof. Bernd Huckriede • Prof. emer. Inken Baller • Barbara Witt • Juliane Jäger • Christoph Wessling **Cairo University (CU) Cairo/Giza:** Prof. Dr. Dalila El-Kerdani • TA Tamer El Serafi • TA Ibrahim Sami • TA Nourhan AbdelRahman • TA Ahmed Ghanem **German-Jordanian University (GJU) Amman:** Prof. Ingo Helmedag **Invited Experts:** Dr. Tarek El Awadi • Prof. Dr. Fekri Hassan

Participating Students:

**BTU Cottbus:** Sophie Höfig • Christoph Kollert • Matheus Nierzwicki • Yvonne Paul • Larissa Preuß • Felix Schaub • Jil Schroth • Luisa Schulz • Veronika Sliacanova • Maximilian Wellner • Philipp Stroh **CU Cairo/Giza:** Manar AbdelHamid • Samar Mohamed ElKamnoury • Nada Hesham Afifi • Dalia Sayed Salem • Sara Hassan Ibrahim • Hoda Ibrahim ElNaggar • Sara Mohamed Darahem • Shaimaa Ashraf Tohamy • May Essam ElSamra • Reham Saleh ElKady • Mohamed Atef Soliman • Ahmed Mohamed ElShafey • Sameh Mohamed Shaalan • Mohamed Ahmed ElDebawy • Ahmed Mohamed Ezzat • Mostafa AlaaElDin Zohdy • Mohamed Basheer Khafagy • Mohamed Samy Youssef • Atta Hany Atta • Omar Mahmoud AboYoussef • Mohamed Ehab Fathy • Mostafa Mohamed ElWakil • Mahmoud Hossam Hendy • Ahmed Shehata Mahrous • Ahmed Yousry ElZomor