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TOWARDS A COLLABORATIVE EXPLORATION OF COMMUNITY HERITAGE IN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SALVAGE CONTEXTS: PARTICIPATORY MAPPING ON MOGRAT ISLAND, SUDAN

MOTIVATION AND AIMS

Within the framework of the first field season of the Mograt Island Archaeological Mission,[3] a participatory heritage mapping project was piloted by the authors in February 2014 with the invaluable assistance of Hassan Mustafa Alkhidir, who served as inspector for the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums, Sudan.[4] The project is focused on the exploration of different dimensions of heritage and heritage meaning on Mograt Island, the largest island along the River Nile, located between the Fourth and Fifth Cataracts (fig. 1). The main methodological approach taken in this project is collaborative research involving local participants and those coming from outside the island, such as migrant workers or Sudanese and foreign archaeologists. The project idea was born from the recognition of a disjuncture between the agendas of (national and foreign) archaeological missions active in Sudan, and the concerns and interests of people living in the vicinity of archaeological sites – often subsumed under the term 'local communities'.[5]

In salvage contexts, such as in the case of the Merowe Dam Archaeological Salvage Project (MDASP) at the Fourth Nile Cataract, the gap between what archaeologists consider to be heritage worth studying and 'saving', and what aspect(s) of their heritage local people may want to save or have saved, may be especially pronounced. During the Fourth Cataract 'rescue campaigns', archaeologists focused on salvaging knowledge on the deep(er) past of the Fourth Cataract region. Community heritage was widely ignored and, indeed, archaeological salvage missions have in the past done little to explore what such 'heritage' could actually include.[6] This (systemic) disinterest had not been lost on members of local communities, who were threatened with the loss of their way of life due to planned re-settlement far away from the Nile, and who expressed their dismay at the archaeologists' focus on saving the "dead rocks" rather than the "living".[7] Archaeological survey and excavation work appears to have been perceived locally as 'mining' the land for "treasures" for the benefit of far-away museums, with the results of archaeological research reserved for national and foreign expert communities and publics rather than being accessible to local people.[8]

At the Fourth Cataract archaeologists did little to consult with local residents in order to engage and involve them in project planning and execution, or in the presentation and interpretation of the archaeological evidence. Indeed, archaeologists seemed to be barely interested in the concerns and the knowledge of the people on whose land they were running surveys and excavations, even if they claimed to

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3 The Mograt Island Archaeological Mission is led by Claudia Näser (Project Director) and Cornelia Kleinitz (Deputy Project Director). Sponsored by the Qatar-Sudan Archaeological Project (QSAP), the mission investigates the (pre)history of Mograt from the Palaeolithic to the recent past.
4 Stefania Merlo's non-field-based work is funded by the University of the Witwatersrand. Cornelia Kleinitz wrote up part of the research while on a visiting fellowship as 'directeur d'études associés' at the Fondation Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, Paris, France. Analysis of project data is still ongoing.
5 See e.g. Waterton and Smith (2010) for a critical discussion of the concept of 'community'.

6 For exceptions see Haberlah 2007; and papers and references in Kleinitz and Näser (eds.) 2012.
7 Kleinitz and Näser 2011.
8 'Sudan's Merowe requests to stop excavating reservoir area' (Sudan Tribune, 27 February 2007), http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article20457 (last accessed 26/10/2014).
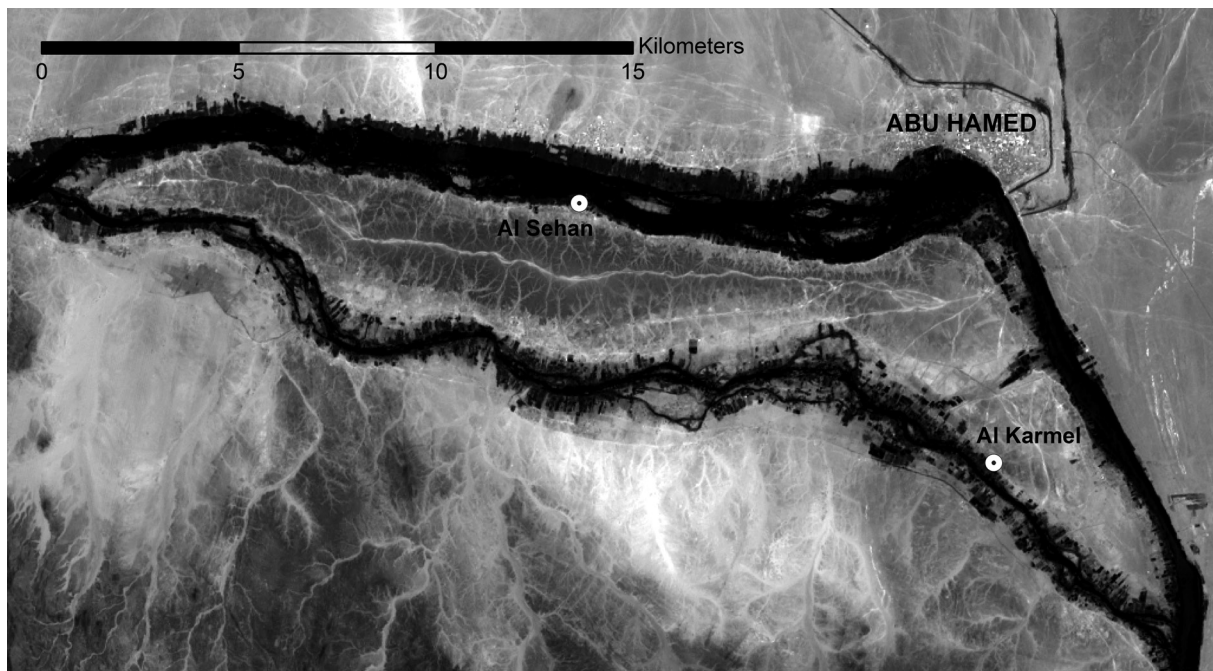
Fig. 1: The island of Mograt with its surroundings as it appears in a Landsat8 panchromatic image (courtesy of USGS).

be salvaging 'their heritage'.[9] The value attached by archaeological missions and 'the government' to archaeological salvage, rather than the well-being of the affected people and/or the study and rescue of their heritage, eventually resulted in a strongly negative local reaction. Archaeological teams were expelled by local people from large parts of the Fourth Cataract region in an attempt to gain traction in negotiations with the government for fairer terms of re-settlement and compensation. However, their goals, such as delaying the flooding of the dam reservoir, were not achieved. The Fourth Cataract was flooded in 2008 and 2009 leaving thousands of its people displaced.[10]

From a heritage point of view, large sections of the Fourth Cataract were left unstudied and their histories lost under the waters of the Merowe Dam lake.[11] It is hard to say if this situation could have been prevented had archaeologists engaged more profoundly with the affected people amongst whom they were working – seeing them as partners with heritages that are worth exploring *for* them and *with* them, rather than using them primarily as an excavation workforce facilitating the exploration of the region's deeper past.[12] The apparent irrelevance for local people

of archaeologically-generated knowledge – at least in contested salvage contexts – and the equally apparent proximity of developer and archaeologists' agendas, pose a serious threat to ongoing and future archaeological salvage work in Sudan. Recent events at the Fifth Nile Cataract, where a new dam is planned to be built, mirror those at the Fourth Cataract: again, members of local communities expelled archaeological salvage teams, but this time soon after the start of the rescue project.[13] Top-down approaches to development and archaeological salvage, as they have been practiced in Sudan, are no longer locally accepted. In view of the numerous larger and smaller development projects planned along the Nile, a profound re-thinking and 're-doing' of (development and) archaeological salvage practice seems timely, in order for rescue research to be able to take place at all.

Bridges can be built by making a concerted effort to involve and engage local communities by communicating the archaeological knowledge generated on the one hand and, on the other, by taking note of local people's wishes in terms of the documentation and preservation of their knowledge and their 'heritage-scapes'. Recently – and possibly taking note of the above examples – numerous archaeological projects active in Sudan have initiated community engagement programmes, which aim to share information on archaeological work and its results with local

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9 See Welsby 2008; Hafsaas-Tsakos 2011; Kleinitz and Näser 2011, 2012.

10 For an eyewitness account of the flooding of the Fourth Cataract with a large number of the local Manasir people still living in their villages, see Hänsch 2012.

11 See Kleinitz and Näser 2011; Hänsch 2012.

12 For a much more engaged approach in connection with

another dam project on the African continent see King and Nic Eoin 2014.

13 See Kleinitz and Näser 2013.

people living in the vicinity of archaeological sites and/or archaeological mission bases, and with the wider Sudanese public.[14] Whilst these initiatives are important, they do not necessarily bridge the gap between the interests of the archaeological and local communities. Although community engagement can 'de-alienate' local people from archaeological practices of knowledge-generation, it is still not necessarily local people's heritage that is being explored and, where necessary, 'saved'.

Conscious of potential conflict arising between communities of archaeologists and local people in the context of (contested) development projects, and in acknowledgement of the need to bridge the interests of archaeologists and local people for both parties' benefit, a 'participatory mapping' project has been developed on Mograt Island. Its express intention is to explore what members of local communities consider to be their heritage(s) and to create a framework in which those heritages, both tangible and intangible, can be explored collaboratively by local people as well as by archaeologists and other researchers.[15] Eventually, this project may contribute to bringing together archaeologically-generated knowledge and local knowledge in writing and telling histories of the island and its people, past and present.

This collaborative approach is especially relevant as the Mograt Island Archaeological Mission may soon find itself operating in a salvage context: one dam is planned to be built towards the western end of Mograt, another one upstream of Mograt at Dagash.[16] The Mograt-related development projects will be significantly smaller in scale than the Merowe Dam, but any more detailed information about the new dams and their potential impact on local landscapes, people and heritage is scarce. Therefore, it seems timely, now, to develop a research strategy that alleviates any potential systematic alienation between archaeologists and local people. This can be achieved by communicating the agendas and results of archaeological work that focuses on the recent and the deeper past of the island on the one hand, while also identifying, exploring and preserving aspects of various 'local' heritages with and for local people by listening to a multitude of voices – if this is what our partners want.

Principles of collaborative research on Mograt's present and recent past

The heritage mapping project on Mograt Island aims not only to involve and engage local communities in the sense of local people being given the chance to add their knowledge to the agenda of a foreign archaeological mission, but it also aims to be fundamentally collaborative and participatory in its methods and structure. This will allow the goals and outcomes of the project to be shaped by members of local communities. Giving up some degree of control over the direction in which a collaborative project develops may initially seem difficult to accept, but it is fundamental in community-based research, such as collaborative archaeologies.[17] As Nicholas, Welch and Yellowhorn put it: "Collaboration means more than just working together […]. It also entails mutual respect, meaningful dialogue, a long-term commitment of time, and expanding "research" to embrace processes and objectives that may not be perceived as conducive to the production and dissemination of scientific knowledge. […] above all else, it requires a commitment to work toward and to maintain equitable relationships among all parties, in terms of both responsibilities and benefits. Ultimately, collaborations rest on the character, actions, motivations, and interpersonal skills of the affected and engaged parties. This, plus the particular histories and objectives of the communities involved, means that there can be no cookbook approach to collaboration, because each situation is unique, and that collaboration is ultimately a local phenomenon and intrinsically a human enterprise."[18]

Participatory research (and its very design) has been undertaken in different disciplines and territories worldwide. Civic participation, innovation and community engagement have been advocated as more inclusive ways in which to conduct research and find solutions to a variety of problems in and outside archaeology and heritage. It would be wrong, however, to assume that the concept of community participation is universal and easily applicable. This pilot project therefore also intends to self-reflect on the practical principle of participation and especially of collaborative research, and its relevance to address the disjuncture of power and ownership highlighted above.

Acknowledging that communities are "never of one mind" as "they are aggregations of people who have come together for all kinds of planned and

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14 E.g. at Meroe: http://www.ucl.ac.uk/qatar/qatar-news/ Sudan-research-team-concludes-latest-excavations-at-Royal-City-of-Meroe (last accessed on 29/10/2014).
15 Following e.g. Lane 2011.
16 Mohamed, Bakhiet and Salih 2014.

17 E.g. Marshall 2002; Moser et al. 2002.
18 Nicholas, Welch and Yellowhorn 2007: 273–274.

Fig. 2: Compounds overlooking the track that runs south of Karmel and divides the fields from the village (photo: C. Kleinitz)

contingent reasons" means,[19] that the project will, in all likelihood, encounter disparate and contradictory ideas of what the 'heritage' of Mograt is, how it should be conceptualised and studied, and how data and knowledge should be held, interpreted and disseminated. The participatory mapping project complements a community archaeology project that has also been piloted on Mograt, starting in 2014.[20] It complements the community archaeology project in focusing on two-way communication, but it differs in that it does not primarily focus on sharing information on archaeological sites and practice, and in establishing what role these sites and the presence of the archaeological team may play in contemporary lives. Rather, the mapping project aims at creating a collaborative research environment in which local lives and recent pasts are explored, with external researchers playing the role of a 'learner' rather than 'teacher'. Both projects combined may facilitate a mutual understanding between the archaeological research community active on the island and the people of the island. As "collaboration forces one to look at things in new ways"[21], the participatory mapping project described below has already

brought unexpectedly rich results – at least for the archaeologists involved.

Developing the heritage mapping project on Mograt

The project was piloted during a three-week period in February 2014. The short time frame of the pilot study is clearly inadequate but it is also representative of the situation in which archaeological salvage teams often find themselves. Rather than long-term investment and dedication in researching a place or region's past, hit-and-run archaeology is the norm, making community engagement with its needs of time and capacity investment more difficult. Research centered on two areas of Mograt where archaeological research was being conducted at the time of our presence (see fig. 1). Work focused on the village of Karmel in the south-east of the island (fig. 2), where a large Kerma-period cemetery was being excavated by the bulk of the mission's team and where the community archaeology project was being piloted. When transport was available, project work also took place in the village of Sehan on the northern shore of the island (fig. 3), where a large multi-period rock art site was being investigated by one of the authors.

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19 Marshall 2002: 215.
20 Tully, this volume.
21 Nicholas in Nicholas, Welch and Yellowhorn 2007: 279.

Fig. 3: The rock art site of Sehan, in the background the nearby household of the family of Abdallah Moussa (photo S. Merlo)

The project methodology unfolded in an iterative fashion comprised of a number of activities nested at different scales: the family, the village, and the island. It soon became clear that a focus on Mograt alone does not reflect the contemporary and recent social landscape adequately, as there is significant movement at various time scales from and to the provincial capital Abu Hamed situated just across the river from Mograt, and longer-term movement to further abroad, both in and outside of Sudan. Moreover, Mograt is an island surrounded by a belt of smaller islands, which are used by families based on Mograt for various purposes, such as agriculture. Thus, the geographical scope of the project had to be adjusted accordingly. The river with its islands and the lush green vegetation belt along the river shore became the focus of our attention, while the dry gravel and pebble-covered centre of the laurel-leaf shaped island, which is the focus of much archaeological work, faded from view. From a local perspective, the interior of the island was mostly referred to in terms of traversing it to get to the other (green) side of Mograt or the pontoon ferry to Abu Hamed. In terms of archaeological heritage work on the island the recognition of local uses and perceptions of space(s) is significant, on the one hand for the location and protection of archaeological sites and on the other for their presentation at the local level, not

the least as spaces of modern life which may or may not intersect with more or less ancient places/spaces.

The overall approach chosen and tested combines a number of traditional and novel collaborative methods drawn from historical archaeology, cultural geography, ethnography and ethnoarchaeology, which helped create 'learning environments' (from which, admittedly, in this early project phase especially the external researchers benefited). Among the set of methods applied during the pilot study, with the aim of establishing which ones would facilitate collaborative work best, were:

1. participatory GIS, including GPS-based mapping of spatial aspects of daily lives and various traking and mental mapping activities,
2. the documentation of family (i.e. local) histories and their material manifestations at compound and village levels during conversations and field visits,
3. the GPS-based mapping of the village of Karmel, which involved numerous encounters and informal conversations with local residents, including seasonal labourers.

Before any of these activities were carried out, a 'familiarisation' period involved several guided trips at the local and island level that were organized by the family hosting the archaeological team at

Fig. 4: Hassan Mustafa in conversation with elderly local resident making rope in Karmel village (photo: C. Kleinitz)

Karmel, the Basheere family. During these trips the authors accompanied members of the family on their daily routines and – often to general amusement or acknowledgement of a job well done – were participating in various aspects of local life, including agricultural practices, such as tending animals, cutting fodder or pollinating date palms. In each activity, the archaeologists put themselves in the position of a visiting 'learner' – none of the authors, nor the inspector, had worked on Mograt before – asking for information on life on the island under the general umbrella of the vague question of "We would like to learn about Mograt and its people. What should we know?". It seemed that our willingness to 'bother', to listen and learn, was generally appreciated.

1. Participatory GIS (PGIS): tracking and mapping

Participatory mapping and Geographical Information Systems (GIS) have been coupled as a methodology for nearly 20 years. With slight differences in the driving forces of the process and the nature of the participants,[22] the common goal is to combine GIS technologies and local knowledge to acquire multifaceted information and ultimately create maps that incorporate traditionally marginalised communities and knowledge for mapping, planning and policy purposes.[23] PGIS data collection has been implemented using multiple spatial methods and technologies. For example, simple technology such as paper maps and markers (e.g. pencil, pen, stickers) were used in early PGIS studies, while digital mapping with markers using internet PGIS applications were implemented in more recent studies. Classically, participatory mapping is an interactive approach that draws on local people's knowledge, enabling the participants to create visual and non-visual data to explore the physical and social environment in which they live.

The PGIS project segment had several aims. Firstly, it was – rightly – hoped to provide ample opportunities to engage with members of the local community and get conversations started, which would allow local partners to get to know the archaeologists and vice versa.[24] Importantly, this and other project segments illustrated that the characterisation of Mograt's people as peasants, fixated on their remote island, would be simplistic and does not take into account the large degree of occupational and familial mobility many conversation partners spoke of. As the authors' Arabic language skills are limited, translations were provided during all conversations by Hassan Mustafa Alkhidir (fig. 4). For later reference, conversations were voice recorded where appropriate with the knowledge of our conversati-

22 See for example PPGIS versus PGIS in Brown 2012.

23 Rambaldi et al. 2006; Brown 2012.
24 For a similar aim, see Tully, this volume.

Fig. 5: Evening meeting with the Basheere family to download and discuss the tracks collected during the day (photo: C. Kleinitz)

on partners. Secondly, PGIS was hoped to give an indication of various aspects of the present social landscape of the island, with the aim of later being able to relate this information to various heritages on Mograt (archaeological, historical, agricultural, to name but a few). Thirdly, it was hoped that the approach would help elucidate the recent landscape history of the island and fill in the chronological gap between research on the distant past and more recent settlement transformations. These include:

a) recent settlement transformations due to the expansion of fields since the introduction of the diesel pump and the likely destruction of material remains of the sub-recent past;

b) the character of the present 'heritage landscape' and its relationship with the more recent archaeological landscape of the island; and

c) the relationship between present social spaces on the island and archaeological heritage sites dating to various periods of Mograt's history, again with a view to the community archaeology project and its role in communicating archaeological research to local 'interest groups'.

Daily life-tracking was the core activity of the PGIS project and it was tested with the help of various members of the Basheere family. Tracking unfolded in two main steps. In step one, different members of the family were provided with GPS units with which to go about their daily activities for an entire day, from waking up to going to sleep. Participants were

asked to switch on the GPS and keep it on tracking mode, which would record the paths travelled and, at the same time, collect points at particular locations, which were considered by them to be worth talking about. The authors deliberately did not provide any further instructions on what such locations could be. In a second step, the tracks and waypoints, downloaded at the Basheere residence to a laptop and displayed on the computer screen in Google Earth, became the object of narration of daily activities, experiences and places tagged. Individual and collective narratives were documented and shared at the same time, since the conversations over the tracks happened during evening meetings where various family members participated by coming in and out of the room, and dropping comments about each other's endeavours and their own experiences (fig. 5).

Complementary to tracking, a mapping activity was introduced. A selected number of adults and children were asked to draw a map of the island of Mograt either on paper or on a tablet computer that was used for collecting information and taking photographs during the field survey. The process of drawing was documented by videotaping and/or collecting notes. This activity, known as cognitive mapping, is based the principle that drawing a locality stems from a process that enables every individual to "collect, organize, store, recall and manipulate information about the spatial environment"[25] and
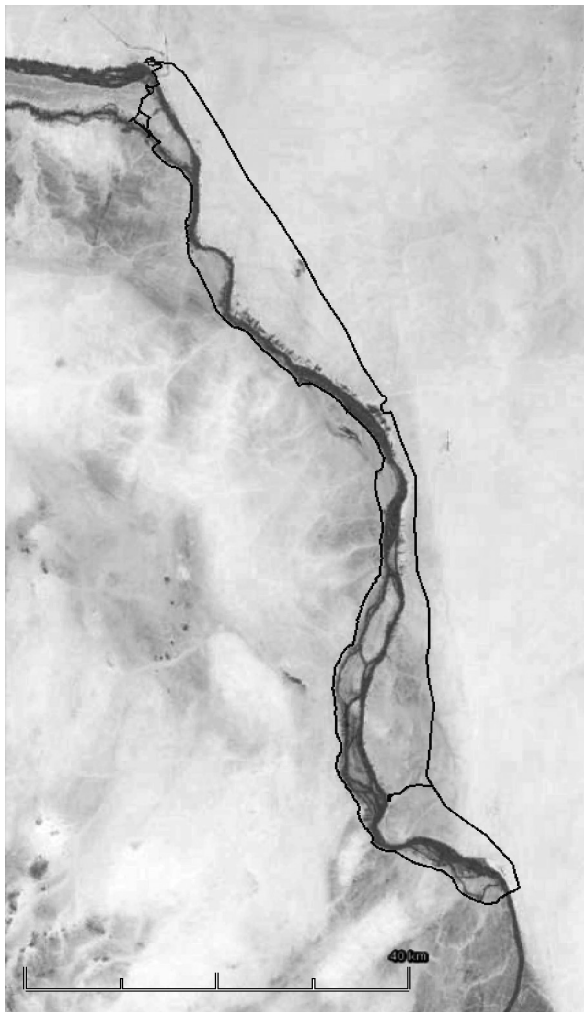
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25 Downs and Stea 1977.

Fig. 6: Combined daily life tracks of the male (a) and the female (b) participants of the Basheere family (image: Google Earth and S. Merlo)

it helps unravel individual perceptions of the world that surrounds us.

The tracking and mental mapping activities fulfilled different aims of the project. Fundamentally, they proved to be an excellent medium to elicit conversations and become familiar with members of the local community at the different spatial scales of their daily lives, i.e. the level of their homes and fields and animal pens, the compounds of their (extended) family, their village/neighbouring villages, the island and beyond. These levels of spatial relationships with the landscape of Mograt intersect with families spread across villages and temporarily working and living 'in town'. Individually, and combined, they tell the contemporary stories of Mograt.

The preliminary analysis of the combined datasets has allowed for a first glimpse on age and gender dynamics of individuals' engagement with the landscape of the island, as is clearly visible in their tracks (figs. 6a and b). For example, the movement of male members of the family often extend to the landscape outside of the island. This concerns the head of the family, Mahajoub Basheere, and his four sons. Their business interests and family ties take them mostly to Abu Hamed (10 km distance from Karmel). One son is supplying telephone credit to shops more than 100 km away on weekly trips; another son works in Atbara for most of the year. The female family members' movements are closer to the immediate or extended family's compounds, in one case involving twice-daily trips to the in-laws to drop-off and pick-up the children while their mother Aya works as a teacher at the local school. The tracks indicate that a tighter relationship exists between male family members to the gardens with, nonetheless, an occasional extension of the female domain to the area when necessary (i.e. for the milking of goats). The tending of the diesel pumps and the organisation of locally drafted and external labourers – from as far as Ethiopia – is the preserve of the men of the family. Domains of occupancy and engagement within and outside the landscape of the island are worth exploring further, to confirm whether the patterns noticed are limited to the extended family with whom we have worked (and the limited timeframe of the pilot project) or whether they are representative of the wider life-scape of Mograt. Tracking is planned to be extended in scope during the next field season, both in terms of the duration of tracking and the number of partners involved.

Different perceptions of the island have been noted in the mental maps analysed. These show the island at different scales: the entire island in the case of the adults and sections of the village or even 'just'

the school, in the case of the teenagers (fig. 7). The adults differed in the emphases they put on various parts of the island, such as the shoreline and its villages (e.g. the farmer, Abdallah Moussa from Sehan), or tracks crossing the island and ways of entering and exiting it (e.g. the business man, al-Nazeer Mahajoub from Karmel) (figs. 8a and b). Analysing the drawing process is equally informative: al-Nazeer drew the outline of the island, and then the ways of exiting it before filling in information within the island's outline, whilst Abdallah Mous-

Fig. 7: Mapping children's Mograt (photo: C. Kleinitz)

sa drew two ovals, one representing the island in its entirety and the other representing the desert, barren interior. Emphasis was given to naming all of the villages present along the cultivation strip, and then adding an island outside Mograt where he owns gardens which he visits regularly. The mental mapping activity promises to be an insightful method to explore perceptions and cultural significance of the island and its surroundings across different genders and ages. Nevertheless, as noted above, a bigger dataset will be needed in order to gain a fuller picture.

The use of digital media for communication has also been demonstrated to be a useful platform for both the tracking and mapping activities, and one to exploit for further developments in the project.[26] The easy visualisation and sharing of data (in real time) between project participants seemed to be one of the drivers of this process.

2. Reaching into the past: Recording family histories and their material correlates

Having explored living on the island in terms of movement and use of space at various levels in the present, a historical perspective was added by documenting family histories related to the development of these spaces. This included conversations on material traces of various events in personal biographies and family histories visible in the fabric, layout and the situation of the mudbrick compounds, animal shelters, etc. It also encompassed discussions on how
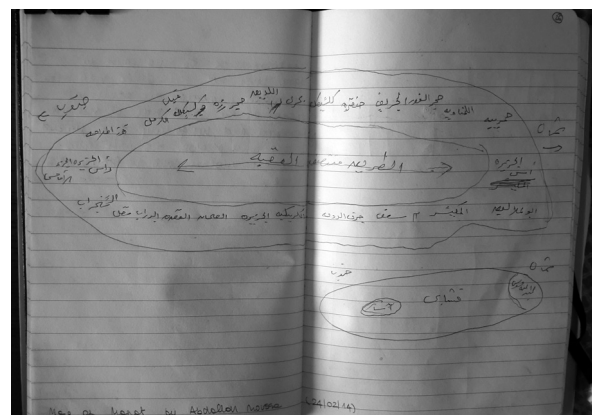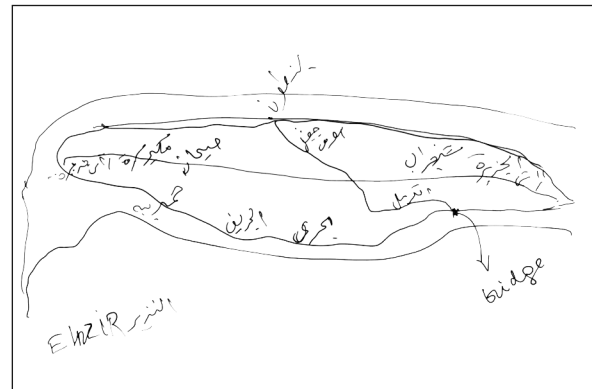

Fig. 8a and b: Examples of mental maps of Mograt drawn by al-Nazeer Mahajoub on a tablet computer (a) and Abdallah Moussa in a paper notebook (b)

land was attained and kept, how settlement developed and shifted in living memory, and how developing family ties wove across and shaped the historic landscape of Mograt. As such we tested the ability of the team to facilitate the collection of 'household and landscape histories', and we expect this to form a large part of further research.

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26 For the use of digital media for recording intangible heritage in development contexts see Nic Eoin, Owens and King 2013.

Two extended households that are part of the same larger family ties, the Basheere and the Al Shek households, joined the study. The heads of the households were informally interviewed with regard to the plots of land which they owned and/or used. Family relations were sketched and corrected collaboratively during a series of meetings in both households. The family tree has proven to be not only useful as a way of establishing a relationship with the family that hosted us, but its discussion allowed various members of the households across gender and age divides to give input

Fig. 9: Multiple episodes of building and modification are visible in the mudbrick fabric of the Basheere family's compound (photo: C. Kleinitz)

and gain insight into the family history. It is hoped that this will be a point of departure for a variety of other conversations which may elucidate (spatial) patterns of family relationships in changing socio-political and economic circumstances, and how these shape(d) settlements, land tenure and the creation of new field systems as well as agricultural practices. These histories need to be developed in much greater detail in forthcoming phases of the project, but the methods developed here have been a useful way for establishing a collaborative research environment and have facilitated discussions on local people's sense of place, history and heritage.

The compound occupied by the Basheere family was mapped by us in detail with sketches of

the internal subdivisions of the compound and its houses. Detailed information of the evolution of the compound since its establishment, including information on occasions and motivations for various modifications, was provided by the head of the family, Mahajoub Basheere. The potential for modification of mudbrick architecture and the re-use of the building material allows for the exploration of family histories and their material correlates from a more archaeological point of view through the life-histories of compounds and associated objects (fig. 9). This became clear during the study when the remains of older compounds and/or houses were identified to the authors and linked to family histories: some buildings were modified and incorporated in new compounds, some turned into stables for small stock, others appeared as 'islands' of deflated mudbrick only (fig. 10). The re-use of building material and the relatively easy modification of built structures introduces a dynamic in which every ruin holds the potential to be revived, turned into something else or become something new.

Corollary notes were made by hand in notebooks. Amongst other elements, these capture different versions of the history of the 'family founder', Malik al-Farah, who is also acknowledged in other parts of the island as the main individual

Fig. 10: Ruins of houses once inhabited by now deceased members of the Basheere family have been turned into animal shelters and storage spaces (photo: C. Kleinitz)

linked to the more recent past of Mograt. Towards the end of our stay we were taken by the Basheere family on a visit to the small island of Kindi on the southern branch of the Nile, where Malik al-Farah's compound was built in the early 1900s. It is characterised by a 'tower' and other striking architectural features that are not part of the contemporary architecture on the island (figs. 11 and 12). The compound is only partially occupied but it is looked after and curated by the family. It is also, as was pointed out to us with considerable pride, a destination for inner-Sudanese tourism. We are invited to return to Kindi during our next field season and further explore the significance of this compound and its founder figure for the Basheere family, and the wider community of Mograt and beyond.

Fig. 11: The compound of Malik al-Farah on Kindi, located on elevated, rocky ground (photo: C. Kleinitz)

3. GPS and Google Earth-based mapping of the village of Karmel

Apart from exploring the histories of an extended family and the ways in which they are tied to the local history of the island, GPS-based mapping was extended to cover the entire village of Karmel. A preliminary map of the village was produced by M. Ritter in 2008.[27] However, although his map shows the compounds, animal enclosures and public buildings existing at the time, it is not representative of the demographics of the village, since mapping was conducted exclusively using remotely sensed imagery, and important social aspects such as occupancy of the compounds was not provided on the map. The collection of qualitative and quantitative information of the historic development of the village and the structures within it, as well as the current composition of its population and the occupancy of its compounds, is fundamental to the understanding of the local community. Indeed, it is the fundamental canvas for further interrogation of the landscape development of the island. A primary aim of this survey was to be able to contextualise the current and past village dynamics linked to the extension of agricultural practices from close to the Nile to farther inland in the past 50+ years, since the introduction of the diesel pump.

The research team GPS-mapped the location of every compound and animal enclosure in the village. All individual features were photo-documented. Information on the state of occupancy of the compounds was noted. Occasional conver-

Fig. 12: The curated and partially restored 'tower' in Malik al-Farah's compound (photo: C. Kleinitz)

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27 Ritter 2008.

Fig. 13: Conversation during GPS-mapping in Karmel (photo: C. Kleinitz)

sations with house occupants and passers-by allowed us to collect preliminary information on the dynamics and the timeframes of in- and out-migration from the village, which seems to be significant, with temporary absences of several years from the village and/or from Mograt mentioned by most conversation partners (fig. 13).

During the study, the team recorded some 300 compounds, buildings and animal precincts. Alongside GPS coordinates, information on the nature and state of occupancy of these features was recorded and later compiled in a database. The layout of the various features was then traced on Google Earth imagery and linked to the information through the GPS point location (fig. 14). A preliminary analysis of the compunds and buildings shows that, from a total of 196 elements, 108 are presently occupied, 5 are occupied only in part or occasionally, 16 are used for a different function to its initial one (i.e. compounds in ruins are now often used as animal sheds), and 67 are unoccupied. This highlights that remotely sensed mapping is not sufficient for providing accurate information on the architectural and social fabric of villages which are characterised by high levels of mobility and transience. We further hope that the various structures recorded may be put into a relative chronology by integration with the recorded family histories, and can then be compared

with archaeological features that we believe were obliterated by the development of the cultivation strip from the 1950s onwards.

In terms of exploring the recent archaeology of Mograt on the example of Karmel, this mapping component of the pilot project, with the associated conversation data, helped establish what the material traces of the past few hundred could be and where they may be located. Due to the development of present and recent settlement patterns, it seems likely that earlier compounds and villages would be located under present palm groves and fields close to the Nile, and closer to areas that could have been irrigated with traditional technologies such as the *saqia* wheel.[28] It is likely that exploration of the traditional field and irrigation systems will result in a better understanding of pre-1950s agricultural organisation and settlement.
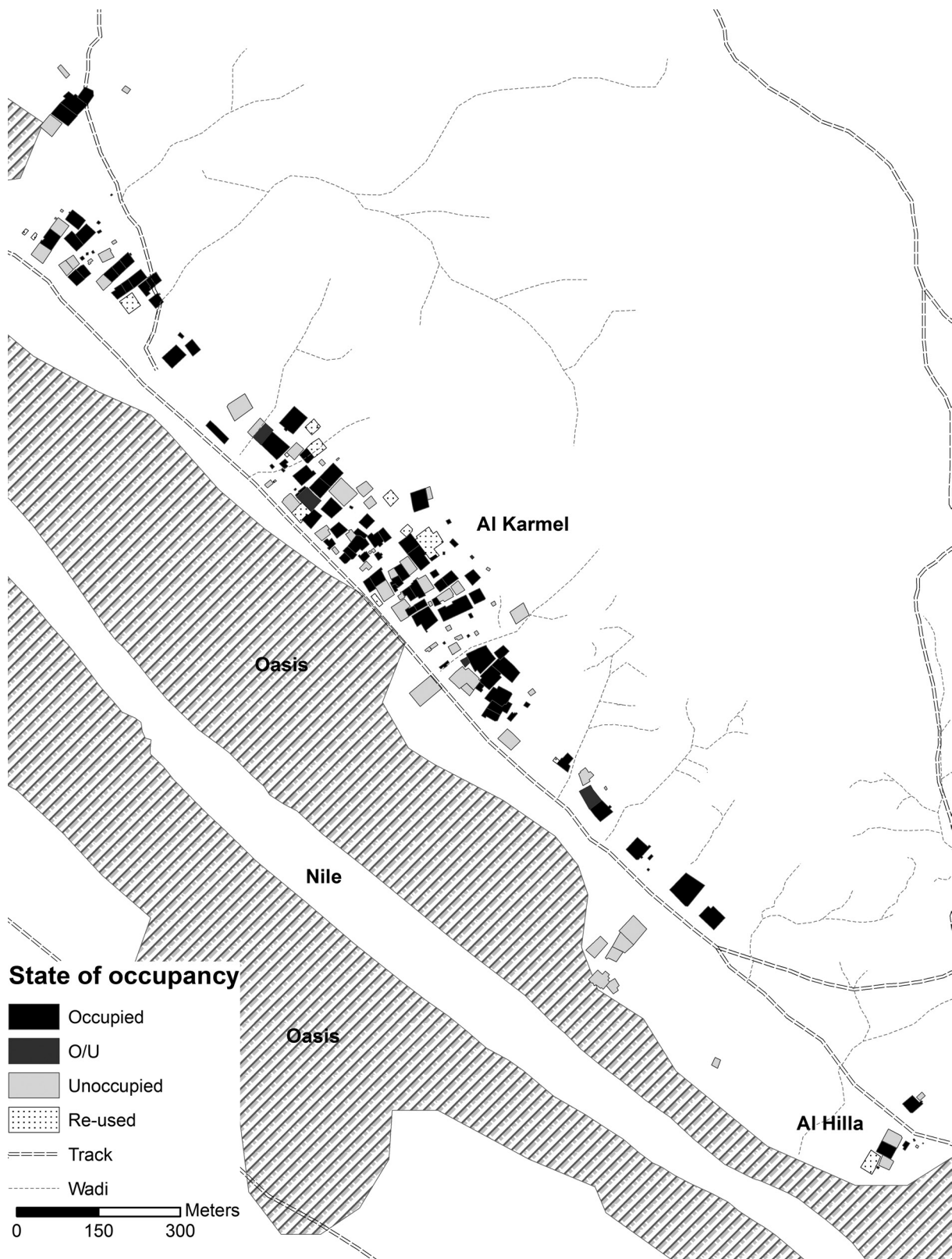
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28 See Ritter 2008 for an example.

Fig. 14: Map of Karmel and al Hilla, highlighting the state of occupancy of the compounds and other buildings (map: S. Merlo)

From community engagement to collaborative research: A reflection on knowledge co-creation

The first phase of the pilot project has been extraordinarily encouraging. We have tested the potential for the collaborative exploration of the present and the recent past of Mograt and its people through a number of shared activities. These have allowed us not only to become familiar with and learn from and with local community members about their lives in synchronic and diachronic perspectives, but also to collect data on more traditional archaeological aspects of the project, for example by pursuing compound and object histories.

The data gathered – which stay with the individuals or families that provided information/knowledge and are available to researchers as a copy – will hopefully also serve as a point of connection between this and other community-based projects that have been and will be developed in Mograt in the next seasons.[29] As far as the more 'archaeological' aspect of this project is concerned, the direction it will take in the next season is to combine tracking and conversation data with the preliminary observations made regarding the recent past of the island. This should also lead to the development of a diachronic account of changing land-use, population and environmental resource management, and an assessment of external factors (Merowe Dam construction, electrification, etc.) on the changing perceptions of the island from the perspectives of members of the local communities and heritage practitioners involved in the project.

For us, the first step towards any further developments of this project has become a deeper commitment to develop a contextual, participatory and collaborative system to document and preserve traditional knowledge and evolving perceptions of what would be worth preserving if the island of Mograt would, one day, be drastically affected by large development projects. This could be achieved in a variety of ways, from creating community sections or 'archives' in the overall project website to developing part of the research in an entirely locally-led manner, as has been the case in other regions of the continent.[30] Recent work on the use of technology for the recording of traditional heritage in Namibia has demonstrated not only that long-term participatory design is possible, but that a communal reflection on the process of participation itself is necessary.[31] Several

challenges in the collaboration and co-creation of new knowledge in the context of diverse cultural, linguistic and research paradigms are highlighted by the authors and we envisage a number of challenges in pursuing this on Mograt. Nevertheless, if we acknowledge that the value and meaning of a landscape and its history are created from people's everyday experiences of places where such meanings and values are created, then it is only through exploring local and external knowledge, which emerges from personal observation and history, alongside experience and subjective valuation, that we can start re-negotiating the value of the very concept of heritage in the context of archaeological practice.

Project goals may need to be re-aligned subsequent to this reflection, but in view of the multitude of larger and smaller-scale development projects in Sudan (and elsewhere in Africa and the globe) it seems that the direction to take in terms of (archaeological) heritage preservation and valorisation is necessarily participatory, if not fundamentally a collaborative one.

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29 See Tully, this volume.
30 Moore and Davies 2011, 2012; Schmidt 2014.
31 Kapuire et al. 2014.

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Zusammenfassung

Im Rahmen der ersten Feldkampagne der Mograt Island Archaeological Mission wurde im Februar 2014 ein Pilotprojekt initiiert, das der partizipativen Kartierung von lokalem Kulturerbe auf der größten Insel im Nil gewidmet ist. Das Projekt setzt einen Rahmen, in dem verschiedene Dimensionen lokalen Erbes in gemeinschaftlicher Forschung von Archäologen und Bewohnern der Insel untersucht werden können. Das Projekt ist aus der (negativen) Erfahrung der archäologischen Rettungskampagnen am Vierten Nilkatarakt geboren, die auf die Bergung materieller Hinterlassenschaften der tieferen Vergangenheit fokussierten, jedoch die Belange und das Erbe der durch den Dammbau von Umsiedlung bedrohten lokalen Bevölkerung weitgehend außer Acht ließen. Insbesondere im Rahmen von Rettungskampagnen zeigt sich, dass von Archäologen als untersuchungs- und schützenswert betrachtetes ‚Erbe' oft von der lokalen/regionalen Bevölkerung als wenig relevant wahrgenommen wird. Auch Mograt ist durch den Bau neuer Staudämme bedroht. In einem Versuch, in diesem Kontext Kulturerbeforschung inklusiv und nachhaltig zu gestalten, widmet sich das partizipative Kartierungsprojekt unter Anwendung verschiedener Methoden aus der Sozialgeographie, Historischen Archäologie, Ethnographie und Ethnoarchäologie der Gegenwart und der rezenten Vergangenheit Mograts.