

6 Institute und Organisationen *Centres and Organizations*

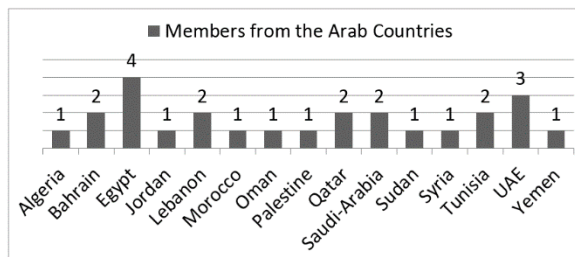
6.1 Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities (AGYA) Giving a Voice to Early Career Scholars



The Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities (AGYA) aims to establish a community of distinguished Arab and German researchers who are at an early stage of their academic careers (3-10 years after the PhD). AGYA effectively supports their innovative collaborative projects and cooperative initiatives pertaining to different areas of scientific research, science policy and education.

AGYA has been established in 2013 at the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities (Germany) and the Arabian Gulf University (Bahrain) as the first bilateral young academy worldwide. It is mainly funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the Qatar Foundation.

Following the public calls for membership in 2013 and 2014 more than 600 early career scholars from 22 different countries and from various fields in Natural Sciences, Life Sciences, Humanities, Social Sciences, Technical Sciences and Arts submitted their applications to AGYA. The 25 Arab and 25 German successful candidates who were selected as the first members are now working on research projects and initiatives that transcend disciplinary borders. The AGYA Working Groups chose topics like: Arab and German Education, Common Heritage and Common Challenges, Energy, Water and Environment, Transformation, and Innovation.



Current AGYA Members from Arab Countries

Furthermore, AGYA fosters the intercultural experience of its members and promotes them as ambassadors of science and culture. AGYA is an exclusive cross-cultural think tank that serves as a model in the promotion of excellent young researchers in the framework of Arab-German academic cooperation.

Annual AGYA conference in Munich on 26-28 May 2015

Arab and German young scholars stand together in the Old Court in Munich at the end of Burgstraße trying to find the inscription referring to the name of the first Bavarian ruler who inhabited the residence – this is just one station of a city rally in which the participants discovered the Bavarian capital in small international teams. In order to succeed, the teams



The AGYA Steering Committee: Verena Lepper, Kalman Graffi, Jenny Oesterle, Bilal Orfali, Ahmed Debez (from left to right)

needed to rely on intercultural team work. The same group of scholars convened on the following days in the Goethe Institute and the Bavarian Academy of Sciences and Humanities discussing in the AGYA Working Groups topics like migration in the Mediterranean, the impact of the Arab uprisings on academia, innovation strategies in Arab countries or solutions to tackle water scarcity. These are just two impressions from this year’s annual conference that brought together all current AGYA members.



One of the six AGYA teams in action that finally made it to third place

The conference gave the participants the opportunity to elaborate on their common interdisciplinary research projects as well as to decide on matters of self-organization such as the AGYA Constitution and the election of the new Steering Committee, which reflects the equal participation of Arab and German scholars in the Academy. However genderwise, it were two female members who took the lead: Dr. Maha Al-Hendawi (Doha) and Prof. Verena Lepper (Berlin) became the new AGYA Co-Presidents.

The wide range of research areas of the Steering Committee members represents the typical variety of disciplines in AGYA extending from Education and Egyptology to Biotechnology and Computer Science. The four other members of the new Steering Committee are Prof. Bilal Orfali (Beirut), Dr. Ahmed Debez (Tunis), Dr. Jenny Oesterle (Heidelberg) and Prof. Kalman Graffi (Düsseldorf). Find out more about all 50 members on our website www.agya.info.

Interdisciplinary projects of the AGYA Working Groups

The members of the AGYA Working Group “Common Heritage and Common Challenges” finalized in Munich the last steps of the preparation for the conference on “Fluid Nature, Fluid Culture. Malta and the Mediterranean”.



Members of the AGYA Working Group “Common Heritage and Common Challenges” in discussion in the Bavarian Academy of Sciences and Humanities

This conference aims at a novel perspective on the Mediterranean by bringing together the “two cultures” in academia, i.e. the sciences and the humanities. In addition, it seeks to investigate Malta as a physical and cultural space by an on-the-spot approach, exchanging conventional conference venues to visit sites of relevance the dimensions of which are unfolded by experts in the field.



AGYA members in front of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences and Humanities

Malta offers a good case for studying the complexities of global processes of exchange on a micro level, thereby employing one of the most promising and feasible approaches in global studies and space theory. A closer look at processes of exchange, transformation or rejection will open up views into the fluidity of cultures and of boundaries. The topics discussed are manifold and will include water supply and distribution, environmental issues, human rights and international law, historical events and Islamic culture.

The conference is scheduled from 10 to 14 September 2015 and will be held in cooperation with renowned senior scholars as well as academic institutions in Malta. It is funded by the Volkswagen-Foundation in Germany.

The AGYA Working Group “Transformation” is currently writing a book on “Academia in Transformation”: Popular uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) have had a deep impact, not only on the societies and political structures in the respective countries, but also on different academic disciplines. The events that started in 2010 in Tunisia have reshaped the language of agents and scholars, contributed to a shift in study focus and sometimes challenged dominant theoretical approaches such as those on change and stability in the region.

The aim of this book is to provide an insightful and illuminating view of the transformation of the academic landscape in the aftermaths of the uprising. It analyses how the academic discourse in and on the MENA region has changed and reflects how the still ongoing transformation processes shape lines of inquiry, methodological tools and academic institutions in different disciplines. In addition the question will be tackled how different disciplines have been able to assess the ongoing transformation processes, but also how these processes have transformed the disciplines. AGYA members are especially well equipped to contribute to such a volume as they represent a broad diversity of scholars with different academic, political and cultural backgrounds. The volume covers different subjects in the humanities, social, technical and natural sciences. The book will be published in winter 2015/16.

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6.2 AREACORE – Arab-European Association for Media and Communication Researchers



The Arab-European Association for Media and Communication Researchers (AREACORE) was founded in 2013 after a workshop initiated by Juniorprofessor Carola Richter at Freie Universität Berlin. The Arab participants of this workshop identified the necessity to strengthen area expertise in communication studies.



The co-founders of AREACORE, Dr. Jassim Jaber and Dr. Carola Richter

Since 2011, the Arab-speaking countries have become tremendously interesting for communication scholars worldwide due to the impact social media seemed to have in empowering people in transformation processes. Before this period, only a few Western communication scholars dealt with the region, mostly in the context of comparative or case study-based research. Still, globally visible research on Arab media and communication is often *research about* the region instead of open-minded *research with* fellow colleagues from the region. In order to produce informed and valid knowledge without imposing specific theories and methods, joint cross-cultural research should be conducted on an equal footing between the researchers.

