



AGYA Annual Conference in Autumn 2022

Heroes and Belonging – How Football, Science and Literature Shape Society

The Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities (AGYA) held its Autumn Annual Conference from 7-10 November 2022. This online conference attracted more than 50 AGYA members and 60 alumni from 19 countries: Algeria, Egypt, Germany, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauretania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

Highlights of the conference were, next to the General Assemblies of all members, the festive opening event with a panel discussion on 'The Power of Football in the Arab World and Germany' as well as the public lunch talk 'Imagining the Future - Science Fiction & Technological Innovation'.

AGYA welcomed 11 new members and 10 new alumni/ae

The 2022 AGYA Annual Autumn Conference and inauguration ceremony was festively opened with a welcome address by [Prof. Dr. Verena Lepper](#), AGYA Principal Investigator (PI), Egyptian Museum and Papyri Collection of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. In her speech, she emphasised the great success of AGYA in the context of current world politics: "Also this year's AGYA General Assembly is a conference in times of crisis in many ends. AGYA showed the capability to face and jointly master these challenging times that also held much good for AGYA: Keeping up a rich variety of projects, publications and events, AGYA is implementing measures and taking action."

Highlighting AGYA's wide-spread network, AGYA Co-President [Prof. Dr. Mahmoud Abdel-Hafiez](#) gave insights into the value of academic leadership as Co-President of the academy: "AGYA has had a great impact on my life as a researcher, but also contributed to my growth as a person and to the advancement of my leadership skills." AGYA Co-President [Dr. Amro Ali](#) placed the academy in the context of the Arab-German research and science landscape, with AGYA taking a pioneering role when it comes to breaking new and extraordinary ground in excellent research for and in society.

After their warm welcoming words, the AGYA Co-Presidents led the inauguration ceremony for the [11 new AGYA members from Algeria, Iraq, Mauretania, Qatar, Sudan, UAE, and Germany](#). For these 11 excellent early career researchers, the ceremony marked the beginning of their five-year membership in AGYA, enabling them to develop innovative projects through research cooperation across countries and disciplines. With a first time AGYA member from Mauretania, AGYA strengthens its outreach and impact. For ten AGYA members, the Annual Conference concluded their active membership, with all proving a strong career boost within their 5 year membership, now starting their new paths as AGYA alumni/ae. At the Annual Conference, members selected the new [AGYA Steering Committee and Co-Presidents](#).

The Power of Football in the Arab World and Germany

[Please click here to see the full Panel Discussion on the AGYA YouTube Channel](#)

With a public event on the hot topic of the World Cup in Qatar, AGYA presented a panel discussion with distinguished guests reflecting Arab-German perspectives. Renowned experts from Lebanon, Qatar, Egypt and Germany discussed the social, cultural and political significance of football as well as its history and trajectory in different Arab countries and Germany. The panel discussion was moderated by [AGYA member Dr. Jan Busse](#), who has recently co-edited with the renowned historian and author Dr. René Wildangel the [AGYA publication "The Rebellious Game: Football in the Middle East and North Africa"](#) (in German). In the preface of the publication, Claudia Roth, Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media, wrote: "Football is Culture and lived culture with a societal importance."

Prof. Dr. Mahfoud Amara opened the event with an insight from Qatar and put the World Cup in a new light of opportunities. Former captain of the Lebanese women's national football team, Hiba El Jaafil, demonstrated that when football teams strive for success and teams are rewarded in competitions, it has a very big and long-lasting impact. Dr. Özgür Özvatan offered a reflective view on football, its players and actors, as well as patterns of thought considering multi-national identities in the German society. Relating this point to the individual level and bringing in the theme of "heroes", AGYA Co-President Amro Ali highlighted one player, Mohamed Salah, as an indicator, who stands between different cultural frames, playing in England and being one of the most famous and influential Egyptian of the present time.

Imagining the Future - Science Fiction & Technological Innovation

[Please click here to see the full Panel Discussion on the AGYA YouTube Channel](#)

Arab science fiction has gained notable momentum in the past years. One of the latest examples for this trend is the novel "HWJN" written by Yasser Bahjatt with Ibraheem Abbas, which was so popular that it is believed to have become one of the most downloaded book in Arab countries. AGYA took the opportunity of for an inspirational mid-day session moderated by **AGYA member Dr. Ikram Hili**, English Literature, University of Sousse, Tunisia, to invite Yasser Bahjatt, Computer Engineer, Novelist & Futurist, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, and Dr. Karena Kalmbach, Head of Strategy and Content, Futurium gGmbH, Berlin, Germany, to reflect on the influence of fiction, imagination, and fear of technological innovation.

Setting the ground, Dr. Karena Kalmbach stressed the importance of being aware of one's own influence and historical origin: We all share the responsibility for shaping the future. Yasser Bahjatt, who is both an engineer and a science fiction writer, pointed out the connection between science fiction and patents produce. He shared his research results which show that both science fiction and patents often occur with the same frequency, suggesting that they may influence each other. In his final statement, he gave the advice to read science fiction from across the globe, as it provides easy access to the cultures concerned.

AGYA invites... 10 Years of AGYA in 2023!

"Looking forward to next year, we will celebrate 10 years of AGYA. I would like to invite members, alumni and alumnae, stakeholders and friends of AGYA to join us on our celebration programme in 2023. So please stay tuned for festive events!"

Prof. Dr. Verena Lepper, AGYA Principal Investigator (PI)

Egyptian Museum and Papyri Collection of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities (AGYA)

The Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities (AGYA) is based at the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities (BBAW) in Germany and at the Academy of Scientific Research and Technology (ASRT) in Egypt. It was established in 2013 and is the first bilateral young academy worldwide. AGYA promotes research cooperation among outstanding early-career researchers from all disciplines who are affiliated with a research institution in Germany or any Arab country. The academy supports the innovative projects of its members in various fields of research as well as in science policy and education. Currently, 60 members – Arab and German scholars in equal number – realize joint projects and initiatives. AGYA is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and various Arab cooperation partners.

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AGYA is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and several Arab and German cooperation partners.

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