AHRC GCRF Area-Focused Network + Annual Reporting

Annual Report to AHRC from October 2017 to October 2018

AHRC GCRF Network + Title: The Nahrein Network

AHRC GCRF Network + PI: Professor Eleanor Robson

Lead Institution: University College London

Date due: 14 January 2019

Date submitted:

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Date report was shared/is to be shared with relevant board or management groups: Nahrein Network Management Committee (by email, January 2019); Nahrein Network Advisory Group (by email, January 2019)

Approved by (AHRC staff):

Section 1: Summary of achievements

Please highlight any major achievements over the course of the reporting period.
(Max. 750 words)

In the first twelve months of its existence, the Network has achieved a great deal. We have:

- **Reconfigured the core research team, enabling us to appoint not one but two full-time postdoctoral researchers, Dr Mehiyar Kathem at UCL (London) and Dr Amani Suleiman at UKH (Erbil). Dr Kathem already has a peer-reviewed article in press and another in progress.**
- **Developed new partnerships with the College of Archaeology, University of Mosul; The Station NGO (Baghdad); and the Iran Heritage Foundation (in anticipation of geographical expansion in 2019).**
- **Consolidated our partnership with UNESCO Iraq around their new "Revive the Spirit of Mosul" initiative.**
- **Consolidated our relationships with the Iraqi Ministries of Culture and of Higher Education and Scientific Research; with the British Embassy in Baghdad and the Consulate-General in Erbil; and with the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI).**
- **Held a series of cultural heritage workshops in Baghdad, in partnership with the Iraqi Ministry of Culture and The Station NGO.**
- **Co-hosted the Iraqi premiere of the documentary film *Letters from Baghdad* with the Ministry of Culture in Baghdad and co-sponsored a national screening season with British Council Iraq.**
- **Launched our Visiting Scholars scheme in collaboration with the British Institute for the Study of Iraq. In the first two rounds of competition we received over 30 applicants and funded 8, two of whom have already started their placements.**
- **Launched our Research Grants scheme, receiving ten applications and funding four. All three small projects have now started work and the large one begins in December, once its Co-I returns from her Visiting Scholarship placement.**
- **Participated in several high-profile conferences in Iraq, the UK and elsewhere to promote the Network's mission and funding schemes.**
- **Opened our Research Centre for Culture, History and Humanities for Sustainable Development at UKH, with the appointment of a part-time administrator, receipt of a significant donation of academic books, and plans for a launch event in November 2018.**
- **Started to develop a partnership with the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House) to explore policy and cultural diplomacy in Strand 3.**

Section 2: Project Management and Operations

i) Please provide details of how the operational and management teams were formed to deliver a large multi-partner research project across different remits. This should include details of the opportunities and challenges associated with a large, dispersed, multi-partner project and how these challenges were overcome and what measures were in place to ensure a coherent approach across all parties

The core team is now equally balanced between Erbil and London, with a PI/Co-I, a full-time postdoc, and a part-time administrator in each. In addition, we have one Co-I in Oxford. Our remits and linguistic competences are as follows:

UKH, Erbil
Co-I: Dr Anwar Anaid, from February 2018 — politics of sustainable development; Research Centre Director (English, Kurdish)
Postdoc: Dr Amani Suleiman, from September 2018 — economics of heritage tourism (English, Arabic)
Administrator: Ms Rahma Ismail, from September 2018 — political science (English, Arabic, Kurdish, Turkoman)

UCL, London
PI: Professor Eleanor Robson — history, ancient languages, digital humanities; oversees the whole programme (English, some Arabic)
Postdoc: Dr Mehiyar Kathem, from December 2017 — cultural heritage, statehood, NGOs and civil society; runs the Visiting Scholars scheme (English, Arabic)
Administrator: currently Mr Adil Chowdhury (temporary contract)

Ashmolean Museum, Oxford
Co-I: Dr Paul Collins — art history, museum studies; runs the Research Grants scheme (English)

Full team meetings are held fortnightly by Skype (in English), with a standing agenda to report progress and tackle problems as they arise. There is also a lot of face-to-face, skype and email exchange between times, and members of the UK team travel to Erbil two or three times a year. (The opposite direction of travel would also be feasible and welcome!)

In addition the core team reports to the larger Management Committee, comprising representatives of our core partners in Iraq as well as UK colleagues with relevant expertise and our AHRC Case Officer. To date these formal, minuted quarterly meetings have been held at UCL with others Skyping in; but now that the Research Centre is fully functional, future meetings could equally be held in Erbil.

Beyond that, the PI consults individual members of the Advisory Group as needed, and keeps in regular touch with the Case Officer and his colleagues. We have also found the bi-annual meetings of the other Network Plus projects incredibly useful for sharing knowledge and experience, and would like to see these continue.

This clear delineation of roles and regular, clearly defined reporting points have worked very well for us and have posed no significant challenges.

| **ii)** | What measures have you put in place to ensure that pre-grant due diligence processes are robust? Please refer to the governance; assessment of organisations' operational structure to deliver, financial assessment; viability and capacity to manage the grant. Please also include comments on any safeguarding policies or procedures. |

Grants fund application forms include questions on project management, budgeting, and ethics. Applicants that cannot give full and convincing responses are not shortlisted.

We have devised a project start-up questionnaire for funded projects, which we have shared with other N+ projects. It asks further questions about the team's and institution's experience in project management; financial management; institutional governance; and research integrity and ethics, in order to identify areas that might require particular support from us.

Each funded project is assigned a project liaison, who holds regular (usually, monthly) skype meetings with the PI, to check on progress and problems. The PL reports back to the Network's core team meetings. It is also possible to seek advice from Management Committee members and the AHRC case officer — but this has not yet been necessary.

The Network does not fund projects on children or vulnerable adults as a matter of policy (now clearly stated in our guidance).

iii) What measures have you put in place to identify and mitigate risk?

With the support of the project liaison, each funded project must complete a risk register (from a template we provide) before the project can begin. The PI and project liaison keep the risk register under review for the duration of the project.

iv) Please describe how the work of the research project and its approaches have evolved over the funding period, the barriers faced and how the project team has mitigated for and responded to them.

As outlined above, the Network has overcome major operational and governance challenges in its first year.

Devolved funding: We have adopted a much simplified devolved funding schedule (with 4 rounds instead of 6) and have been much less directive about fundable topics than envisaged in the original proposal. In short, we allow our applicants to set the research agenda much more.

Erbil Research Centre: this took much longer to set up than anticipated but is now fully staffed with a Director, Postdoctoral Researcher and part-time Administrator, as well as a donated library.

Advocacy: The constant churn of international NGO and diplomatic staff in Iraq, as well as the very slow (and still incomplete) formation of the new Iraqi government in the latter half of 2018 means that advocacy work has to be constantly redone. However, we have undertaken a lot of surprisingly effective behind-the-scenes advocacy and advisory work, especially around the reconstruction of Mosul.

Geographical expansion: It was our original plan to expand beyond Iraq in Year 3; the AHRC interview panel recommended immediate coverage of the entire area. We have compromised by agreeing a partial expansion from January 2019 to Lebanon and Turkey. However, Syria is still not safe, ethical or legal to work in and Iran is challenging because the intensification of US sanctions means that it is impossible to transfer money into the country. We will keep these two countries under review.

v) Plans for following year; please provide an updated work plan where the plans have diverged from what was set out in the research grant's application and your rationale for doing so

Despite the major problems experienced in the first year, the work plan remain substantially the same, with the following exceptions:
- Strand 1 activities will now start to wind down in summer of 2019, about six months later than planned
- We are already beginning to develop Strand 3 work with Chatham House, and possibly work on cultural diplomacy with FCO & DCMS

- As noted above geographical expansion of our Visiting Scholarship and Research Grant Scheme will now begin in early 2019

Section 3: Devolved and leveraged funding:

i) Please provide an overview of how your Network+ research programme has deployed its flexible funding pot over the course of the reporting year.

We issued a first call for Strand 2 research grants in spring 2018, as planned, and funded three small and one large research project as a result. A further three grant calls are envisaged for 2018-19.

ii) If different from what was originally proposed in your application, what is the rationale for the funding model used?

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iii) Do you envisage any changes to your use of the flexible funding for the following year e.g. new unanticipated opportunities which have arisen?

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vi) Please provide an overview of any additional funding leveraged to support this research project? Please provide the total amount and the sources of funding.

Details of further funding for related research or development projects which have been stimulated by your Network + award should be included within your Researchfish submission and should not be included here.

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Section 4: Research Project Development and Strategy

i) Partnerships, networking and knowledge exchange

A) Please indicate the progress you have made this year in regard to partnerships (academic, non-academic, third sector NGO, international in particular the Global South)? For example, please include your approach to forging new partnerships and sustaining existing partnerships? How have these partnerships been supported? How have these partnerships helped shape the research agenda? Please provide evidence of new and improved working relationships, collaboration and level of commitment to collaboration.

B) What opportunities and challenges have you faced in relation to partnerships, networking and knowledge exchange? How have these influenced how you will work with new and existing partners in the future?

A) Planned partnerships with Al-Amal (a Baghdad-based NGO) and the British Institute for Persian Studies didn't materialise; we have replaced them with The Station and the Iran Heritage Foundation respectively. Last-minute cancellation of a Strand 1 event in Baghdad by one of our project partners has proved logistically impossible to reconvene. Mosul University has proved an important new partner. New Strand 3 collaboration with Chatham House emerged this summer.

Partnerships are initiated and sustained through face-to-face and online contact, each depending on particular needs and interests. There has been no one-size-fits-all model.

b) Beyond the confidential issues discussed above, the main challenges have been last-minute cancellations, slow response rates and changes of plan by project partners; this was frustrating but, especially given our own limited capacity in the first year of the project, we haven't found solutions to these problems.

ii) Interdisciplinarity
What is the combination of disciplines which are found within this research project? Over the reporting period, have you identified other research areas which need to be represented? How has the formulation of the research agenda/s reflected the different disciplines involved?

Museum and heritage studies (Paul Collins); development studies (Mehiyar Kathem); history, ancient languages and Digital Humanities (Eleanor Robson); politics (Anwar Anaid). Since September 2018 we have added the economics of heritage tourism (Amani Suleiman). The range of work we carry out and fund is a fair reflection of this disciplinary mix.

iii) Capacity building & innovation
a) What is your approach to capacity building and innovation in your research project?

b) Please provide details of how the research project has facilitated the processes and outcomes of capacity building within HEIs both in the Global North and South and other partner organisations from new and innovative interactions.

c) Please provide a summary of the significant career development opportunities or new appointments directly associated with the research project.

a) We build capacity and encourage innovation through Strand 1 workshops (although we have not been able to hold as many as we would have liked: see above) and through our very successful Visiting Scholarships programme. In year 1 we partnered with the British Institute for the Study of Iraq to offer 8 two-month placements with UK institutional hosts for Iraqi researchers and cultural heritage professionals. This scheme provides individuals with bespoke opportunities to develop new relationships, collaborators, methods, skills, data, and so on, with UK partners. As the first case study below shows, this is often the beginning of longer-term developments

b) Our Research Centre for Culture, History and the Humanities for Sustainable Development, at the University of Kurdistan Hewler has introduced a new dimension to heritage studies in the region, which to date has focused on architectural restoration projects. Closely related, we have funded a 12-month Cultural Heritage Network for Kurdistan, based at Sulaimani Polytechnic University, which starts work in December 2019 (after the PI returns from a Visiting Scholarship to the UK), with collaboration from the universities of Leicester and Reading.

c) To date, the Network has created two new postdoctoral research positions: Dr Mehiyar Kathem at UCL, working on the role of heritage in sustainable state-building in Iraq; and Dr Amani Suleiman, researching heritage and sustainable tourism in comparative perspective.

iv) Engagement and Communications

a) Please provide an overview of the research project's progress over the course of the first year in relation to its engagement and communications strategy. Please include any opportunities and challenges you faced in delivering this strategy and how you overcame them.

The engagement and communications strategy outlined in our original Pathways to Impact document has proved robust and effective. The informational website went live in the first month of the project and by the end of the reporting period was getting 600 unique visitors a month, of whom 60% were from the UK, 20% from Iraq, and the other 20% from about 50 further countries. The most accessed parts of the site were, as expected, those relating to the grants we offer — over 55% of all visits.

We also have a very engaged Twitter following, with over 800 followers by the end of the reporting period, mostly Iraqi and UK researchers, international diplomats and journalists, and Iraqi and diaspora enthusiasts. Facebook has been slower to take off, despite it being the Iraqi social medium bar none, but this rather reflects the core team's social media preferences. A podcast series, featuring interviews with our partners and grantees, launched in summer 2018, has also been very successful.

Twitter direct messages, Facebook messenger, and WhatsApp have all proved invaluable in initiating and fostering individual engagement and relationships between face-to-face contact. The Iraqi Embassy in the UK has facilitated visas whenever needed.

v) Sustainability and legacy development
What measures are you developing to plan for sustainability of the research project, beyond the duration of the funding?

Not within this reporting period; scheduled for year 2 and beyond

Section 5: Monitoring and Evaluation
i) Please provide an overview of the processes and methodologies, including data availability, to assess and report findings, outputs, outcomes and impacts, including how the research project will collate evidence from devolved funding grants. Please attach or provide links of guidelines, tools and a Theory of Change if applicable (this could include a logic model)

ii) What progress has been made towards the research project's milestones and objectives during the reporting period?

Ongoing projects are monitored through monthly meetings with the project liaison. All projects must submit final reports in order to receive the final tranche of payments; and interim reports are required at 6-month intervals for longer projects. Templates are

available on request. There will also be longer-term follow up to support publication strategies, and core team member Dr Suleiman will help devolved projects measure economic impact, where appropriate.

It was agreed at the Network+ joint start-up meeting in London in September 2018 that Theory of Change and logic models, etc. were not a requirement of these projects and GCRF grant condition 11 was removed from the formal letter of award.

The Network has five major aims:

1. To better understand the current situation, we aim to develop a fuller historical understanding of the current exclusion of local experts and audiences from the production and consumption of knowledge about Middle Eastern antiquity.
   Progress: held fact-finding workshop in Baghdad with young CH professionals; funded one Visiting Scholarship to historicise British Orientalists' views of Iraq; nascent collaboration with Iraqi polling company IIACSS to collect, quantify and analyses views of non-experts

   2. To raise the profile of local expertise, we aim to facilitate Middle Eastern humanities academics in re-engaging with regional and global academic communities, as producers of research for international consumption.
   Progress: three devolved grants and seven visiting scholarships awarded to teams led by Iraqi academics; substantial raising of profile through social media and advocacy with politicians and decision-makers

3. To improve the job prospects of the region's youth, we aim to improve employability and leadership potential for humanities graduates from Middle Eastern universities.
   Progress: just starting, with two Visiting Scholarships on these topics

4. To help heritage organisations better serve local needs we aim to enable Middle Eastern museums, archives, cultural heritage sites to contribute to local tourism and knowledge economies.
   Progress: all four devolved projects funded in this reporting period contribute directly to this aim, as well as several of the Visiting Scholarships. We also provide extensive behind-the-scenes advice and support to UNESCO Iraq.

5. To help post-conflict healing and reconciliation, we aim to promote ancient Middle Eastern history as a 'safe' space for public debate around sensitive social, and political matters of current concern.
   Progress: not yet started; originally scheduled for year 2 and beyond.

Section 6 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
Please indicate the number of applications made and awarded in the table below.
NB Visiting Scholars applications as well as Research Grants

Characteristic		PI (applications)	PI (awards)	Co-I (applications)	Co-I (awards)
Gender	Female	3	2	6	2
	Male	6	2	21	6

	Other				
	Not disclosed				
Age	**0 – 29**				
	30 – 39				
	40 – 49				
	50 – 59				
	60+				
	Not disclosed	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**
Ethnicity	**Asian British**	**1**	**1**		
	Asian other				
	Black British				
	Black other				
	Chinese British				
	Chinese Other				
	Mixed / multiple ethnic groups				
	Other	**5**	**3**	**20**	**5**
	White British	**2**	**0**	**7**	**3**
	White other				
Disability	**Not disclosed**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**
	Known Disability				
	No known disability				
	Not disclosed				

If you are unable to provide the information as requested above, please use the space below to explain how your data maps onto the categories above.

In Iraq, identity politics has been violently weaponised over the past 15 years, to the point of death. As a result, even anonymised requests to reveal ethnicity and religious affiliation (which do not map on to these categories in any case) are met with hostility and suspicion. As a matter of principle, in order to maintain the trust of our partners, we therefore do not request information about protected characteristics for monitoring purposes.

For our Strand 1 Iraqi Visiting Scholars scheme we kept monitoring data as follows:

	Applicants	Awardees	Success rate
Male	38	7	18.4%

Female	**9**	**1**	**11.1%**
Academic	**42**	**6**	**14.3%**
Of whom ECR	**12**	**3**	**25.0%**
non-academic	**5**	**2**	**40.0%**

Section 7: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

How is your research project helping to address and encourage equality, diversity and inclusion, such as gender equality and social inclusion? Please state if you have experienced any challenges and how you overcame these.

The Network has a clear equalities and inclusion policy, which is prominent on the website and all grant applications materials.

It is a massive challenge to overcome ingrained gender inequalities in Iraq and we still have no overall answer to the relative lack of women coming forward for our grants schemes. However, the gender balance of the team sends strong signals and we are learning how to identify and foster strong applications from female PIs. The funded project on post-conflict textile crafts explicitly addresses women's knowledge and skills.

Given the sensitivities around ethnicity and religious affiliation, we use geography as a proxy for intrusive questions of diversity. We ensure that we fund good projects and visiting scholars from across Iraqi Kurdistan, the predominantly Shi'a south and the predominantly Sunni north.

The funded project, "Integrating Comprehensive, Cross-community History with Reconciliation and Heritage Protection" explicitly addresses the challenges of contested ownership of heritage sites from minority and majority perspectives. The funded projects on post-conflict textile crafts and "Thesiger's Tarada" both aim to bring economic renewal to deprived rural communities.

Section 8: Impact of research project and ODA compliance

i) Please provide an update on progress in relation to the ODA Compliance Statement and Pathways to Impact plan you provided in your application.

The Network's focus remains for the moment on Iraq, as a DAC-listed Middle Income Country and a Fragile State. In our original ODA compliance statement we aimed to improve the lot of five groups that have been identified as at risk of being 'left behind': youth; women and girls; rural dwellers; those living in conflict-affected areas; and cultural, ethnic and religious minorities.

- improved employability for young humanities graduates (SDG 4: Quality Education; SDG 6: Decent Work and Economic Growth) — tackled by two Visiting Scholarships and the funded project for a Kurdish Cultural Heritage Network
- improved inclusion and representation of women and minorities in education, society and the economy (SDG 5: Gender Equality; SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities) — tackled by the Post-Conflict Textile Crafts project and the Cross-Communitiy History project respectively and one Visiting Scholarship
- increased local tourism and knowledge economies around rural cultural heritage sites (SDG 14: Life Below Water; SDG 15: Life on Land) — tackled by the Thesiger's Tarada project and two Visiting Scholarships

- better social cohesion in <u>war-damaged communities</u> (SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities; SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) — tackled by three Visiting Scholarships for researchers from Mosul

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ii) Please provide a brief overview of the new insights and or areas of enquiry which have emerged during the reporting period?

Our main insights have been:
- that local researchers can and should define what heritage is, and what priorities are, in locally meaningful contexts;
- that heritage and the past are a valuable means of escape from a difficult present, as much as a means of coming to terms with it.

As such we have funded a much wider range of projects than we might have expected and the Network is all the richer for it.

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iii) Please provide a brief overview of the progress made to date towards achieving impact. How is the research project beginning to promote the economic development and welfare of the DAC listed country/countries? This can include impact at community, practice and policy level. *(summary of information submitted into Researchfish)*

It's really too early to assess this in any meaningful way, as the first projects began just a couple of months before the end of this reporting period.

Section 7: Sharing learning
Please highlight any learning that you are happy for us to share with other and future Network + award holders:

- Research models need to be adapted to local circumstances, cultures, and needs. The funded project with the most teething problems was led by a PI with extensive subject-area experience in the global south but not in Iraq, and who initially found it difficult to listen to local collaborators.
- In developing relationships with potential partners and grant applicants, it's important to be present in your collaborating countries as much as possible, to listen and learn; and then to be opportunistic, recognising and acting on opportunities as soon as they arise; and finally, to manage expectations about competition for funding and what funding can offer.
- It's vital to engage as early as possible with international agencies, diplomats, politicians and funders — ideally as the proposal develops. Strong relationships here can lead to informal advice-giving, which is just as effective and much faster than formal policy interventions (which also have a role)

Case studies

Case studies are an important evidence resource for AHRC and GCRF. We use them to understand the contribution research can make and to provide important evidence to external bodies about the value of funding in the arts and humanities. We also use them to

offer a compelling narrative for those who want to learn more about the AHRC, GCRF and the role of research (especially the arts and humanities) towards international development.

Please provide 2-4 case studies (400 words maximum word limit for each case study). The case studies can highlight progress and achievements relating to building capacity, creating and sustaining networks and partnerships, exchanging knowledge or effecting change.

Using art to reconnect the archival, local, and archaeological strata of memory of Iraq's vernacular watercraft heritage

Led by renowned Iraqi artist Rashad Salim of Safina Projects, this 9-month project examines the relationship between recent Iraqi marshland boats like the *tarada* canoe made for the British explorer Wilfrid Thesiger in 1952 and ancient boats of comparable form, known from the archaeological record. Current and recent information about Iraq's marsh canoes has been gathered through oral history work with today's marsh communities, and through studies of Thesiger's photographic archive in the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford. This evidence has been analysed together with available archaeological data on similar boats, to shed new light on the development of a boat form and craft tradition that endured for millennia but is now endangered.

The making of *taradas* — the canoes of Marsh Arab sheikhs — ceased during the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s. However, a handful of boat builders still make *meshoufs* (wooden canoes) for work purposes, while some of the older generation previously built *taradas*, including members of the family who built Thesiger's boat. This project aims to preserve their knowledge. Importantly, it also seek ways to sustain these craft practices into the future, through developing new uses for traditional boats in the tourism, leisure, and sports sectors in Iraq.

In parnership with NGO Nature Iraq, in autumn 2018 the project team constructed two reproductions of Thesiger's *tarada* (one of which will remain in Iraq; the other will be brought to the UK). A series of trial expeditions into the marshes studied the boats' performance and assessed the functionality of their form and features (as against their symbolic and aesthetic value).

In spring 2019 Basrah Museum in southern Iraq will present an exhibition of selected photographs from Thesiger's archives and from the project, together with the reconstructed *tarada*, digital and physical models of the *tarada* and other canoe types, and relevant artifacts from the Museum collection, such as ancient pottery and clay model boats.

Building on this project, in summer 2018, Safina Projects was awarded a grant from the UK Cultural Protection Fund for *An Ark for Iraq,* which will work to revitalise and document the endangered watercraft heritage of traditional boats in central and southern Iraq. This year long programme of fieldwork, research and public engagement will be delivered in partnership with Iraqi ministries, museums and universities.

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Dr Rozhen Mohammed-Amin of Sulaimani Polytechnic University wants to revolutionize cultural heritage storytelling in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, while hoping to add more gender balance to her field. In spring 2018 the Nahrein Network and the British Institute for the Study of Iraq jointly awarded her a two-month Visiting Scholarship at the University of Glasgow to work with Dr Maria

Econoumou, Co-I of the EMOTIVE project. EMOTIVE is an EU-funded heritage project that aims to use emotional storytelling to dramatically change how people experience heritage sites.

During her placement at the Hunterian Museum, Mohammed-Amin developed and experimentally evaluated a storytelling pilot project for the Sulaimani Museum, using the EMOTIVE platform. The museum is the second largest museum in Iraq: It houses and displays collections from the early Stone Age (c.100,000 BC) to the Ottoman period (1922 AD). Despite displaying significant collections, the museum, like many others in Iraq, is struggling to attract and connect to visitors and tourists for enjoying and promoting Iraqi heritage and generating revenue.

Since her return from the UK, Mohammed-Amin has been assessing and comparing the experiences of visitors who explore Sulaimani Museum with or without the EMOTIVE experience. In doing so, she aims to evaluate the impact of the EMOTIVE approach in users' experience, perception, and long-term interest and connection to the museum and it collections. She will use her findings from this research project to inform other museums and heritage sites in Iraq in developing their education and interpretation strategies and means for attracting visitors and generating revenue.

She hopes that her model will encourage more women into her field and promote gender equality. She has adopted an affirmative action policy to increasing the number of female recruits to her university's research centre, arguing that women can better inspire and encourage other women.

In summer 2018 the Network awarded Mohammed-Amin and colleagues a grant to establish a local cultural heritage network based at Sulaimani Polytechnic University, bringing together stakeholders and experts from academia, the NGO sector, and policy-making, as well as the local communities. Focus groups and workshops will identify and analyse cultural heritage challenges and opportunities. A series of seminars and lectures by local and international experts will explore best cultural heritage practices, while increasing connection and interaction among the network members. The 12-month project, in collaboration with Reading and Leicester Universities, begins in December 2018.