



CIE—CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL HERITAGE ACTIVITIES

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

1. Message from the Board and the Director

In the last few years, CIE has developed a new organizational structure, in which platforms of research, teaching and interpretation are based on equality of the participants, aiming for our all over goal of heritage justice. We are dedicated to facilitating multidisciplinary cultural heritage projects, empowering communities to develop skills for narrating and curating their own heritage, challenging the Eurocentric and/or nationalistic origins of the heritage industry.

This focus accelerated during the limitations of the COVID 19 period, when we were forced to pause and reflect on our approaches to community-based heritage collaboration. With rapidly changing geopolitics, both tangible and intangible heritage are increasingly targets in this shifting world order, destabilizing communities physically and culturally. What happens to the heritage and memory of communities that face erasure due to conflict, environmental changes, and/or when they encounter the rest of the world as potential UNESCO World Heritage Sites or tourist destinations? What are the alternative narratives that engage the community, rather than tourists or national agenda setters, and why does this matter? We look toward the dismantlement of the many dichotomies imposed on heritage from the divisions between natural and cultural, authentic and inauthentic, or tangible and intangible. Looking toward the future of the past, we are exploring how heritage can be objectively or equitably managed, as it increasingly comes into conflict with issues around nation-building, climate change, social class, ethnicity, religion, and gender. We are doing this through educations, publications and conference but also by engaging at with communities to give them the digital tools to visualize and share their own narratives.

Historically, heritage has been monopolized by those in power, leading to exclusionary narratives and the marginalization of diverse voices. CIE continues to challenge this paradigm by giving voice to the multifaceted nature of heritage that exists beyond the confines of official designations, traditional boundaries, and geographical frontiers. Since its inception in 2006, CIE has setup networks of collaboration to counter these exclusionary narratives. CIE's Mutual Cultural Heritage Network and Database is the most tangible outcome of a European/Dutch funded vision on a cultural relationship between a former colonizer with its

former colonies. This program brought us a clear vision on the role of colonialism and the need for an equal power balance the international heritage development.

Community based programs- often spin offs from Maritime and Underwater Cultural Heritage (MUCH) projects and our culture and development programs in Afghanistan and around the Indian Ocean over the past 20 years- have allowed us to develop more grassroots approaches and structural networks for collaboration. The aim of these collaborative partnerships is a better understanding of heritage creation processes and to find common ground for a platform where different stakeholders and different visions on heritage can be put together for purposes of safeguarding, recording and interpretation.

We stand on the shoulders of the many groups and individuals who, over the years, have shared their insights and knowledge, supported us, and offered constructive criticism— helping us stay relevant and up to date.

Ten years ago, CIE published *A Changing World: Perspectives on Heritage* as a reflection on our program in Afghanistan. In it, we outlined a vision for the future, grounded in more equitable and sustainable platforms for collaboration. That vision has since developed into three main programs:

The **CIE–Institute**, a hub for research and education that fosters mutual exchange rather than one-directional knowledge sharing. The **CIE–Universe and HeritageLab**, shaped through our work with multiple communities, serving as an experimental and creative space for collaboration. And the **CIE–Futures Program**, where we have heavily invested in collaboration around digital heritage and technical innovation.

Through the publications of two books, convening seminars, workshops, and conferences, developing new platforms of collaboration, and participation in other projects and programmes, we have been able to develop a vision on how CIE can continue play a constructive and productive role in the rapidly changing world of international cultural relationships.

2. About CIE

Mission & Vision

In recent years, CIE has moved its focus to heritage justice. Heritage justice is not about courts, but rather communities. We envision a world where heritage and memory are reclaimed as tools for collective empowerment and transformation. We aim to contribute to a more inclusive cultural landscape by challenging dominant narratives and amplifying silenced voices. Through critical engagement with the past—rooted in solidarity, care, and imagination—we strive to build equitable and sustainable futures in which communities assert ownership over their stories, spaces, and cultural resources.

Our focus will continue to be both academic and practical, working at the grassroots level and at the policy level.

We recognize heritage as a powerful agent in our understanding of our past and our path towards the future, whether in geopolitical, environmental, or social contexts. We seek to unearth, document, and celebrate forgotten or erased heritage narratives around objects, places, and collective memory in what we could call emerging or re-emerging pasts.

Approaches and methodology

CIE is a dynamic organisation based on collaborative partnership and driven by heritage communities' initiatives and needs. Our multi-disciplinary approach--bringing together researchers, practitioners, and artists--developed over the years in specific focus areas and methodology. Central to our approach and work are three closely linked programs.

- CIE--Institute for Heritage Justice (bringing critical research and education together),
- CIE--Universe and HeritageLab (our collaborative and creative workspace),
- CIE--Futures (innovation, digital heritage and heritage interpretation).

3. Activities in 2024

CIE--Institute.

Positioned at the intersection of education, research, and practice, the Institute offers tailored training programmes, public dialogue, and accessible resources that connect heritage practitioners, educators, and communities across borders. With a focus on justice, inclusivity, and sustainability, it fosters lifelong learning and cross-sector partnerships that equip individuals and organisations to confront historical injustices, reclaim narratives, and develop creative, community-driven approaches to cultural memory. Programme highlights in 2024 that include this theme are:

(Re)Emerging Past(s). Starting in 2020, a group of young researchers, coordinated by Alia Yunis, Robert Parthesius and Niccolò Acram Capalletto, looked at the various conflicting perspectives in the process of nominating a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. The team consisted of recent graduates and emerging scholars in the field of heritage studies, with all having personal connection to their world heritage site of focus. As insider/outside they brought to attention the hypocrisies and hopes in the heritage creation processes. The outcome of this research was published in the book: *Future Stories in the Global Heritage Industry* Edited by Alia Yunis, Robert Parthesius, and Niccolò Cappelletto (Routledge, 2024).

Palgrave Encyclopedia of Cultural Heritage and Conflict. In the context of this publication project, as editors of the Maritime Heritage section, Robert Parthesius and Georgia Andreou (University of Southampton) and assisted by Niccolò Acram Capalletto (University of Bologna) approached various authors in our network to write an essay/entry. Our recently published section explores the concept of ocean heritage in the context of conflict and contested maritime heritage. Given humanity's reliance on waterways and oceans for transport, livelihood, and survival, this "liquid" space is a transnational and multi-layered arena, often a shared but troubled space. We integrated contested heritage perspectives and present-day case studies focusing on maritime underwater cultural heritage (MUCH), encompassing conflicts over displacement, ownership, treasure hunting, and looting, unsustainable tourism, and environmental issues. The scope extends to issues related to expansion and migration, (de)colonization, contested narratives and memories along coastal communities in World

Heritage Port Cities, and traditions and identities intertwined with intangible heritage and memories of migration along ocean networks. This is an ongoing publication project, with online essays and the publication of a book in 2026.

The Launch of CIE's Edu-Hub. CIE associate Alia Soliman launched Edu Hub, an online research resource for heritage educators and leaders looking for alternative approaches to heritage studies. Edu-Hub includes several papers written by CIE associates that highlight alternative ways of thinking about heritage. The writing is accessible to both academics and non-academics and will be continually expanded and updated. Edu Hub strives for innovative pedagogies and supports the co-creation of practical solutions for a more equitable and reflective heritage field.

ICOM International Symposium, Dubai (November 2024). Alia Yunis was invited to present on both Future Stories in the Global Heritage Industry and HeritageLab as one of the keynote speakers at the opening session of the event.

30th European Association of Archaeologist (EAA) Annual Meeting, Rome (August 2024)

Nurcan Yalman and Niccolò Acram Cappelletto presented the paper *Embracing Multivocal Heritage: Introducing the Memory Lab as the core concept of the HeritageLab Initiative*. On behalf of the CIE –team, the two gave an overview of Heritage Universe and HeritageLab and discussed with an international audience its goals and methodology. A paper from the conference is forthcoming in 2025.

One Ocean–One Heritage Expert Meeting, Abu Dhabi (April 29 – May 1, 2024)

This two-day meeting, hosted by CIE, UNESCO, NYUAD Institute, and the Asia Research Institute (National University of Singapore) brought together ocean heritage policymakers, scientists, heritage professionals and artists to develop interdisciplinary projects focused on community engagement, heritage sustainability, and climate adaptation. It began with reflecting on outcomes of COP 28, the Ocean Decade Conference (Barcelona), and the High Seas Treaty (2023). It also expanded the conversation around CIE's **Shipping Database on European Expansion in the Indian Ocean**, designed by Robert Parthesius and Menno Leenstra. Among the outputs of the gathering is a collaboration between two attendees on a book on plants and heritage being published by Monash Museum in Australia and a new HeritageLab Co-Lab on a living archaeological site in Gaza.

Reviving Deleted Cities: Jaffa & Gaza, Pakhuis de Zwijger, Amsterdam (April 17, 2024).

This CIE co-hosted event looked at how to build the future of the urban, cosmopolitan, and intellectual Palestinian cities with deleted (hi)stories. We presented and had a lively discussion of our Heritage Co-Lab *Jaffa Resurfacing*. This Co-Lab was begun in 2020 by the project coordinator Umayya Abu Hanna and included multiple perspectives on the history of this rich port city. Alia Yunis and Robert Parthesius presented CIE–Universe and HeritageLab and its wider context and theme of heritage and conflict. The event recording is available [here](#).

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COP 28 UNESCO/CIE Roundtable & Press Conference (December 2023)

Looking at the intersection between the themes of climate change and ocean heritage, CIE initiated the discussion between various stakeholders. The panel, hosted in collaboration with UNESCO Paris and Cairo, Scripps Institute, and the Ocean Decade Heritage Network (ODHN), explored how insights from underwater cultural heritage can inform climate resilience.

CIE–Universe & HeritageLab Platform

In 2024, CIE launched its signature project, the HeritageLab, anchored by the Heritage Universe and its community-based Co-Labs and Special Projects. HeritageLab is multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary in its approach and reflects how communities increasingly desire to play a pivotal role in re-imagining authorized heritage narratives. HeritageLab is an interactive online space for grassroots organizations dedicated to preserving collective memory and community narratives while at the same time connecting these communities across oceans and trade routes through shared tangible and intangible heritage.

The independently run Co-Labs come together digitally under the Heritage Universe, which links heritage across oceans through timelines and key words, such sustainability, arts and crafts, and professions such as boatbuilding or textile manufacturing.

HeritageLab has worked with numerous communities in what we now call the Global South, empowering them to independently become custodians of their heritage sites and cultural memory by providing frameworks and tools that then allow them to engage with their communities directly, without interference from a third party. But communities are not just spaces. They can also be built around intangible heritage and environmental heritage spanning oceans, such as HeritageLab's Tree Routed, which explores through personal stories how we are connected through our tree heritage.

As we shared at the Digital Common Ground: Community, Inclusivity and New Paradigms co-organised by CIE at the 11th International Conference on Culture and Computing July 2023 in Copenhagen, Denmark, HeritageLab offers an independent internet platform, not driven by 'big tech-companies' or hierarchical institution, to safeguard communities' input and independent experimental research.

This digital collaborative platform is based on the pioneering work by many colleagues, heritage communities over the years since its first concept at the CIE field schools on Zanzibar,

Moçambique Island and Robben Island. FH Münster University of Applied Sciences in Germany and the young computer scientists in our network helped us envision this as an online project we introduced in 2024. It is still a work-in-progress, but we invited you to visit HeritageLab (www.heritagelab.center).

CIE—Futures

Coordinated by Felix Beck and Zlatan Pilipovic—a team of filmmakers, new media, and computer specialists—CIE actively explores how emerging technologies influence and shape heritage narratives. From virtual reality to interactive media, these tools offer innovative ways to create and experience storytelling.

Our work is driven by a desire to understand the evolving relationship between technology and narrative, and its potential to impact creativity, communication, and engagement. We focus on developing site-specific installations—whether on-line, in museums, exhibitions, or public art—that are carefully designed to respond to the unique characteristics of a particular location, be it an urban space, gallery, or natural setting.

These installations often challenge conventional artistic boundaries, inviting viewers to engage with the work in ways that blur the line between art and its environment. They offer powerful opportunities to explore the dynamic relationship between art, space, and viewer, creating immersive and thought-provoking experiences that reflect diverse perspectives on heritage.

Whether online or on-site, the narrative potential of new technologies shares a common thread: the capacity to connect people, culture, and technology with broader societal values and aspirations. Exploring these narrational qualities enriches our storytelling, enabling more inclusive, innovative narratives that can inspire new ways of thinking and drive meaningful societal change.

Global Heritage Symposium Networked Heritage – Collaborative Strategies for Global Research, FH Münster University of Applied Sciences, November, 2024. At this symposium, co-organised by CIE, at the FH Münster University of Applied Sciences in international group of digital heritage scholars and practitioners discussed research strategies for platforms of exchange. The focus was on promoting global collaborations that advance research in the areas of cultural heritage, digital networking and collaborative strategies. In particular, the use of the collaboration platform “Heritage Universe and Laboratories” was discussed. Based on the outcome of this last event in the pilot evaluation a strategy was plotted for the further development on our digital platform with CIE as the organisational framework. Presentations by Felix Beck (organiser), Zlatan Filipovic, Alia Soliman, Dev Kalavadiya and Hassan Hamadi, and Ava Abtahi (intern at the CIE from Leiden University)

Exhibition

“Gaza is Alive” A cultural event celebrating the power of heritage and the recognition of humanity in the Palestinian story. 21 September-3 November 2024. Tolhuistuin Exposition Space, Amsterdam

This exhibition in partnership with Tolhuistuin and supported by, Pax Christi, Leonhard Woltjer Foundation and the Foundation Groot Midden Oosten Platform, celebrated the resilience and creativity of the people of Gaza and how this connects its people to their past and future—and to the rest of the world. Spanning two months, this dedicated space centred around an exhibition featuring works by Gaza-based artists, portraits of notable contemporary Gazans, and audio-visual installations that highlight the rich and vibrant heritage and arts of Palestine. Alongside the exhibition, workshops, discussion seminars, and performance art will deepen the audience’s engagement with the material. This is a story of archaeology, land, built environments and objects—and most importantly people. We invited our audience to reflect on the humanity often overshadowed by distressing news and rhetoric. By presenting the art, traditions, and culture of Gaza and Palestine. This event encourages visitors and participants to see beyond propaganda and politics, fostering a deeper understanding of the human stories and cultural richness that persist despite adversity. Join us in building a bridge of awareness and in recognizing the enduring strength of heritage and art in the face of challenges.

Publications

***Future Stories in the Global Heritage Industry* Edited by Alia Yunis, Robert Parthesius, and Niccolò Cappalietto (Routledge, 2024).** *Future Stories in the Global Heritage Industry* explores what happens to the heritage and memory of communities that find themselves in contact with the rest of the world when they become UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Written by an interdisciplinary group of emerging scholars and heritage professionals connected to these sites through their own heritage, this volume considers how a community can engage with a site’s globalized importance while retaining its own sense of history. Drawing on oral histories, ethnographic methods, film, interviews, and archival research, the book adds to the discourse around Critical Heritage Studies. It does so by putting theories into practice in selected heritage sites in Romania, the UAE/India, Eritrea, China, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Malaysia. The book also contributes toward the dismantlement of the many dichotomies imposed on heritage from the divisions between natural and cultural, or tangible and intangible in the UNESCO Conventions and Eurocentric heritage practices. Looking toward the future of the past, the volume asks whether heritage can be objectively or equitably managed, as it increasingly comes into conflict with issues around nation-building, climate change, social class, ethnicity, religion, and gender.

Shipping Database on European Expansion in the Indian Ocean. As part of HeritageLab’s ocean programs, CIE has expanded its database of maritime trade records (1595-1660), including Over **56,000** searchable records of Dutch voyages, dates, ship types, ports of departure and origin, the movements of 1767 ships between 1595 and 1687, as well as data about cargos and other maritime trade activities between 1595 and 1660. The database was initially created by Robert Parthesius’ for his study of *Dutch Ships in Tropical Waters* (2010), but now meticulously maintained and extended by Menno Leenstra. The data are now used by

many research groups on various topics worldwide. In the Netherlands the database integrated Indian Ocean and Maritime Asia Slave Trade research databases by the International Institute for Social History in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Access the database here: [HeritageLab Shipping Database](#)

Advisory Activities

CIE and its members are part of various advisory bodies and international committees: Robert Parthesius severs on and in 2024 he conducted a desktop review for a UNESCO world heritage site nomination file.

Honors and Awards

CIE was very honoured that even while we are still in the pilot evaluation stage of our platform, we were one of 10 recipients of the **2024 Award for World Heritage Education Innovative Cases given by the World Heritage Institute of Training and Research for Asia and the Pacific Region under the auspices of UNESCO** (WHITRAP under the auspices of UNESCO). The award was announced on July 23 at the 46th Session of UNESCO World Heritage Committee, held in New Delhi year. Alia Yunis and Salama Al Faheem accepted the award on behalf of HeritageLab. <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/2oFSCVT3bjYhmu83mZC0ww>

Other highlights

Afikra Series [Hidden Stories of Gulf Cinema](#) (Summer 2024). Alia Yunis was invited to record three episodes with the popular podcast Afikra about the history and heritage of cinema in the Gulf and how it connects to the region to South Asia and the rest of the Arab-speaking world

Naomi Shihab Nye Prize for Fiction, USA (December 2024). Alia Yunis won this award for her novel, (publication forthcoming)

On Friday 6 December, **Biljana Volchevska defended her PhD thesis**, *The Symbolic Potential of the Past: Political Crimes, Memory Politics, and Europeanization in Southeastern Europe – The Case of North Macedonia*. Against the backdrop of emerging hybrid authoritarian regimes in the former Yugoslavia, she examines how collective memory and heritage production are wielded as tools of power and identity formation.

<https://www.uu.nl/en/events/phd-defence-biljana-volchevska-verbrugge-heritage-as-a-tool-of-power-in-north-macedonia>

Alia Yunis and Dale Hudson's edited volume, *Reimagining the Middle East*, was released by Indiana University Press in January 2024.

Conclusion

CIE remains committed to advancing community-driven cultural heritage initiatives, promoting underwater cultural heritage protection, and supporting the ratification and

implementation of the 2001 UNESCO Convention. Our efforts in research, training, capacity building, and international collaboration continue to shape sustainable heritage management across regions.

Team

Members of the Board

Robert Parthesius (director / chair, 'directeur-bestuurder')

Charles van Schelle

Miranda Vos

Albert van Nunen Karioen

Management Team

Director/Chair: Prof. dr. Robert Parthesius (The Netherlands)

Deputy Director: Dr. Biljana Volchevska (North Macedonia, The Netherlands)

Director of Programs: Dr. Alia Yunis (Palestine, USA)

Advisors to the Board: Prof. Felix Beck (Germany) , Dr. Sibongile Masuku (South Africa)

Project teams and Consultants:

Dr. Alia Soliman, (Egypte, UAE)

Ava Abtahi (The Netherlands)

Claire Louise Okatch (Kenia, Canada)

Dr. Chen Wu Wei (China)

Devaki (Andy) Vadakepat (India)

Batuhan Keskin (Turkey)

Begüm Yigit (Turkey)

Dev Kalavadiya (Fiji Islands, UAE)

Hassan Hamdani (Pakistan, UAE)

Matthew Tan (Malaysia)

Nazli M. Yilmaz (Turkey)

NiccolòAcram Cappeletto, (Italy)

Dr. Nurcan Yalman, (Turkey)

Sarah Al-Yahya (Palestine)

Umayya Abu Hanna, (Palestine, The Netherlands)

Victoria Marcano (Venezuela)

Prof. Zlatan Filipovic (Bosnia and Herzegovina, UAE)

CIE Financial Report 2024

Balance	31/12/2024	31/12/2023
Fixed assets		
Tangible fixed assets		
assets		
Total fixed assets		
Current assets		
receivables		
Liquid assets	2437	1928
Total current assets	2437	1928
Total Assets	2437	1928
Liabilities		
General reserve	2437	1928
Reserve for special purposes		
Reserves for following year		
Total equity	2437	1928
Short term debts		
Total debts		
Total liabilities	2437	1928
Statement of income& expenditure		
income		
Project income	2000	
Other income (general donation)	3127	
Received interest	18	-2
Total income	5145	-2
Expenditures		
Expenditures personeel		
Other management expenses	461	340
communication	292	252
Research and documentation		
Program development		
Direct expenditure programs	3698	
Banking costs	184	162
Total expenditure	4635	753