

Heritage as a Common Property: The Participation of Local Communities in Preserving Documentary Heritage in the Arab Context

التراث كمشاع مشترك: مشاركة المجتمعات المحلية في حفظ التراث الوثائقي في السياق العربي

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Abstract

This article explores the nature of community engagement in documentary heritage conservation in four Arab countries: Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt. It focuses on three key dimensions: socio-cultural and religious motivations; local epistemologies and knowledge transmission and tensions between institutional and community-led models.

Through comparative analysis, the study highlights how local values and knowledge systems influence both opportunities and challenges in participatory conservation. Findings indicate that while community involvement is often driven by deep cultural and religious imperatives, it remains constrained by institutional dominance and structural inequalities. The study argues for inclusive governance, capacity building, and flexible policies to foster fair and sustainable preservation of documentary heritage in the region.

Keywords: Documentary Heritage, Community Participation, Arab Region, Heritage Conservation, Local Knowledge.

ملخص:

يبحث هذا المقال في طبيعة الانخراط المجتمعي في صون التراث الوثائقي في أربعة بلدان عربية هي: الجزائر، والمملكة العربية السعودية، والأردن، ومصر. وينصب التركيز التحليلي على ثلاثة أبعاد رئيسية: الدوافع الاجتماعية-الثقافية والدينية؛ والأطر المعرفية المحلية وآليات نقل المعرفة؛ والتوترات القائمة بين النماذج المؤسسية وتلك التي يقودها المجتمع المحلي. ومن خلال التحليل المقارن، تسلط الدراسة الضوء على الدور الذي تلعبه القيم المحلية ونظم المعرفة في تشكيل كل من الفرص والتحديات المرتبطة بممارسات الصون التشاركي. وتخلص النتائج إلى أنه على الرغم من أن المشاركة المجتمعية غالباً ما تكون مدفوعة بحتميات ثقافية ودينية عميقة، إلا أنها تظل مقيدة بفعل الهيمنة المؤسسية والتفاوتات الهيكلية. وفي الختام، تدعو الدراسة إلى تبني حوكمة تشاركية شاملة، وتعزيز بناء القدرات، وصياغة سياسات مرنة، وذلك لترسيخ ممارسات صون أكثر صموداً وملاءمة للسياق الثقافي.

كلمات مفتاحية: تراث وثائقي؛ مشاركة مجتمعية؛ صون التراث؛ معرفة محلية؛ المنطقة العربية

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Introduction

The Arab region holds an exceptionally rich and diverse documentary heritage, a testament to centuries of intellectual, cultural, religious, and political activity. From ancient papyri and early Islamic manuscripts detailing foundational theological and scientific thought, to Ottoman administrative archives (Defters), colonial records, photographic collections capturing societal transformations, recordings of oral traditions, and contemporary digital outputs, this heritage constitutes a vital repository of collective memory and cultural identity. It is not merely a collection of artifacts but a living resource actively shaping historical consciousness, social cohesion, and individual and group identities across diverse communities spanning North Africa, the Levant, the Arabian Peninsula, and Mesopotamia. As historian Jack Goody argued, the transition to literacy and the subsequent accumulation of written records fundamentally alter social structures and epistemological processes, making the preservation of such documents crucial for understanding societal trajectories (Goody, 1986, p. 175). Despite its profound significance, this documentary heritage faces unprecedented threats. Political instability, armed conflicts (as devastatingly witnessed in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and Libya), and deliberate cultural destruction have led to irreparable losses (Al-Tikriti, 2007, p. 732).

Furthermore, chronic underfunding of national archives and libraries, infrastructural decay, lack of trained personnel, inadequate environmental controls, and the sheer scale of materials requiring preservation pose persistent challenges. The rise of digital technologies presents both opportunities for wider access and new preservation challenges, including the digital divide, technological obsolescence, and questions surrounding the authenticity and materiality of digitized heritage. Within this complex landscape, heritage conservation has predominantly been framed as the domain of state institutions (e.g., national libraries, archives, museums) and international organisations (e.g., UNESCO and ICCROM), often operating within paradigms derived from Western conservation science and archival theory (Clavir, 2002, p. 121).

These approaches typically prioritize the material integrity of the object, standardised cataloguing, and centralised control. However, this institutional focus often overlooks or marginalises the long-standing, diverse, and deeply embedded roles that communities play in safeguarding their own documentary heritage. Across the Arab region, families, religious endowments (Awqaf), Sufi orders (Tariqat), tribal groups, local scholars ('Ulama), and informal networks have historically acted as crucial custodians, interpreters, and transmitters of knowledge contained within manuscripts, oral accounts, and other documentary forms. These community-based practices are often guided by distinct cultural logics, local epistemologies, and social obligations that may differ significantly from, and sometimes conflict with, institutionalised norms.

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This research addresses a gap in heritage studies concerning the Arab region: The need to understand community engagement as a complex social field, shaped by historically constituted practices, cultural values, power relations, and evolving technological engagements. The central problematic this study explores is how diverse communities within three Arab countries: Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt, conceptualise, value, safeguard, and transmit their documentary heritage, and how these vernacular practices intersect, negotiate, or conflict with formal conservation frameworks in a context of rapid social, political, and technological change.

This research examines how socio-cultural and religious factors in positive and negative ways influence participation by communities in the preservation of documentary heritage in specific contexts, including how local knowledge systems, including memorisation methods and oral traditions, inform community beliefs and practices in relation to the preservation of and access to heritage. This research discusses how community-driven or community-embedded approaches and institutionalised models of conservation intersect, clash, and contradict each other and how overlapping power dynamics, economic struggles, and social hierarchies affect who participates in conservation, what heritage is prioritized, and how heritage narratives are constructed, negotiated, or contested, because this research examines how socio-cultural and religious factors in positive and negative ways influence participation by communities in the preservation of documentary heritage in specific contexts, including how local knowledge systems, including memorization methods and oral traditions, inform community beliefs and practices in relation to the preservation of and access to heritage.

This research emphasises that community participation is not an isolated phenomenon but is, instead, systemically embedded within and shaped by broader social structures, political economies, historical legacies, and global exchanges of ideas and technologies.

1. Algeria

1.1. Socio-Cultural and Religious Factors Motivating Community Participation

In Algeria, community participation in documentary heritage conservation is deeply influenced by a complex history of colonialism, a post-independence emphasis on national identity, and strong religious and regional affiliations. The country's diverse heritage, encompassing Phoenician, Roman, Ottoman, and French colonial records alongside indigenous Amazigh traditions, creates a multifaceted landscape for heritage preservation. The National Centre for Research in Prehistory, Anthropology, and History

(CNRPAH) plays a central role in documenting this heritage, but its work is often complemented by community-based initiatives. The preservation of Sufi zawiyas and their associated manuscript libraries, for example, is a powerful example of community-driven conservation motivated by religious and spiritual values. Local families and Sufi orders (Tariqat) often serve as custodians of these sacred documents, viewing their preservation as a religious and ancestral duty. This sense of stewardship is a core part of the communities' identity and is often passed down through generations. Post-colonial efforts to reclaim and re-narrate Algerian history have also spurred community engagement, particularly in documenting the country's war of independence through oral histories, personal archives, and photographic collections. This grassroots movement is often driven by a desire to challenge official state narratives and to ensure that local and familial sacrifices are not forgotten (El Azzaoui, 2025, p. 18)

1.2. Local Epistemologies and Knowledge Transmission Systems

Algerian local knowledge systems are a rich blend of written and oral traditions. The written traditions are often found in manuscript libraries of zawiyas and private family collections, while oral traditions are preserved through storytelling, poetry, and musical performances, particularly among the Amazigh communities. The preservation of these oral traditions is viewed as equally important as the safeguarding of physical documents. Initiatives supported by the High Commission for Amazighity (HCA) have focused on documenting and digitizing these oral accounts, ensuring that they become part of the official national heritage. The use of new technologies, such as digital archives and community-driven mobile applications, is becoming more prevalent. For example, local associations in cities like Algiers and Tlemcen are using digital platforms to create interactive maps and databases of historic sites and family histories, incorporating both written records and oral testimonies. These projects not only preserve knowledge but also create new avenues for intergenerational learning, allowing younger Algerians to engage with their heritage in a dynamic and interactive manner.

1.3. Tensions Between Institutionalized Conservation Models and Community-led Approaches

Tensions between institutionalized conservation models and community-led approaches in Algeria are often rooted in a legacy of centralized state control over cultural heritage. Government bodies, such as the Ministry of Culture and the National Archives, typically adhere to a top-down approach, emphasizing standardized preservation techniques and national-level narratives. This can sometimes conflict with community-led initiatives that prioritize local histories, regional dialects, or a more flexible approach to access and use of heritage materials. For instance, state-led digitization projects may be met with resistance from local manuscript custodians who are

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reluctant to hand over sacred or sensitive family documents to government institutions. In such cases, the community's concern for the spiritual integrity and local ownership of the documents may clash with the institutional goal of centralized preservation and public access. To bridge this divide, a more collaborative approach is needed. This includes establishing co-management agreements that recognize community ownership and control, providing training and resources for local custodians to preserve their own collections, and integrating community-led narratives into official heritage projects. By fostering trust and respect, both institutional and community efforts can be combined to create a more inclusive and sustainable framework for documentary heritage conservation in Algeria. (Timhadjelt S., 2023, p. 16)

2.Saudi Arabia

2.1. Socio-Cultural and Religious Factors Motivating Community Participation

In Saudi Arabia, documentary heritage is deeply intertwined with Islamic traditions and the Kingdom's unique status as the birthplace of Islam. The Royal Commission for AlUla (RCU), established in 2017, has played a pivotal role in integrating local communities into conservation projects at archaeological sites such as the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Hegra, emphasising both cultural authenticity and economic development. Religious values are central to the stewardship of records related to Islamic scholarship and historic mosques, fostering a moral imperative among communities to safeguard manuscripts and waqf (endowment) documents. The establishment of the Memory of the World Committee for the Arab Region (MOWCAR) in 2025 further mobilises public advocacy and volunteer networks across Saudi Arabia, highlighting shared regional responsibilities for documentary preservation (UNESCO 2025).

The intersection of religion and heritage in Saudi Arabia is particularly evident in the community's approach to the preservation of Islamic manuscripts and waqf documents. These materials are not only valued for their historical significance but are also regarded as sacred objects that embody the spiritual and intellectual legacy of the Muslim community. As a result, community members often perceive their involvement in heritage conservation as a religious duty, motivated by a desire to honour their ancestors and fulfil their obligations to future generations (Alshehaby, 2024, p. 13) This sense of stewardship is reinforced by the Kingdom's broader efforts to position itself as a global centre for Islamic culture and learning, further incentivising community participation in heritage initiatives.

2.2. Local Epistemologies and Knowledge Transmission Systems

Saudi local knowledge systems are characterised by a rich tapestry of tribal oral traditions, Quranic scholarship, and the custodianship of waqf

libraries. The RCU's participatory workshops, for example, engage elders and religious scholars to map genealogical records and tribal histories, ensuring that conservation strategies are informed by and respectful of intangible epistemologies (Alshehaby, 2024, p. 5). These workshops serve as platforms for intergenerational knowledge transfer, allowing younger community members to learn from the experiences and insights of their elders.

Contemporary initiatives, such as the Dive into Heritage (DIH) digital platform, exemplify the integration of traditional and modern approaches to heritage documentation. By combining community-sourced oral testimonies with advanced technologies like GIS and photogrammetry, these projects enable the documentation of remote desert sites and the preservation of intangible cultural heritage in digital form. This approach not only enhances the accessibility and durability of heritage records but also empowers communities to actively participate in the creation and management of their own historical narratives.

The role of local epistemologies in heritage conservation is further underscored by the emphasis on oral transmission and communal memory. In many Saudi communities, knowledge about historical events, genealogies, and religious practices is passed down through storytelling, poetry, and ritual recitation. These forms of knowledge are often regarded as equally, if not more, authoritative than written records, and their preservation is seen as essential to the maintenance of cultural identity (Alshehaby, 2024, p. 1). By recognising and incorporating these local epistemologies into conservation strategies, heritage institutions can foster greater community engagement and ensure that preservation efforts are culturally relevant and sustainable.

2.3. Tensions Between Institutionalised Conservation Models and Community-Led Approaches

The relationship between institutionalised conservation models and community-led approaches in Saudi Arabia is often characterised by tension and negotiation. National and international institutions, including the Ministry of Culture, UNESCO, and the RCU, typically deploy standardised conservation protocols that prioritise material stability and the potential for tourism development. These protocols are informed by global best practices and are designed to ensure the long-term preservation of heritage materials.

However, local communities may have different priorities and values when it comes to heritage conservation. For example, access to sacred waqf documents and the continuity of oral recitations may be seen as more important than strict adherence to preservation conditions. This tension was evident at AlDir'iyah, where institutional plans for museum displays conflicted with tribal demands for the continued ritual use of historical texts. In such cases, efforts to mediate these conflicts have included the development of co-

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management agreements that grant community bodies advisory roles in curatorial decisions.

The challenge of reconciling institutional and community perspectives is further complicated by differences in knowledge, resources, and authority. While institutions may possess technical expertise and financial resources, communities often have a deeper understanding of the cultural and spiritual significance of heritage materials. Successful conservation efforts, therefore, require the establishment of collaborative frameworks that respect and integrate both institutional and community knowledge systems (Alshehaby, 2024, p. 12).

3. Jordan

3.1. Socio-Cultural and Religious Factors Motivating Community Participation

In Jordan, the interplay of socio-cultural and religious factors is a powerful motivator for community participation in documentary heritage conservation. The country's rich archaeological and religious landscape, exemplified by sites such as the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Petra, has fostered a strong sense of local stewardship. The Petra Integrated Management Plan (IMP) demonstrates how heritage tourism and religious narratives can intersect to galvanise community engagement (UNESCO World Heritage Centre 2018). The IMP not only addresses the technical aspects of site management but also incorporates local values and traditions, recognising the importance of community involvement in sustaining the site's integrity.

In urban centres such as Salt and Irbid, community pride in Islamic architectural heritage has spurred grassroots efforts in cleaning, maintenance, and oral-history documentation, often organised by civil society groups (Fakhoury, 2022, p. 162). These initiatives reflect a broader trend in Jordanian society, where religious and cultural values are closely linked to the preservation of tangible and intangible heritage. Community members are motivated not only by a desire to protect their historical legacy but also by the potential for heritage conservation to contribute to social cohesion and economic development.

3.2. Local Epistemologies and Knowledge Transmission Systems

Jordanian communities possess diverse and dynamic systems of knowledge transmission, rooted in Bedouin poetry, tribal genealogies, and regional craft guilds. These local epistemologies play a crucial role in shaping community engagement with documentary heritage. The national archives' 2014 mapping of film and photography collections, for instance, integrated community-held family albums, thereby recognising the validity of private memory as part of the public record (UNESCO, 2014). This approach

underscores the importance of including personal and familial narratives in the broader tapestry of national history.

Recent technological advancements have further enriched the landscape of knowledge transmission in Jordan. At sites such as Gadara and Umm Qais, laser scanning and photogrammetry have been complemented by locally led storytelling sessions, in which elders contextualize digital models with oral narratives (Trillo, 2020). These sessions serve as vital forums for intergenerational learning, allowing younger community members to engage with their heritage in both traditional and innovative ways.

3.3. Tensions Between Institutionalised Conservation Models and Community-led Approaches

Despite the successes of community-driven initiatives, tensions persist between institutionalised conservation models and community-led approaches in Jordan. Government agencies and UNESCO partners often emphasise the technical conservation of stone monuments and the digitisation of archival materials. While these efforts are essential for the long-term preservation of heritage, they may not always align with the capacities or priorities of local stakeholders.

A case in point is the city of Salt, where proposed drainage improvements to protect mud-brick structures were met with resistance from residents concerned about disruptions to traditional water-sharing systems (Ababneh, 2016). This example highlights the potential for conflict when institutional plans fail to account for local practices and values. The gap between institutional standards and community capacities can hinder the effectiveness of conservation efforts and undermine community trust.

Addressing these frictions requires flexible institutional frameworks that incorporate community-defined priorities and incremental capacity building. Collaborative approaches, such as participatory planning and co-management agreements, can help bridge the divide between institutional and community perspectives. By empowering local stakeholders and respecting their knowledge and traditions, heritage institutions can enhance the legitimacy and sustainability of conservation initiatives (Fakhoury, 2022, p. 179).

4. Egypt

4.1. Socio-Cultural and Religious Factors Motivating Community Participation

In Egypt, the motivation for community participation in documentary heritage conservation is deeply rooted in a sense of pride in the country's Pharaonic, Coptic, and Islamic heritage. This pride is not only a matter of national identity but also a source of local empowerment, as communities recognize their role as custodians of a diverse and ancient legacy. UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage inventories in regions such as Assiut, Aswan, and Siwa Oasis have empowered local custodians to document oral chant traditions

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and family archives, reinforcing the idea that heritage preservation is a shared responsibility (UNESCO, 2021).

The application of participatory models, such as the Ladder of Citizen Participation in Port Said, has demonstrated that moving from mere consultation to genuine empowerment significantly increases volunteer contributions to archival indexing and documentation (Fouad & Messallam, 2018, 32). This model highlights the importance of involving communities not just as informants or beneficiaries, but as active partners in the conservation process. The digital revival of colonial-era sites through participatory storytelling apps has further mobilised Egyptian youth, particularly around war-memorial archives, blending technological innovation with a renewed sense of historical stewardship.

4.2. Local Epistemologies and Knowledge Transmission Systems

Egyptian documentary epistemologies are characterised by a rich interplay between written, oral, and material forms of knowledge. Temple inscriptions, mosque waqf registers, and Coptic monastic chronicles represent longstanding traditions of record-keeping and historical narration. The integration of local epistemologies into heritage conservation is further supported by the recognition of oral traditions as vital sources of historical knowledge. In many Egyptian communities, oral histories, songs, and storytelling are central to the transmission of cultural values and collective memory. By incorporating these forms of knowledge into digital archives and participatory documentation projects, heritage institutions can foster more inclusive and resilient conservation practices (Sobaih, 2024, p. 5).

4.3. Tensions Between Institutionalised Conservation Models and Community-led Approaches

The relationship between institutionalised conservation models and community-led approaches in Egypt is often marked by tension and negotiation. The Supreme Council of Antiquities and major museums in Cairo enforce strict conservation protocols, which can sometimes conflict with community uses of heritage spaces. For example, the use of historic palaces for weddings or communal readings in mosque libraries may be at odds with preservation guidelines, leading to friction between authorities and local stakeholders (Afify, 2007, p. 5).

Efforts to bridge the gap between institutional and community perspectives have included participatory planning processes, co-management agreements, and the integration of community representatives into decision-making bodies. However, significant challenges remain, particularly in terms of overcoming bureaucratic inertia and ensuring that community voices are genuinely heard and respected (Fouad, 2018, p. 34).

5.Comparative Analysis

This section synthesises the findings from Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt, highlighting both shared patterns and unique national variations in how socio-cultural factors, local knowledge systems, institutional tensions, and power dynamics influence documentary heritage conservation across the Arab world.

5.1. Socio-cultural and Religious Factors Motivating Community Participation

Socio-cultural and religious factors motivate community participation in documentary heritage conservation and the socio-cultural and religious factors that motivate community participation in documentary heritage conservation in the Arab region are deeply rooted in the culture, religion, and society of the region. These factors influence the attitudes and behaviours of communities towards their heritage, therefore understanding these motivations is essential for developing effective and sustainable conservation strategies that reflect local values and priorities.

Cultural identity and national pride are major motivating factors for heritage conservation in countries such as Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia, so for Egyptians, the country's rich ancient history serves as a source of pride and a motivation to conserve the past. Religion also plays a significant role, particularly in Saudi Arabia, where mosques and religious texts are an integral part of the country's culture and religious beliefs, thus religion provides guidance for conservation efforts, emphasizing the importance of preserving the past for the future. Economic benefits are also a motivating factor for community participation in documentary heritage conservation, particularly in Jordan where heritage tourism provides economic opportunities and employment, and local development through heritage conservation can be a powerful incentive for community participation. Education projects are also prevalent, with all three countries training people and engaging youth in conservation, thereby ensuring its sustainability, because institutional and technical support from UNESCO and others provides skills, money, and policies that encourage local people to engage. Egypt and Jordan are oriented more towards archaeological and physical heritage, while Saudi Arabia is becoming more engaged with intangible heritage and modern culture, reflecting their different national circumstances, therefore these differences are significant for the development of conservation strategies.

5.2. Local Epistemologies and Knowledge Transmission Systems

Local knowledge and traditions, heritage has the right to be cared for and maintained, and local knowledge and traditions, old and new, are important to help people to care for and maintain heritage. Local knowledge and traditions include traditional (or indigenous) knowledge, culture, traditions, stories and knowledge from elders, and when heritage is carefully conserved using local

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knowledge, the conservation work will be more culturally suitable, and the heritage will be better protected in the long term.

In Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, this has become a major issue, as a balance has to be found between new and old knowledge and new and old methods, so that the conservation of heritage is culturally acceptable and uses new technology, and many concerned authorities now recognise this importance and make laws and projects that involve local people, which also help to conserve heritage, tradition and culture.

The use of cutting-edge technologies to document traditional knowledge is also becoming increasingly important, so that more people and young people can learn about it, and this is a new innovation, but adds to the ways that traditional knowledge is transferred, however, the transfer of knowledge to the younger generation continues to be difficult, due to the rapid urbanisation of populations and the shrinking of the world.

Education and cultural programs seek to overcome this by engaging students in the conservation of heritage, and religious objects and practices form a significant part of vernacular knowledge, and are also influential in determining the perception and conservation of heritage, therefore, the preservation of sacred sites, texts and rituals is a significant facet of heritage preservation.

While there are universal aspects which are shared by all nations, there are also variations, thus, Egypt and Jordan are more focused on prehistoric ruins and antiquities, whereas Saudi Arabia is more interested in Bedouin culture and Islamic heritage, because these differences reflect the unique cultural and historical contexts of each country. Whereas Saudi Arabia is more interested in Bedouin culture, Islamic heritage, and its rich pre-Islamic heritage, exemplified by sites like Al-Ula, because these differences reflect the unique cultural and historical contexts of each country.

5.3. Tensions Between Institutionalised Conservation Models and Community-Led Approaches

In the Arab region, conservation of documentary heritage reveals tensions between institutionalised models—driven by government agencies and international bodies—and community-led initiatives rooted in local and grassroots contexts. These tensions arise from divergent priorities, methodologies and conceptualisations of heritage value, which can impede or enrich conservation efforts depending on their management. Across Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, five thematic tensions are evident.

First, governance structures often struggle to reconcile institutional expertise with community knowledge and practices, reflecting stakeholders' varying objectives and operational norms. Second, capacity disparities exist between the technical resources and specialised skills of formal institutions and the limited infrastructure that local communities possess, resulting in the

marginalisation of grassroots voices in decision making. Third, conflicts emerge between the economic imperatives of institutional actors—such as tourism development and urban regeneration—and the cultural imperatives of local communities, which prioritise authenticity and social cohesion (Osman, 2018, p. 2909). Fourth, evolving legal and policy frameworks aim to formally recognise and support community participation, striving to bridge institutional–community divides and foster more inclusive conservation strategies (Meskell, 2018, p. 137). Fifth, tensions persist between adherence to international standards promoted by UNESCO and the preservation of indigenous practices and traditions.

Despite these shared patterns, national variations are notable. In Egypt and Jordan, a strong emphasis on archaeological heritage and historical sites engenders complex institutional arrangements and international collaborations. In Saudi Arabia, rapid development pressures necessitate innovative approaches for integrating community perspectives within a dynamic urban and economic transformation context. A truly nuanced understanding of these tensions is essential for designing effective, inclusive conservation policies.

Conclusion

This study examined documentary heritage conservation and community participation in Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt, focusing on socio-cultural factors, local epistemologies, institutional tensions. Three principal findings emerge:

First, active community participation is fundamental. When local stakeholders are meaningfully involved in the decision-making process, conservation initiatives become more culturally suitable, socially inclusive, and economically sustainable. However, it is important to note that the level and style of this participation vary depending on the specific historical, political, and cultural background of each country.

Second, local knowledge systems hold immense value. Indigenous ways of knowing—which include traditional practices and the transfer of wisdom across generations—offer essential insights for preserving and interpreting documentary heritage. Incorporating these systems into official conservation strategies ensures that the work remains relevant to the context and viable in the long term.

Third, resolving tensions between institutions and communities is necessary. The differences in priorities and methods between government-led conservation and grassroots approaches highlight a clear need for inclusive governance, training programs, and ongoing dialogue. Successful partnerships must find a balance between professional technical expertise and community wisdom to achieve comprehensive results.

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Recommendations

Based on the study's conclusions, three key recommendations emerge.

First, inclusive governance frameworks must be established through community advisory boards and participatory planning to ensure transparent decision-making.

Second, institutions should invest in capacity building by offering workshops and targeted funding, empowering communities to manage their own projects.

Finally, conservation strategies should integrate digital tools with traditional practices. This hybrid approach balances modern technical standards with respect for local cultural values and contexts.

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