ABSTRACT:

In developing countries, like Egypt, urban archaeological sites are usually fenced and segregated from their surrounding context. Those sites which are open with fees to the public, remain ruins to be visited with either guided tours or information panels presenting the history of the site. This type of urban archaeology has witnessed development through consecutive international charters for conservation of cultural heritage. These charters developed the concept of archaeological sites from sites visited by scholars and professionals who are in the field of conservation and preservation, to sites opened to the wider range of society. The Ename Charter 2008 have specifically addressed this point by focusing on the interpretation and presentation of cultural heritage sites.

In his paper “Process not product: the ICOMOS Ename charter (2008) and the practice of heritage stewardship”, Neil Silberman highlighted the challenge of anticipating the consequence of implementing each of the charter’s principles and to understand that each principle could be a great opportunity or a total disaster (Silberman, 2009, p.9).

Picking up on Silberman’s posed challenge, the paper focuses on the first principle of this charter and discusses the potential of implementing it on one of the important urban archeological sites in Alexandria “The kom El-Dikka archeological site”. After thoroughly going through literature related to interpretation and presentation and studying the current situation of the site, the paper presents a partial framework of an interpretation and presentation plan related to “the access and understanding” principle of the Ename charter.
Keywords: Urban archaeology, Presentation and interpretation, Ename Charter, Kom El_Dikka Archeological site, Access and understanding.

1. Introduction:

In the Preface to the Second Edition of Tilden’s book “Interpreting our Heritage” Christoph Crittenden stated that scholars and historians in the beginning of the twentieth century didn’t care that their work be understood by the layman, even great museums were not directed to the public. So, professionals maintained an ivory-tower attitude. And he explained how this gradually changed and by the 60s some of them started to address the layman. With a rapid rise in interest, associated with the growth of books and T.V programs and media, came an increase interest of the public in many disciplines including Archeology (Tilden, 1977)

In 1972, Charles McGimsey coined the term ‘public archaeology’ (Timoney, 2008), then came Lea and Smardz and defined it as: “those projects and programs designed to enhance popular knowledge of and appreciation for archaeology” (Skeates, 2000,141).

In 2006 the term “localization” was introduced by Giorgio Buccellati, he stressed on the importance of interpretation and presentation of archaeological sites and how those sites can be interesting not just to the professionals or archaeologist but also to the layman (Buccellati, 2006).

Followed Buccellati in the same aspect the Ename charter which stressed on the inclusiveness of archaeology and that interpretation and presentation should reach all categories of society.

Ismail Serageldin in the Forward of the book titled “Cultural Heritage and Development in the Arab World” stated that cultural heritage in the Arab world with all its manifestations needs to be revisited. These manifestations should not be seen as just “antiques” or “treasures” visited by international tourists and few intellectual locals but should be open to the wider society with all their embedded values towards a better understanding and thus a better future. (Hassan,2008).

The Pharaohs’ Golden Parade, which was held on the 3rd of April 2021 in Egypt, during which twenty-two mummies belonging to Kings and Queens of the New Kingdom of Ancient Egypt were transferred from the Egyptian Museum to the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization in Fustat, was watched worldwide and somehow acted as a wakeup call for Egyptians and especially the layman with the value of his ancestors, in addition it revealed how presentation and interpretation of cultural heritage is an important tool to connect the past to the broad community
and especial the layman, and that this kind of link provided pride for the Egyptian population.

In Alexandria, a city where a complete ancient city lies beneath the modern one, these archaeological sites remain as dr. Ismail mentioned above, “treasures to be enjoyed by certain segments of society. There is a huge gap between the ancient ruins with its embedded meanings and the public. Filling this gap is the main aim of this paper.

The paper defines urban archaeology as a term and how and where it was discussed in international charters related to cultural heritage. Then it covered the terms Interpretation and presentation in relation to archaeological site, analyses the case study of kom El-Dikka archaeological site in Alexandria, Egypt in view of the first principle of ENAME charter. Finally, a partial framework for interpretation and presentation is presented.

2. Problems:

In the heart of downtown of modern city of Alexandria lies the urban archaeological site of Kom El-Dikka, not just revealing the historic layers of the city but also – as was lately discovered- several lecture halls that would indicate the presence of a large teaching institution (Majcherek, 2018), witnessing the emergent of many sciences, medicine, astrology, and others. It was a hub of all great minds. With all this value, the site is barely making use of its potential, it is disconnected from the surrounding community as this value is not reflected through the current interpretation and presentation of the site.

3. Research Methodology:

The methodology used for this paper has two-fold. First, a thorough review of the terms, urban archaeology, and specifically its interpretation and presentation. A complete review of the international charters related to cultural heritage. Second, primary data was gathered through visiting the case study archaeological site of Kom El-Dikka in Alexandria and the existing situation was analyzed. It is important to mention that this specific site was chosen three times by the author as a case study, once with an international workshop of museography that took place in 2007, a collaboration between Alexandria University and Academia of Adriana, and Bibliotheca Alexandrina. And the second time, in 2020, where the
site was chosen to be part of the project module in the master program, RHCD\(^1\), adapting the Fire brigade building adjacent to the site for a new use that complements the history of the site. In addition of a third time in 2022 where an underused adjacent site was also presented for the RHCD master program students to propose an architectural project of Alexandria’s interpretation centre.

4. Urban Archaeology:

The phrase urban archaeology is used to refer to the study of archaeology in towns or cities or of towns or cities. (O’Keeffe, 2014). It can also be defined as “the study of the relationships between material culture, human behaviour, and cognition in an urban setting” (Staski, 1982) Urban Archaeology is a sub discipline of archaeology that is concerned with finds, usually hidden, that reveal the development of urban space (Capone, 2011)

The existence of historical remains or ruins in a city is not only considered evidence for the history of the place but is quite important to the city’s inhabitants, contributes to their social life, their sense of place, their pride, their identity, Urban archeology also attracts tourism, local and international and thus it contributes to urban vitality and viability, enhances local economy. (Alpan, 2013).

5. International charters:

Urban Archeology was addressed in international charters in a progressive way; Venice charter in 1964, in article 15, focused on excavations and how they should abide to scientific standards, in addition it focused on the conservation of ruins and how any intervention must be distinguishable.

In 1987, the Charter for the conservation of historic towns and urban areas (Washington charter), Stated that archaeology must be addressed in the conservation plans, in addition, archaeological investigation and proper preservation should reflect the history of the historic town or urban area.

In 1990, the Charter for the protection and management of archaeological heritage addressed presentation of the archaeological site to the public, stating that “Presentation and information should take account of the multifaceted approaches to an understanding of the past”.

The Nara Document in 1994, tackled the values and authenticity of cultural heritage in general and explored the factors by which they can be evaluated. And

\(^1\)Revitalization of Historic City District, a double master’s degree between Brandenburg Technical university in Cottbus, Germany and Cairo University and Alexandria University
in 1999, the international cultural tourism charter did not specifically address the archaeological sites, but it set principles to apply for heritage places of significance in general and how interpretation programs should focus on the visitor’s experience and how it could be enhanced through appreciation and understating.

The ICOMOS charter for the Interpretation and presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites “Ename Charter” in 2008, presented seven principles, Access and Understanding, Information Sources, Attention to Setting and Context, Preservation of Authenticity, Planning for Sustainability, Concern for Inclusiveness and the Importance of Research, Training, and Evaluation (Silberman, 2009). This charter, since it is specifically directed to Interpretation and presentation of cultural Heritage was chosen to analyze the case study and sum up recommendations to develop this unique site in Alexandria city and make use of its hidden potentials.

6. Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural heritage:

In his paper “The ICOMOS-Ename Charter initiative” presented in the George Wright forum, Neil Silberman clearly distinguished between Interpretation and Presentation. Presentation is a “one-way mode of communication” prepared mainly by professionals and scholars while Interpretation “donates the totality of activity, reflection, research, and creativity stimulated by culture heritage site” it involves mainly different stakeholders including visitors, in addition to professionals and scholars (Silberman, 2006)

“To interpret something is to figure out what it means” (Shanks & Hodder,1995). To interpret is: to explain or tell the meaning of or present in understandable terms: to represent by means of art: bring to realization by performance or direction (Merriem-Webster).

Tilden defined Interpretation as “An educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by first-hand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information. (Tilden, 1977, p:8) Australia Association defines interpretation as “A means of communicating ideas and feelings which helps people enrich their understanding and appreciation of their world, and their role within it”. (Hall and McArthur, 1998, p:166).

Based on Thompson in his book “Ruins: Their Preservation and Display”. Interpretation can be divided into two categories, primary and secondary. Primary interpretation is the act of explanation within the community of specialist as a way
of understanding the meanings. While secondary interpretation is revealing the knowledge acquired in the primary phase to a wider audience (Timoney, 2008). With increase of Audience from scholars and professionals to the general public, as mentioned above, the word presentation was added to convey the process of explanation and reaching the wide spectrum of audience. In this Context, presentation is considered the secondary phase of interpretation.

Interpretation is a creative act, its as solving a puzzle. It carries uncertainty. Ruins my have a certain interpretation, and when other clues evolve the interpretation might differ. Interpretation can also be through indirect channels, as games and souvenirs that presents the archaeological site in artistic designed way. Take back memories of this unforgettable visit and act as teaching materials. and their revenue help in the sustainability of the site. These playful resources could be designed by local designers and thus act as a link between visitors to the site and locals who have pride in their city. “This may include museographic experiments, graphic design, audio-visuals, theatre, etc.” (Custódio, 2017)

Interpretation goes beyond information; it provides stories and messages (Tilden 1977). Tilden in his book “Interpreting our Heritage” pinpointed a very important aspects that adds to experience of the visitor when looking at ruins, they always wonder “What was it like?” the fulfilment happens when they can relate that someone has lived here. (Tilden, 1977) The visitor needs visualization in addition to the stories behind the persons who were there and had lived and used the buildings at one point in history. The human stories have always moved the visitors and this is quite obvious in the Berlin wall museum and the Jewish museum in Berlin. The human aspect and stories are exhibited to move the human feelings.

Interpreting to children should be handled differently, with special talented specialized interpreters; using a more playful programs, including superlative adjectives (the biggest, the smallest). Along with interacting with more senses other than sight and hearing. To grasp children attention and curiosity, heritage education is a key factor (De Meyere, 2017). Teachers of history or heritage-oriented courses should have the tools to attract attention of children New Technologies can be utilized in interpretation and presentation of archaeological sites to reach the public and not just the professionals. (Plemić, 2018). Ancient ruins as they are might not appeal to the general public but when these ruins are presented and visualized as close as can be to its original state, this would open for more audience to relate, and this could only be done through the use of technology.

Presentation of Archaeological site is the “planned communication of interpretive content through the arrangement of interpretive information, physical access, and interpretive infra structure at a cultural heritage site” (ICOMOS, 2008).
Presentation should also provide the visitor with the spatial relationships that aren’t realised in a simple comprehensible way.

There are many forms of interpretation and presentation of the archaeological sites, some of which are as follows:

6.2.1 Interpretive panels: Interpretive panels are the classic most familiar methods to present interpretive materials in archaeological sites. They vary in size and material used, along with the different fixation methods (Timoney, 2008). Those panels usually simple information boards that carry text, photos along with architectural drawing – usually plans- to familiarize the visitor with the site and provide basic information.

6.2.2 Interactive boards: Visitors can interact with these boards to follow the interpretations they need.

6.2.3 Guides and maps: Those printed materials provide interpretative information and are either distributed at the site or sold at adjacent souvenir shops.

6.2.4 Guided tours: Interpretation materials are communicated to the visitors through specialized Interpreters, usually called tour guides. These guides are usually registered in their home country to be able to guide visitors of the archaeological site.

6.2.5 Audio devices: Recorded interpretative information in different languages are considered basic technological tool for the presentation of a site, where visitors are provided with them at the beginning of the tour and along the path the visitor finds codes which when entering it into the device hear the interpretation provided for this sector location.

6.2.6 Three-dimensional model: Reconstructing the site in a physical 3-dimensional model of the whole or part of the archaeological site help visitor relate to the remaining ruins. This reconstruction not only helps the visitors but the archeologists too (Buccellati, 2006).

6.2.7 Digital and Virtual reality reconstruction: The development in digital technology has help in not only in the digital reconstruction of the archaeological site but also with the virtual reality devices helped the visitors to navigate into the reconstructed buildings and provided them with the spatial feel of how the building was in the past.

6.2.8 Mobile and tablet android applications -with the Wi-Fi which covers the entire site, along with websites and other communication technologies helped not just present the archaeological sites but provide current daily statistical information.

6.2.9 Hologram: By creating 3D effect of presenters using holographic technology. This technique can use actors who resemble historical figures providing the visitor information from a look-alike figure.
6.2.10 Games: Digital games that use reconstruction of the site provide a playful tool for children to imagine the area and provide them with curiosity towards the archaeological site. (Plemić, 2018).

6.2.11 Parades: Public ceremony that moves through the city celebrating an event related to the archaeological site.

Visitor’s centers can provide interpretation through different presentations methods. These digital methods are usually better provided indoors off-site in those visitor’s centers that are built in the beginning of the path of the visitor.

7 Kom El-Dikka Archaeological site (case study)

7.1 Brief history and significance

The Kom El-Dikka Archaeological site cannot be explained without getting back to the actual birth of the city of Alexandria. The city of Alexandria, founded by Alexander the Great in 331 BC, the Macedonians leader who was taught at an early age by Aristotle, the great philosopher and scientists who was and expert in different fields as physics, astronomy, biology, embryology, meteorology, and much more. (Freeman, 2011). Alexander with such influence by his tutor wanted his city that carried his name to be the greatest city in the ancient world, not just physically planned in an ideal way but also a city that housed great minds from different fields. A center of intellect. And although he died before seeing his dream come true, but his childhood friend Ptolemy I carried out his dream. Alexandria the capital of the Ptolemies was haven for intellectuals.

One of its primary institutions- the ancient Museion. Which is considered university or philosophical academy- a kind of institute of Advanced study with many prominent scholars in residence supported by the state (Alexander, 2008). The Museion and the great library were housed in the royal quarter of the city known as the Bruchium. Euclid headed the mathematics faculty and wrote his “elements of Geometry” there. Archimedes Appolonius of perga, and Eratosthens were only a few of the noted scientists and scholars who lived in the king’s household and made use of the library, lecture halls, covered walks, refectory, laboratories for dissection and scientific studies, and botanical zoological gardens (Alexander, 2008). It is where the physician Herophilus open his surgery where he combined his activities as practitioner with fundamental research requiring the dissection, even vivisection, of the human body. It is where Hypatia the Neoplatonist philosopher, astronomer, and mathematician lived. Alexandria quickly became the major center boasting figures as Eratosthenes in science, Herophilus in medicine, Zenodotus and Aristarchus literary scholarship, and Apollonius and Callimachus in creative writing (Shaw, 2003).It is where several
written sources allowed for new mapping of the Earth, the first critical editions of Homer, the compilation of world chronologies, dictionaries, encyclopedias and general bibliography (Jacob et al, 2000) Here, great and pioneering advances were made in many fields: geometry, anatomy, astronomy, engineering and more. Strabo the historian and geographer has described Alexandria as a city of learning a centre that attracts scholars, in addition Archimedes reflected on the importance of Alexandria as a medium of scientific exchange (Canfora, 2000). Alexandria had played a pivotal role in the development of the modern world.

Kom el Dikka, first discovered in 1960. And ever since the Polish-Egyptian Archaeological and Conservation Mission worked in Kom el-Dikka as an excavation site. The site is in the heart of Modern Alexandria and is considered the largest and only site which contains public buildings including an educational complex with lecture halls and a Roman theatre, a Roman bath complex, and the remains of Greek and Roman residential villas. Although the excavations did not yet prove that the site is related to the ancient library of Alexandria, it definitely unveiled the nature of the academic life of the late antiquity (Majcherek, 2018).

![Figure 1 photo of Kom-Al-Dikka Archeological site – (Source: Author 18-8-2021).](image)

7.2 Evaluation of the site in relation to the first principle of the Ename Charter

The first principle “Access and understanding” of Ename charter focuses on facilitating access to cultural heritage sites; not only physical access but concentrates also on intellectual access for diverse spectrum of the public.
The archaeological site of Kom El-Dikka is in a prime location in the modern city of Alexandria. The south side is bordered by Ismail Mehanna Street which is directly located on the plaza in front of the main train station of Alexandria, in addition part of the south side is the fire brigade building which is currently barely used and can be a potential for future reuse.

On the east side overlooks Safia Zghaloul street which is a main street that runs all the way to the seafront. The west side is bordered by neighbouring buildings, one of which is the Nabi Daniel Mosque, which is a heritage listed building. As for the north side, it overlooks a public parking lot, in addition, it is a block away from Fouad Street which coincides with the Canopic street, Alexandria’s main street from its foundation in 332BC (Empereur, 2002) and today it is a main street in downtown Alexandria (Figure 2).

The Site is known and officially referred to by the name of Kom El-Dikka archaeological site or the Roman theatre. And both names do not reflect the actual significance of the site mentioned above in the brief history section.

According to a Detailed statistical statement issued by the regional authority for
tourism promotion for the number of tourists visiting Alexandria attractions (Regional Authority for Tourism promotion, 2020). The site is visited by only 3.8% of the number of tourists visit Alexandria’s main attractions which is considered the second least percentage. When discussing this issue with Zahra Adel, an Alexandrian registered tour guide, she response was that: Tourists companies do not put the site in their official tour. And tourists themselves, especially international ones, do not show interest in visiting the site as they already have visited roman theaters in other places around the world. In addition, that local tourists prefer to visit the Qaïet bey Fortress as the visit encompasses some leisure time along the sea. From these two reasons; both tourist companies and the individual tourist are not aware of the real significance of the site. The site needs be interpreted and presented differently in away that shows its true value and uniqueness.

Majcherek mentioned in his paper “Alexandria Kom el-Dikka Season 2017” (Majcherek, 2018) Information panels were installed in different location: theater, auditoria, bath, cisterns, residential quarter and the mosaic shelter (Figure 3). The information on the panels is in Arabic and English and includes a short text describing the function and history of the monuments, complete with orientation maps and relevant plans and this was verified by the author’s visit.

Although Majcherek also mentioned in his paper that the Project produced a bilingual leaflet funded by the Embassy of Poland as part for promoting ancient cultural heritage but upon visiting the site on Wednesday 18th of August 2021, the author found no leaflets available.

Concerning the point of encouraging individual and communities to produce their visions of the site helping them to connect and appreciate the site. In 2007 a workshop concerned with the museography of the archaeological site of Kom El-Dikka took place in collaboration with Alexandria University and Academia Adriana in Rome, in addition to Bibliotheca Alexandrina.
Twenty-five students participated, fourteen Italians and eleven Egyptians, the students worked for a week to envision a method for the museography of the site based on scientific research to show how the buildings were at one pointy in time under the coordination and supervision Staff from Academia Adriana and Alexandria University, one of which was the author, who was representing Alexandria University. The workshop was fruitful and helped in the learning process of the students and staff, where they deeply dug into the history of the site, visualized it digitally, and produced reconstructed images of the site’s main buildings with visions of their museography. (Figure 4).

![Figure 4 The visions of museography of the bath and theatre proposed by the students in the workshop.](image)

In Addition, during the third semester of the dual master program RHCD, year 2019, 2021 and under the supervision of the author, two adjacent sites were presented to the students for their final semester project module. First site was the old fire brigade building south of the site, which was presented to the students as an adaptive reuse project. The students proposed to adapt it to a visitor center that would include interpretation of the adjacent archaeological site of Kom El-Dikka. The second site was an underused plot of land west of the site where the students were asked to propose an architectural project for an interpretation and presentation center connected and related to the Kom El-Dikka archaeological site. The students, during both batches, studied the history of the site in depth, along with the values and significance of the site and were able to produce architectural projects that reflect this significance.

These two examples show that efforts are made to interpret and present the site is done informally through Alexandria university staff but not in a officially organized way.

As for the interpretation and presentation program and how it identifies and assess their audience; the regional authority for tourism promotion is the governmental body responsible for producing statistics related to the visitors of different touristic attractions in Egypt. The statistics categorize visitors into only foreigners.
and Egyptians, without assessing them demographically and culturally. These kinds of assessments if categorized, will give the opportunity to fully understand the vast spectrum of audience and provide interesting interpretations that would fit each category specifically.

Concerning the physical accessibility of the interpretation and presentation; the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, University of Warsaw had started its project of excavation and Conservation Mission of Kom el-Dikka site in 1960 and is still their work. Some parts of the site are closed for excavation and conservation work. No offsite work is presented. Showing the progress of the mission would be an interesting content to be interpreted and presented in a visitor center offsite.

The current situation of the Kom El-Dikka archaeological site show poor interpretation and presentation of the site which does not make use of the vast methods in the field and the use of technology, in addition, does not reflect the value and significance of the archaeological site. The site needs a new plan to widen the scope of audience and visitors and to connect the local community to their city’s layers.

7.3 Framework for the Realization “Access and Understanding” principle

7.3.1 Creating a responsible body:
In light of the merger of the Ministries of Tourism and Antiquities in Egypt, some new organizational divisions were created and developed in accordance with the Prime Minister’s Resolution No. 1146 of 2018, which included some of the new organizational divisions, including the General Administration of Services for Tourist and Archaeological Sites and Museums. It is suggested to have a satellite in each governorate and under it an administration headed by the governor and under him an agency specialized in interpretation and presentation of archaeological sites and responsible of creating the program of interpretation and presentation. In addition, this agency would be responsible for implementation, and evaluation. This would be with the help of an advisory board which is created of multidisciplinary consults from different field of Archaeology, tourism, Arts (History, Anthropology, psychology, and sociology), fine arts (Architecture, painting, and sculpture), Engineering (Architecture, civil, computer) and Planning.

7.3.2 Interpretation and presentation of Archaeological sites Agency
As mentioned above the consultancy board would be responsible for the following tasks:
- Determining the significance of the archaeological site and develop the stories that would be the base for the interpretation.
- Identify the audience for this interpretation plan culturally (Egyptians, foreigners and thus their different languages – educated, non-educated), demographically (different age group categories; children, youth, adults, and seniors).
- Identify stakeholders (Municipalities, NGOs, academics, and professionals)
- An educated community is essential for conservation of archaeological sites. An educated community that understands the values of such treasures will contribute in development of Interpretation and presentation plans with funds, volunteers and political support. Conduct awareness campaigns in schools and in local communities to stress on the importance of the conservation of our cultural heritage sites.
- Ensuring the participation of the community in the vision of the archaeological site through conducting surveys and workshops and covering all above identified categories.

Depending on the above fields, different approaches for interpretation and presentation are specified, either on site or offsite. It is important to integrate new technologies and up-to-date devices in this field.

After conducting the above tasks an Interpretation and presentation plan is set for the specific site.

A body responsible for implementation and another for evaluation (including archaeological impact assessment and evaluation of interpretation and presentation techniques) should be established.

8 Conclusion and recommendations

With all of Egypt’s archaeological treasures, and although the country is entering a new phase of developments in all fields, integrating new technologies and new visions. Most of its archaeological sites lacks plans for Interpretation and presentation and are not making use of the evolution of technologies in this field. Sites use traditional interpretation panels which present just information without communicating the values of the sites of varied audiences.

Many countries and international organizations have developed new approaches for interpretation and presentation of culture heritage sites. There are no universal plans, solutions, but Egypt needs to develop those plans learning from others’ mistakes and achievements. An interpretation and presentation plan give guidelines and define the main policies aspects related to the principles of the ENAME charter and in accordance with the significance of a specific
archaeological site. Every site designated as being of outstanding and/or great value should have its own interpretation and presentation plan. Values of our archaeological heritage must be assessed and given priorities in investment as it will intern not just return in tourism and other related fields but also help create an identity to Egyptians who would have pride in their country’s history.

In order to have proper plan for Interpreting and presenting the archaeological sites various representatives need to be involved. From the regional government till the layman. In brief, a participatory approach is needed; involving everyone who might have benefit and interest in conservation of cultural heritage and especially archaeological sites.

Increased tourism brings potential for serious harm to the sites. It is very important to study the impact of such increase and based on it the allowed numbers of visitors of the archaeological sites should be calculated. Off-site methods of interpretation and presentation could be introduced to compensate the limited numbers of visitors in case the visitors exceed the advisable limits.

The paper introduces a partial framework for an interpretation and presentation Plan, covering just one of the principles of the Ename charter. Future research is needed to cover the rest of the principals and develop a complete framework.

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