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## **Civilizational Heritage in the Age of Innovation: Exploring the Importance of Civilizational Heritage in the 21st Century**

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### **Introduction**

“Science and technology revolutionize our lives, but memory, tradition and myth frame our response. Expelled from individual consciousness by the rush of change, history finds its revenge by stamping the collective unconscious with habits, values, expectations, dreams. The dialectic between past and future will continue to form our lives.”

— Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.

‘What has civilizational heritage to do with innovation?’ you may ask. ‘I just got the latest iPhone and don’t see any connection.’ You would not be the only one to ask this question.

If we backtrack a thousand years or so and look at innovations from the past, such as the Via Appia or the Colosseum, did the Romans think about civilizational heritage when they built these two magnificent structures? Did they care about civilizational heritage? What about the ancient Egyptians whose building innovation, ‘the pyramid,’ is still an enigma for us today?

Innovation is thus nothing new, but it is more pronounced than it has ever been before. Primarily, it is reflected in the way we term our world, the Age of Digitalization and Innovation, or as it is also called, the 4th Industrial Revolution. Across continents, innovation is regarded as the leading marker of progress and prosperity.

In this paper we will examine the significance and meaning of civilizational heritage and argue its importance and relevance to our world today.

The case for this argument is two-fold. The first argument is that innovation reflects the beliefs, values, and structures of the civilization in which it is born and nurtured. To illustrate this, we will first examine selected innovations from the past and our current perception of these innovations. Following this we will discuss findings from the 2020 World Expo supplemented with a case study of Saxony, a region in Germany that personifies the link of innovation and civilizational heritage.

The second aspect we will analyze is simply, why should we care? What are the takeaways and consequences? What can we learn from observing and researching the links between innovation and civilizational heritage? What value does it have for us and posterity?

The paper is thus organized in the following way:

Part 1: Innovations from the past. Do we think of them as our civilizational heritage?

Part 2: World Expo 2020

Part 3: Saxony, linking innovation and civilizational heritage.

The key question this paper will argue is: Is it critical for organizations and individuals to embrace a deeper understanding and achieve successful mutual cooperation through an understanding of the cultures and civilizations from which they come?

### **Part 1: Innovations from the past. Do we think of them as our civilizational heritage?**

In everyday life we conduct many actions. We drive to work, read books, call our family and friends and in the evening have dinner without worrying that it is dark outside. It probably does not cross our mind to think of who helped us, and when, with their invention, now allowing us the possibility to carry out these simple actions.

What is even less probable is that today when we find ourselves in another environment or situation, we look upon these inventions as our civilizational heritage.

In Part 1 we will examine and analyze three inventions that, over time, have become recognized as our civilizational heritage.

#### Via Appia

Built towards the end of the 4th century B.C.E., the Via Appia represented a revolution in road construction. Its initial route from Rome to Capua was designed to ensure a fast and smooth communication route between these two cities. Brilliant engineering of bridges and viaducts enabled the road to be paved in a straight line rather than the usual meandering roads that were prevalent at the time.

What made the Via Appia a socially progressive project was that it was available to all, irrespective of their social status. It was a public, toll-free road serving kings, noble men and women, as well as the general urban and rural population.

The Via Appia led to the construction of a wide network of roads that connected all parts of the Roman Empire. Many of these roads still serve us today. This road network led to enhanced communication, the spread of ideas, mobility, new economies, the building of new towns and cities.

Surely you have heard or have even used the saying ‘all roads lead to Rome,’ which not surprisingly derives from the road network of the Roman empire resulting from the Via Appia construction.

Today, tourists flock to the Via Appia. Visiting this remarkable structure, we see more than just a road. It is a testimony to one of the great civilizations of the past, one to which we owe so much. We may compare it to the later inventions of cars, railroads and airplanes, but its importance goes far beyond that. It symbolizes the culture, politics, values, beliefs, lifestyle of the ancient Romans, one of the greatest civilizations of the past.

### Printing Press

Perhaps more than any other invention, the printing press transformed the world. We cannot even imagine life without books, magazines or newspapers. What would our society look like?

And it all started because one man was in desperate need of money. Utilizing the existing basic form of print, Johannes Gutenberg used his experience in minting to revolutionize the printing machine by using metal instead of wood. Unlike wooden letter blocks, metal block letters could be moved around to create new words and sentences. The rest is history.

The impact of press-printed material was enormous. Suddenly books were available to the lower classes who could not afford hand-written manuscripts. There was now a better chance for the vastly uneducated public to gain knowledge and education. Knowledge could now travel at a much faster speed, and similar to the Via Appia, this helped spread new ideas.

For us today the invention of the printing press is a symbol of the Renaissance, a fascinating period in history where culture, art, literature flourished at an unprecedented level. The influence of the Renaissance is felt to this day.

### Telephone

One can hardly imagine the excitement of the first telephone call back in 1876 by Alexander Graham Bell. People then could hardly imagine that over a hundred years later, we would carry our phones with us and call someone whilst sitting in a cafe.

Today we do not think twice about our ability to carry our phones with us. But we do gaze with curiosity and astonishment when looking at a phone that is connected to a wire, cannot be moved and carried around and has to be manually dialed. We are amused by the fact that if you made a mistake whilst dialing, you had to turn the dial again.

The importance of the invention of the phone can be placed alongside the Via Appia and printing press in bringing faster communication, spreading of ideas and information.

These three inventions give us the possibility to argue the following case:

### Perception of innovation in regarding to civilizational heritage

We regard all three inventions as our civilizational heritage. They reflect the civilization in which they were created. However, most of us do not place a modern highway, an electronic book, or an iPhone into that category. Most likely the engineers of the Via Appia, Johannes Gutenberg, or Alexander Graham Bell did not think in those terms either.

A few questions now arise. How will people in 200 years look upon the iPhone, the electric car, and other innovations that are made today? Will it reflect our civilization, as the Via Appia or the Pyramids do to their respective civilizations? Will future generations be able to build on this?

How our current world perceives civilizational heritage in regard to innovation will be argued in the following two parts.

### **Part 2: World Expo 2020**

To argue the case of the importance of civilizational heritage in the Age of Innovation, we have chosen two examples to illustrate how countries and regions across the globe seek to link their innovative endeavors with their unique civilizational background.

The two examples, the World Expo 2020, held due to the COVID pandemic in 2021/2022 in Dubai, and the German region of Saxony have been chosen based on personal observations and experiences together with research into the historic origins to argue this case.

A visit to the World Expo 2020 opened eyes to the unique feats, developments and future possibilities countries offered by digging deep into their civilizational heritage.

Driving through Saxony, passing the cities of Dresden, Leipzig, Chemnitz, and Zwickau, one is amazed at the innovations this relatively small region has produced throughout centuries and which, through its ability to seek inspiration from its own heritage, has overcome the devastating decades of Communism.

These two examples are by far not the only ones. From the Americas to East Asia, we can find many countries and regions, which, through their own personal stories, illustrate this.

### World Expo 2020

“We've arranged a civilization in which most crucial elements profoundly depend on science and technology.” — Carl Sagan

The World Expo, also known as the World Fair, is regarded as one of the most important, if not the most important international exhibition that takes place every five years. Designed to showcase the achievements of nations, this unique gathering of peoples has been the place where many ground-breaking inventions were first presented.

The idea for an international exhibition on a broad scale was first conceived by Henry Cole, a British inventor, civil servant, and member of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce. Through the support and efforts of Prince Albert, husband of England's Queen Victoria, the first 'world exhibition' took place in 1851 in London's Hyde Park. It was called 'the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations' where a wide variety of industrial, scientific, and cultural items were on display.

The exhibition was such a success that the period until World War I was called the golden age of fairs. Every few years world fairs were held across continents, in Europe, North America, Asia and Australia.

Many famous structures and objects we admire today were first presented at a world fair. The Eiffel Tower in Paris was built for the World Fair in Paris in 1889. The first live TV broadcast dates back to the New York World's Fair in 1939. As discussed in Part 1, Alexander Graham Bell showcased the world's first telephone in 1876 at Philadelphia's Centennial Exposition of Arts, Manufactures and Products of the Soil and Mine. The list goes on and on.

The latest World Expo was held in 2021 in Dubai, UAE. With the motto 'Connecting minds, Creating the Future' 24.1 million people from 178 countries visited this exhibition looking to experience the latest technological and scientific inventions and innovations as well as fabulous video projections.

But what we saw was something more than that. It was a surprising display of the connection between innovation and civilization heritage.

Divided into three sections, which represented the three key mottos of the exhibition, were examples of Opportunity, Mobility, and Sustainability. One felt that walking from one pavilion to the next was a journey through civilizations, their stories, values, beliefs, strengths and weaknesses.

Every country in its own individual way showcased their vision of the future, providing solutions to the biggest world challenges through the mirror of their civilizational heritage.<sup>1</sup> For every innovation there was a story dating back a hundred, thousand or more years back. This trend, if one may call it so, had no boundaries. From the Americas, Europe, Asia, Africa and Oceania, countries looked to connect their present and future with their civilizational heritage.

Countries presented what they regarded as the heart and soul of their culture and traditions. Historical landmarks, significant moments in history, art, music, and cuisine, shared an equal stage with the latest technological feats and endeavors.

The United States celebrated the American spirit: the people, the ideas, and the contributions that improve lives around the world to build a brighter tomorrow. The German pavilion showcased German innovations and sustainable solutions accompanied by a Culture Lab and cuisine.

Morocco presented its commitment to a sustainable future for the planet together with a walk through the streets of the Medina. The island state of Fiji addressed the importance of happiness and presented themselves as a leader and advocate in climate change.

Croatia amazed with a video projection of its great minds from the past and present, culminating with the creation of the fastest electric car. The Saudi Pavilion, voted best pavilion at the Expo, offered a glimpse into the future, taking the viewers on a journey across four main pillars: people, nature, heritage and opportunities.

The Japanese pavilion presented itself as a place where ideas meet. Based on external influences that have played a key role in the development of Japan, the country moving towards the future will continue to be a place where ideas meet.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.expo2020dubai.com/en/understanding-expo/participants/country-pavilions>

With this brief overview of the Expo, we would like to argue five main points that corroborate the importance of recognizing and understanding civilizational heritage in the age of innovation:

1. Recognizing civilizational heritage is a critical factor for innovation
2. Connecting innovation and civilizational heritage brings understanding between nations, cultures, and civilizations
3. Innovations are either directly connected to history, culture and traditions or inspired by them
4. Innovation helps broaden the understanding of civilizational heritage
5. Being exposed to different civilizations triggers our own innovative mindset.

### 1. Recognizing civilizational heritage is a critical factor for innovation

In the past few years major disruptions in the world have occurred that are shaking core beliefs, values, understanding between people, lifestyles. Climate change, pandemic, war and a possible new world order have challenged societies to seek novel solutions to overcome these challenges. As we have witnessed at the World Expo, industries and the scientific community across the globe have turned to innovation as a vision for the future with a deep connection to their civilizational heritage.

What was the primary reason for this? Creating and emphasizing this connection provided a guide to understanding oneself and one's future. Mapping out one's culture, temperament, habits, and traditions helps understand what is done now and why. Similar to the construction of an architectural structure, building on a solid foundation brings stability and self-confidence.

The French writer Antoine de Saint-Exupery expressed it as following: "A civilization is a heritage of beliefs, customs, and knowledge slowly accumulated in the course of centuries, elements difficult at times to justify by logic, but justifying themselves as paths when they lead somewhere, since they open up for man his inner distance."

### 2. Connecting innovation and civilizational heritage brings understanding between nations, cultures and civilizations

The dominant concept of connecting innovation with civilizational heritage, adopted by countries at the World Expo, brought a wider public to directly experience different civilizations and cultures. Just steps away from each other, pavilions brought a better understanding of cultures that are close to us but also of those that are distant. One had the possibility to compare and experience the unique directions countries are taking to build the future based on their own civilizational heritage.



We may come from different continents, civilizations, and cultures, but our paths crossed in the past, creating long-lasting influences in art, literature, music, architecture, and other fields of human endeavor. An invention or innovation from one country may have a trail back to a distant and diverse civilization.

Quoting Samuel Huntington: “Innovations in one civilization are regularly taken up by other civilizations.”<sup>2</sup> We will discuss this through the example of porcelain in our case study of Saxony. Perhaps in this understanding we will find the most significant takeaway lesson, an enhancement of cross-cultural understanding and cooperation and a sense that innovation can come from anywhere to everyone.

### 3. Innovations and ideas are either directly connected to history, culture and traditions or are inspired by them

At the World Expo, two types of innovation and civilizational heritage connections were observed.

A number of countries presented innovations which were directly connected to their history, culture and traditions. The Czech Republic, following its centuries-old tradition of glass and crystal manufacturing, presented the largest polished Bohemian crystal sculpture. Croatia presented highly creative individuals of the past centuries, from Faust Vrančić, the inventor of the parachute, to Mate Rimac, the man behind the creation of the fastest electric car.

Others sought inspiration from a distant past with which their current society and culture do not have a direct trail. Countries from the Middle East and Central Asia sought inspiration from the great civilizations of the past that flourished on their territory. The United States, with its slogan ‘America, Always Creating the Future,’ presented itself as a leader in individual liberty, innovation, and mobility. Germany emphasized the long tradition of leading in technology, engineering, and manufacturing. We see this with organizations, businesses, and individuals alike.

Today’s Age of Digitalization and Innovation, or as it is also called the 4th Industrial Revolution, follows the trail of civilizational heritage more than we may think.

### 4. Innovation helps broaden the understanding of civilizational heritage to a wider public

“For a human audience, seeing things that are slightly more otherworldly and beyond human power is always really fun and exciting to watch.” — Evangeline Lilly, Canadian actress

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<sup>2</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations* (Simon & Schuster - London, 1996)

Civilization heritage is something we all own. The 24.1 million visitors from 178 countries strolling through the pavilions certainly were of a diverse professional and personal background. Understanding civilizational heritage is not reserved only for scholars, university professors and students, but for all, irrespective of their background.

After the Expo we presented our thoughts to business leaders, bringing to the industry awareness of the critical importance of understanding and embracing civilizational heritage. We do not build our society from scratch but build it on layers that have been built before us. We can refer here to the book, *The Source*, by James Michener<sup>3</sup> who through the discoveries of modern archaeologists re-creates life in an ancient city and traces the profound history of the Jewish people — from the persecution of the early Hebrews, the rise of Christianity, and the Crusades to the founding of Israel and the current conflict in the Middle East.

By observing the developments societies and industries go through, one may argue that this concept of uncovering layers is a great way to explain civilizational heritage.

##### 5. Being exposed to different civilizations triggers our own innovative mindset

One of the key questions people ask today is, how to become more innovative and creative?

Books, articles, and various workshops try to explain and teach, however key to embracing these two skills is opening our mindset. Thinking out of the box, turning our focus on and observing other countries and cultures is one way to go.

The more we are exposed to different civilizations, cultures and traditions, the more our minds open and we start developing curious and investigative mindsets that lead to adopting a more innovative mindset. After two days of visiting the Expo and being exposed to a vast and opposing variety of different experiences and sensations, we personally felt a surge of inspiration.

Encountering and observing cultures, getting a feeling of a world one has not experienced before, triggers the creative mindset. Even if we do not understand, being exposed to different civilizations and cultures is priceless.

### **Part 3: The Free State of Saxony**

Civilizations around the globe are finding themselves increasingly in rivalry for economic-driven innovation and competitive specializations of industry cluster building.

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<sup>3</sup> James A. Michener, *The Source* (Random House - New York, 1965)

Countries, regions and cities have realized the importance of growing and maintaining innovation ecosystems to build a strong economic basis within the global competition.

We find that innovation today does not happen by principle of chance but is being triggered through a systematic approach for staying competitive. Political directions taken by the countries and regions, such as the European Union, in the form of strategic policies and financial support spark an innovation culture among industry players and the research community. These are driven to increase their level of cooperation for the benefit of social and economic improvement.

Rankings such as the Global Innovation Index (GII) or the European Innovation Scoreboard (EIS) define the innovativeness of countries and regions and categorize them based on results of specific mainly economic criteria. It identifies those societies with a historical innovative gene and those cultures emerging as innovators within an international comparison.

The Free State of Saxony, as part of Germany and the European Union, presents an interesting case study of how the centuries-old traditions of a region have generated significant innovations, despite political and economic disruptions. In Saxony, historically significant innovations still give distinction to its economic success. With a strong tradition in education and research, the region is successfully building new strategic industry growth through the support of today's political and economic measures.

In this section, we will demonstrate how an economically innovative region from the 18th and 19th century became a sleeping beauty during part of the 20th century and is looking again to thrive through innovation today.

As a first step, let's take a closer look at the terminology of civilization, heritage, and innovation to find a connection or even disconnection. I am sure many of you are familiar with various definitions of the term civilization. According to the Oxford Dictionary, civilization 'refers to the stage of human social and cultural development and organization that is considered most advanced.'

When reading this definition two things come to mind. Firstly, civilizations are considered advanced and therefore may be innovative. Secondly, the definition does not mention anything about the economic state about the society. This is surprising, as advanced and innovative would indicate a superior economic position.

Therefore, we looked for further definitions and found them to be very similar. In a definition by the National Geographic, civilization is described as 'a complex human society that may have certain characteristics of cultural and technological development'.

Here we find the mentioning of the technological abilities of the society, indicating it is advanced and progressing, but again, it is not a direct indication of the economic aspects.

Based on these formal definitions, the question arises as to whether civilizations are not considered to be connected to economics within which they exist? We believe this is a major deficiency of the definition and think if we speak about modern civilization, the definition needs to include the economic aspect as societies are defined by the wealth or poverty they live in, as well as by their industrial ability and specialization in production, services, and trade. In today's understanding, when speaking about innovation, progression and technological development, economics are playing a great role. We will learn shortly that innovation is in fact mainly measured in economic terms.

As for innovation, the Oxford Dictionary defines the term as 'the introduction of new things, ideas or ways of doing something.' What we immediately notice is that an innovation represents something new. In contrast the term "heritage" is outlined as 'the history, traditions, and qualities that a country or society has had for many years and that are considered an important part of its character' (Oxford Dictionary).

Thus, how can we connect heritage, which is often considered ancient, repetitive and constant, to what is innovative and new? And how can we connect civilization to this innovative aspect, when civilization, according to formal definitions, is not connected to the economic state of a society, but rather innovation is the main trigger behind the world's largest economies and hence civilizations?

Let us have a look at a case study of a specific German region, namely the Free State of Saxony. Why have we chosen to present the case of Saxony and what makes it special? Historically, the region generated a number of significant innovations that are part of daily life around the world today (i.e., locomotive, daily newspaper, white European porcelain, tooth paste and mouthwash, thermos jug, coffee filter, tea bag, washing powder, and milk chocolate). In addition, inventions from the textile, automobile and pharmaceutical industries distinctively contributed to Saxony's economic success in the past. The region was further culturally and historically significant, as can be seen by the many castles dotted around the country, numerous theaters and concert halls, as well as vast art and historical museums.

With a strong heritage in education and research, the region today is building new strategic industry sectors through the support of political and economic measures (i.e., Silicon Saxony is the fifth largest chip industry in the world, e-mobility is developed at five production sites of car manufacturers and their suppliers, robotics is an emerging sector aiming at becoming Europe's center for robotics called Robot Valley).

Research, development and hence innovation, whether carried out in academic or commercial institutions, play an important part throughout the state and help position Saxony as a leader among other East German states, but also West German states. But this was not always the case. WWII followed by decades-long communist rule made it seem that the driving force of innovation had stopped in the region.

During communism, the automobile industry in Zwickau, where the brand Audi originated, only produced cheap cars called Trabant in the same styles for decades. The individual manufacturers in the town of Glashütte, which once made up an innovative and significant ecosystem for watchmaking, were nationalized under one organization in the system of a planned economy. The inventive spirit of this advanced civilization was brought to a halt.

Only after the reunification of Germany in 1990 was it possible for Saxony to return to its roots of thriving innovation. Yet the journey was long, as western regions under democracy and a free-market economy had in that period developed a strong competitive advantage. Catching up was and still is difficult, as competition between the different regions to attract investment for rebuilding old and new industry sectors is tough. Outdated technology and infrastructure, low labor efficiency and a dissimilar approach to motivation and innovation was the legacy of the communist-ruled region.

Changing the mindset of people who suddenly found themselves working in a free market was a long process. As communist principles had largely diminished the innovative spirit of the people, attitudes needed to be fundamentally shifted towards a more free-thinking environment.

Today Saxony, bordering Poland and the Czech Republic, has three larger cities, namely Leipzig (597,493), Dresden (556,227), and Chemnitz (244,401). In total the state counts 4.1 million inhabitants and makes up 5% of Germany's population. It is one of sixteen federal states. Looking at the influx of young people to these regional centers, the problem of qualified people leaving the region has been largely overcome. Saxony is once more advancing towards an economically strong position, as in the pre-communist era. It has managed to attract investments from a number of larger firms, hence creating interesting job opportunities locally and providing an excellent setting for study and research.

How did Saxony manage to get there? Of course, civilizational heritage alone did not manage to achieve this. Given the competition from other regions looking to attract investment, local and country-wide politics needed to support this process through a number of measures.

Saxony today is driving innovation, technology, and networks.

For instance, cluster policy, at state level, has redesigned funding guidelines, achieving 17 recognized clusters in Saxony to date. Foreign trade and internationalization are of significant importance for Saxony's economy, generating around one third of its economic output from exports. Positioning itself as a partner or player for international trade is therefore a key success strategy. Saxony's innovation strategy foresees the support of start-ups and is making Saxony an attractive place for the establishment of new businesses.

Yet the dilemma persisting today is that a large percentage of German corporations keep their headquarters in the western parts of Germany, resulting in a much higher GDP compared to the former East German states. Investments coming from Saxony itself are therefore limited. Saxony together with other former East German states needs to be creative in attracting jobs and keeping people in the region.

Saxony's innovation strategy is placing a focus on future fields, such as the environment, raw materials, digitalization, energy, mobility and health, while also utilizing strength from existing and traditional fields, such as mechanical engineering, automobile plants and pharmaceuticals. Strategies in R&D are also playing a major role in the region's success, where research excellence is not only taking place in academic research institutions, but also at an above average number of commercial research centers.

The results of these efforts can be seen in the EU's Regional Innovation Scoreboard (RIS). The three Saxon regions of Dresden, Leipzig and Chemnitz are the most innovative regions of former East Germany (with the exception of Berlin) and are considered strong innovators. Dresden and Leipzig are particularly successful in a German-wide comparison in the following categories: Population with tertiary education Leipzig (6 from 16); Population involved in lifelong learning (Leipzig 2, Dresden 6); R&D expenditure in the public sector. (Dresden & Leipzig 1); Non-R&D innovation expenditure (Leipzig 1, Dresden 3). We can conclude that the state of education in Saxony is above average and that spending in the R&D scientific sector demonstrates a competitive edge over other German states.

So, what new paths has Saxony taken to achieve this and what has survived of innovation despite the communist-rule disruption? The Automobile Cluster East Germany seated in Leipzig is a strong force in the automobile market. In Saxony alone there are plants of BMW, Porsche and three VW plants with numerous suppliers surrounding them. The automobile industry generates one quarter of the industrial turnover of Saxony.

'Silicon Saxony' is Europe's largest microelectronics / Information Communication Technology cluster and the fifth largest of its kind around the globe. Every third chip produced in Europe bears the label of origin "Made in Saxony."

The semi-conductor cluster with companies like Global Foundries, Bosch and Infineon located in and around Dresden stands at the heart of it.

Saxony is considered to be the cradle of German machine construction. Existing for the last 200 years, such globally sought-after mechanical engineering products today make up more than 13 percent of the annual industrial turnover.

Robot Valley is looking to become the robotics ecosystem in the heart of Europe connecting industry expertise, leading research and entrepreneurs to drive innovation and growth for robotics in Saxony and beyond.

Furthermore, the aerospace industry, life science, production of bicycles, textiles, excellence in research, etc. with long traditions have revived, significantly contributing to the region's economic growth and power. Smaller sectors are bringing prestige to the diversity of the economic environment.

Watchmaking in Glashütte for instance, has reawakened and is home to a number of luxury watch brands today. With the reunification of Germany came privatization and companies like A. Lange & Söhne regained their fame. A. Lange & Söhne is considered one of Germany's oldest brands, created in 1875 by Ferdinand Adolph Lange.

In the city of Meissen, the first European porcelain production was founded in 1708 by August the Strong, Elector of Saxony. Since 1722 Meissen porcelain is carrying its two swords as a brand and is therefore one of the oldest brands existing today. The hand-made porcelain of Meissen is recognized worldwide for its craftsmanship of superior quality. With a strong love for Chinese porcelain under the leadership of August the Strong, the then secret Chinese formula for porcelain making was reinvented in Meissen. By a twist of fate, today the largest export market for Meissen porcelain is represented by Asia.

It is also worth mentioning that key to this region was the Leipzig trade fair with roots dating back as early as 1165. Leipzig was situated right at the intersection of trade routes Via Regia and the Via Imperii. Numerous trading organizations settled there. The concept of the sample fair was invented in Leipzig in 1895 (Leipziger Messe), replacing the traditional goods fair with sample shows. Sample fairs are the type of fair that is common today. As argued in the example of Via Appia, the trade routes of Via Regia and Via Imperii also brought innovation to this region, from which it benefits to this day. Modern trade in form of the parcel service can be found in the DHL hub situated at Leipzig - Halle Airport, where DHL processes 150,000 packages per hour and counts 23,600 air movements per year. From the traditional road system, trade has been transferred to air.

Concluding this section, we would like to point out that a consistent drive to nurture and pursue civilizational heritage has brought this innovation boom, allowing for a long-term vision for companies growing into stable businesses. This can be a good example for regions around the world. Coming back to the start of this section and its review of definitions, we argue that the terms should be extended and in particular that the term civilization should reference the economic state of a society. We also propose a definition for an ‘innovative civilization’, as demonstrated in the example of Saxony. Such a term can be expressed as follows: ‘An innovative civilization represents a human social and cultural organization which is founded on pioneering and visionary characteristics looking to advance in social, cultural and economic terms while respecting their heritage’.

## **Conclusion**

“The heart and soul of the company is creativity and innovation.” —Bob Iger, CEO of Disney

The main goal of this paper is to argue the importance of understanding civilizational heritage in the Age of Innovation as well as to present one aspect of how to approach this subject. This is a subject worth future research as it provides a source of collected factual and empirical knowledge from which generations may benefit. At the least it provides further food for thought.

Through a short overview of selected inventions, we have first sought to argue how perception plays a role in recognizing and identifying the role of civilizational heritage. We are surrounded by our civilizational heritage, often without realizing it.

We further examined observations and findings from the World Expo. Throughout its history the World Expo or World Fair has played a role in connecting the dots between innovation and civilizational heritage. The last World Expo in Dubai confirmed the continuation of this role, countries surprisingly aligned in their presentations. Based on our findings, we have identified five key points that argue the case of the critical importance of the innovation — civilizational heritage connection in forging a progressive and visionary future.

The case of Saxony gave us a picture of how one thriving region fell into decay during Communism but found the strength to reconnect to its civilizational heritage and mold a flourishing present and hopefully future. Saxony also represents an example of what might be called an ‘innovative civilization.’

We will conclude this paper with the question from the introduction:



‘Is it critical for organizations and individuals to embrace a deeper understanding and achieve successful mutual cooperation through an understanding of the cultures and civilizations they come from?’

Absolutely yes.