

# HERITAGE AND OUR SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

research, practice, policy and impact



## CREATIVE INDUSTRIES AND TOURISM BEYOND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Brief Report from the UK National Commission for UNESCO and PRAXIS at the University of Leeds. Session held on Monday 1st March, 2021.**

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The session explored the role of heritage-based tourism, intangible heritage and creativity in promoting more inclusive, people-centred and sustainable approaches to socio-economic development. Contributors discussed how it is possible to unlock the potential of heritage to rethink and reframe our (unsustainable) models of development, which have often focused solely on economic growth and its immediate benefits. The session took into consideration a wider range of quality-of-life elements, and a variety of global challenges, including gender equality and climate change.

### KEY INSIGHTS

**ONE. Heritage constitutes a unique and sustainable resource for strengthening local livelihoods, improving people's quality of life and creating prosperity.**

Heritage can be a driver for promoting sustainable tourism and generating new economic activities – from arts, crafts and creative industries to sustainable fishing, organic farming and agriculture – while also stimulating solidarity and empowering marginalised and disenfranchised groups.

**TWO. The involvement of local communities – often excluded from the benefits arising from Western models of tourism – is key to the long-term success of heritage-led projects.**

Local communities are exceptional custodians of traditional knowledge, practices and know-how for both long-term heritage conservation and the creation and perpetuation of sustainable livelihoods. However, they are often excluded from externally driven development approaches.



*This session addressed a number of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).*

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCH, POLICY, AND PRACTICE

**ONE. Heritage constitutes a unique and sustainable resource for strengthening local livelihoods, improving people's quality of life and creating prosperity.**

- **Protect cultural and natural heritage over time and use them to support sustainable development** and create prosperity, improving people's quality of life and livelihoods without harming local resources.
- **Use the potential of heritage, particularly of intangible practices, to diversify pathways for inclusive economic development**, for example through tourism, fishing, agriculture, and organic farming.
- **Promote heritage-based strategies to empower marginalised and disenfranchised groups**, like youth, women and rural communities, to engage local perspectives and increase autonomy and independence.
- **Create linkages between traditional heritage practices, contemporary arts and design, and modern techniques**, and strengthen networks between actors working in different creative fields to stimulate innovation.
- **Support eco-tourism and co-creation of diversified and sustainable tourism circuits** to attract international and domestic visitors, including independent travellers, to heritage sites.
- **Increase heritage awareness and stimulate creativity** working with youth and local schools and providing heritage-based educational toolkits to students and teachers.
- **Provide adequate measures for mitigation of the potential negative impacts that heritage-based initiatives and (mass) tourism** can generate on local environments and communities.

**TWO. The involvement of local communities – often excluded from the benefits arising from Western models of tourism – is key to the long-term success of heritage-led projects.**

- **Involve local communities from the beginning of heritage projects and in funding applications** to ensure local needs and expectations are put at the core of any interventions without raising false expectations.
- **Promote innovative, participatory and inclusive approaches in heritage-based development projects and co-produce long-term visions and evaluations**, working in partnership with community members, national and local authorities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other institutions.
- **Learn from project failures and mitigate potential tensions that may emerge from conflicting needs among multiple stakeholders**, and ensure that local communities benefit from tourism and other heritage-based approaches.
- **Build on local knowledge, practices and know-how to identify local resources and promote community-driven approaches** for sustainable development, supporting local ownership and shared economy.
- **Harness the potential of museums and heritage institutions** as unique environments for community engagement, co-creation, networking with stakeholders and long-term heritage management.
- **Foster local empowerment, innovation and leadership** through the provision of specialised training and skill development in the tourism, handicraft and creative industries' sectors.
- **Support the establishment of local and international networks** (North-South and South-South) to make tourism activities, handicrafts and locally made products owned, led and managed by local communities.





## KEY ISSUES

1. The COVID-19 pandemic is exacerbating global poverty and existing socio-economic inequalities even further, together with conflict and climate change.
2. The potential of cultural heritage as a driver for creating new economic resources and positive social impacts is often underestimated by policymakers.
3. The COVID-19 pandemic has had devastating effects on the tourism sector and on many tourism and heritage-based activities and actors.
4. Power imbalances exist in the tourism sector, usually externally driven and resulting in an equal distribution of economic benefits in favour of international beneficiaries.
5. Tourism, particularly mass tourism, is often unsustainable, contributing to some 8% of the global CO2 emissions (Sustainable Travel International) and to overexploitation of local cultural and natural resources.
6. Internationally funded development projects are most likely to succeed where local people are meaningfully engaged from the start, and the value of engaging communities in the co-design of research projects is recognised in grant criteria.
7. Measurement of the economic, social and environmental successes of international projects on heritage, tourism and the creative industries, is difficult, and often requires a longer timescale than some project-funding permits.

## KEY CHALLENGES

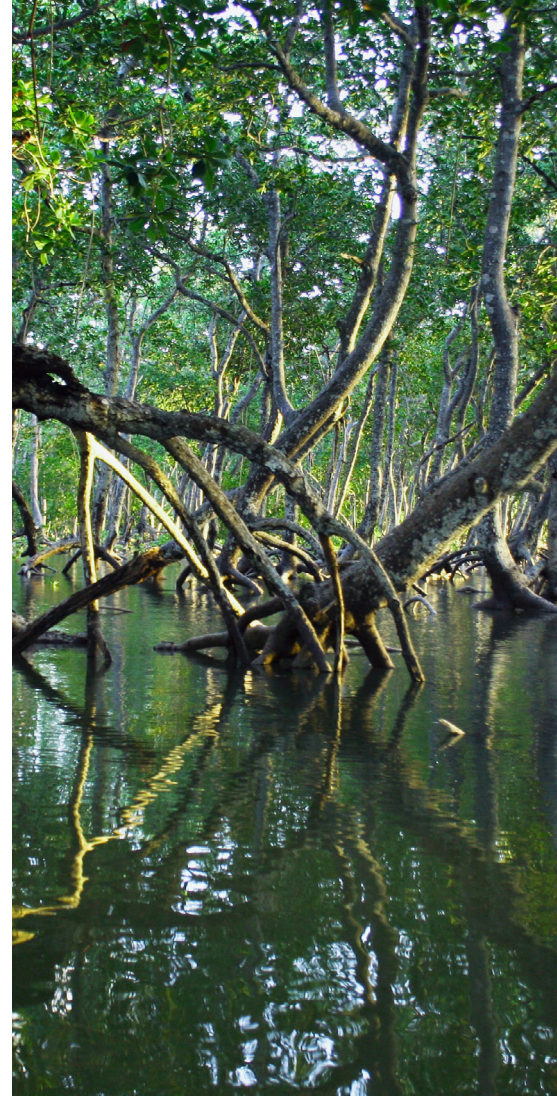
1. POVERTY
2. SOCIAL INEQUALITIES
3. UNEQUAL INCOME DISTRIBUTION
4. UNSUSTAINABLE TOURISM
5. COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS
6. NEO-COLONIAL DIMENSION OF TOURISM AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES



# CASE STUDIES

## MUCH TO DISCOVER IN MIDA CREEK, KENYA

[MUCH to Discover in Mida Creek](#) aimed at creating community resilience and sustainable development through local maritime cultural heritage, focusing on a local women's group. Women here are confined to domestic work, with no active role in economic development, resulting in marginalisation and poverty. One key challenge was to create diverse sustainable pathways to inclusive economic growth for communities mainly dependent on unsustainable fisheries, forestry and tourism. Researchers and stakeholders worked together to increase community awareness on the local fragile maritime heritage and foster sustainable development, using the Mida Creek landscape as a living historical baseline for the long-term protection of these resources. The team employed research and community science to co-produce alternative livelihoods, making marine cultural heritage visible and valuable to communities previously excluded from the benefits generated by marine and coastal tourism. These included butterfly, organic and mangrove farming, beekeeping, sustainable fishing practices, a dhow house restaurant and ecotourism circuits. The project founded the [Mida Creek Ecotour](#) and a community-maintained [digital platform](#) telling the story of the sea and forest and promoting tourism and community creative industries locally. Impacts include the creation of self-managed industries, economic empowerment of a marginalised community, improved environmental sustainability, and climate change mitigation and adaptation.



## DAR BEN GACEM, SOCIAL ENTERPRISE AND GUESTHOUSE IN THE MEDINA OF TUNIS

The Medina of Tunis, a World Heritage site since 1979, is home to more than 20 crafts and 524 artisan workshops. However, several historical buildings need restoration and repurposing, and many handicraft activities are currently struggling. The project aimed to revive the architectural and artistic heritage of [Dar Ben Gacem](#), a 16th century building in the Medina, diversifying its uses and supporting local social and economic development. It was transformed into a guesthouse and social enterprise, with all profits reinvested in heritage revival, advocacy and support to local economic and community development. Examples include: restoring historical buildings; support to youth heritage activists; workshops to upload monument information to Wikipedia, increase heritage awareness and boost local tourism; digitising an archive of Tunisian Andalusian music; and promoting the Kairouani Tunisian script, through workshops, lectures and digitisation. In partnership with other local economic actors, the project founded M'dinti to preserve the historical urban quarter and push against gentrification and decay. Through strengthening the network with other guest houses, cafes, restaurants, artisans and young designers and increasing our voice and visibility, the project aimed to foster a shared circular economy, youth inclusion, cultural and tourism activities to improve livelihoods and economic dynamics, and private-public partnership to revive historical public buildings.



## FAYNAN HERITAGE: USING CULTURAL HERITAGE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHERN JORDAN

The Faynan region is a desert landscape between the Wadi Araba and the Jordanian Plateau, home to a Bedouin community. The region is economically deprived, and one of the most impressive archaeological landscapes in South-West Asia. For more than fifty years international archaeologists have undertaken fieldwork, often working with Jordanians, supporting the community by employing workmen and purchasing supplies, but leaving nothing behind – while their careers flourished based on their discoveries. The [Faynan Heritage Project](#), led by the University of Reading and [Future Pioneers for Empowering Communities](#) is seeking to redress this imbalance by using cultural heritage to support eco-tourism to directly benefit the local community. Through projects funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, Newton-Khalidi Fund and the UK's Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy, Faynan Heritage has developed museum displays, constructed heritage walking trails, and produced materials for the local schools. Most significantly, it has established the Faynan Heritage Women's Cultural Association, a small business enterprise producing high-class handicrafts based on unique Faynan archaeological finds. The project provides training and infrastructure, with a view to creating sustainable businesses, owned, and managed by Faynan women. Success will depend on how quickly tourism returns to Faynan following the COVID-19 pandemic.







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