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CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY: AN ASSET OF CULTURAL TOURISM INDUSTRY

Khalid S. Al-Hagla

Dipartimento di Economia "S. Cagnetti de Martiis"

International Centre for Research on the
Economics of Culture, Institutions, and Creativity
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Cultural Sustainability: An Asset of Cultural Tourism Industry

Khalid S. Al-Hagla .

Alexandria University and Beirut Arab University

1. Introduction

The importance of the tourism development as an economic tool appears when we realize that the forecasts of the World Tourism Organization highlights that the international tourist arrivals will mount from the present 625 million a year to 1.6 billion in 2020. By this date, travelers will spend over US\$2 trillion, (against US\$445 billion today), making tourism the world's leading industry. [4] These projections are based on annual growth rates of 4.3% for arrivals and 6.7% for spendings. Already in 1997, tourism receipts accounted for a little over 8% of the world's exports of goods and almost 34% of global services exports.

On the other hand, the sustainability of tourism would then suggest preserving the valuable communities' assets - the historical sites and buildings, traditions, culture, heritage, attractions and natural beauty- for future generations and for long-term economic and social gain. The economic value in the protection of such assets helps both small and large communities enhance the overall tourism potential. Recent studies have demonstrated that an increasing number of travelers are interested in seeing and doing more and are willing to stay longer and spend more money in areas that sustain the culture and environment [2].

2. Development

The complex relationship between different development aspects (economical, socio-cultural, political, and environmental) and their overlapping sections, dictate a comprehensive understanding to unify these aspects within. Each of the 'Sustainable Development' and the 'Ecodevelopment' concepts brings a comprehensive development perspective that depicts its special vision to these aspects altogether. While the former places a special emphasis to the global development perspectives and their international relationships, specially in its early coming outs, the latter highlights the micro scale actions taken at the endogenous level as to inspire the development process.

The paper considers the 'Ecodevelopment' as an approach to the study. Within its wider understandings, the economic development perspective could be addressed through two different scales. The macro scale, which conceptually links the economic aspect to other development aspects, and the micro scale that emphasizes the mechanisms of economic development themselves.

2.1. Macro Scale

2.1.1. Ecodevelopment Approach

The term Ecodevelopment was firstly used at the Stockholm Conference in 1972. It emphasizes the role of regional, rather than imported, resources. Moreover it appreciates the encouragement of local expertise and the 'Endogenous' potentials. [2]

2.1.1.1. Principles of 'Endogenous Development'

Friberg and Hettne outline 'Green' principles of 'endogenous development' as: [3]

- The social unit of development should be a culturally defined community, and its development should be rooted in its values and institutions.
- Self reliance, so that each community relies primarily on its own strength and resources.

- Social justice.
- Ecological balance, implying an awareness of local ecosystem potential and local and global limits.

This formulation reflects a territorial conservative approach regarding the potentials of any development process, which is clearly addressed at the first two principles. This idea of 'endogenous development' is '*completely at odds with dominant universalist thinking*' [3]. Development is to be sought in a country's own ecology and culture, not in the supposed 'model' of a developed country. Furthermore, as development is to be through '*voluntary cooperation and autonomous choices by ordinary men and women*' [3], the unit of development cannot be considered to be the state, but people and groups of people defined by culture, indeed 'natural communities'.

2.1.2. Ecodevelopment: Macro Economic Perspective

Ecodevelopment rejects the "trickle-down" economics tacitly implied in Agenda 21, favoring the creation of "trickle-up" activities as an alternative. Resource allocation in this view looks less at cost-benefit analysis and investment and more toward the ecological definition of regional ecosystems. Maurice Strong defines it as, "*Ecodevelopment emphasizes the capacity of people themselves to invent and generate new resources and techniques to increase their capacity to absorb them and to put them to socially beneficial use, to take a measure of command over the economy and to generate their own way of life*". [2]

2.2. Micro Scale

2.2.1. Micro Economic Development.

The endogenous sense of economic development is as old as the human being itself. However, the acting development agencies are trying to formulize this understanding. Among these definitions is one developed by the American Economic Development Council (AEDC) in its report titled *Economic Development Today: A Report to the Profession*. The report stated that: "*Economic Development: the process of creating wealth through the mobilization of human, financial, capital, physical and natural resources to generate marketable goods and services. The economic developer's role is to influence the process for the benefit of the community through expanding job opportunities and the tax base.*" [1] Dr. Ronald J. Swager developed this definition in 1991 when he published another study titled *Economic Development Tomorrow*. He states that, "*The entire set of approaches to economic development practice may be considered as a specialized form of marketing.*"

We can explain these various definitions of micro scale within the understandings of macro scale 'Ecodevelopment' concept. The focus of these two different scales is the community itself. Meanwhile, the macro scale advocates the potentials of the culturally defined territory as the assets for its economical development; the micro scale highlights the importance of these qualities marketing as the guarantee for the community development.

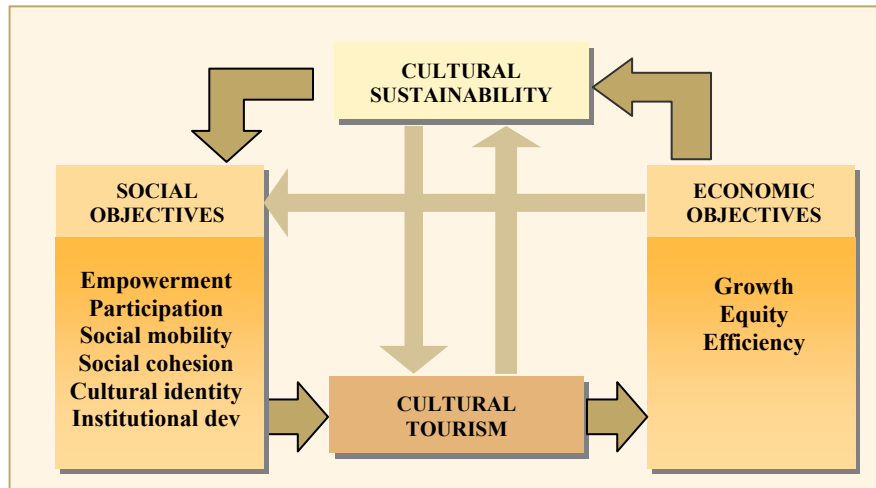


Fig. 1. Cultural Tourism within the 'Ecodevelopment' understanding. Source: The researcher.

The cultural tourism can play this hub role. [Fig 1] That is conceptually highlighted when we come to define the economic perspective of cultural tourism as the way by which the cultural significant community can do economic development achievements by marketing its cultural potentials. Actually it does not simply function this way, the paper will present it in two compatible ways, the first draws the linkage between cultural tourism and economic development, and the second emphasizes the cultural sustainability as the guarantee for achieving cultural tourism assets within the eco-development understandings.

3. Cultural Tourism, Economic Perspective.

The study of the economic prospects has to be interpreted within the realities of the 21st century global economy that will affect every national economy regardless of political or economic system. One of the most significant features of this economy is its penetration ability to influence the local community as it is sometimes called "*Global Localization*". [5] Another important aspect is the sensitive and the critical relationship between economic globalization and cultural localization. The former has to be redefined as not to bring threats to the latter. However, that must be taken into consideration as culture is one of the focal domains that the economy will grow both in output and employment. Other domains that are expected to flourish are services, ideas, entertainment, and one-of-a-kind products (individually produced) [5].

These domains are altogether drawing the shape of cultural tourism. However, that brings us to redefine the '*Product Development*' –in cultural tourism- so as to match these global economy understandings. Jerold Kappel, the American Association of Museums' (AAM) director of development, included a need to interpret what product faces five challenges in its development, he emphasized the importance of considering product development within the context of the whole community. According to him tourism products are community-based. He wrote: "*...what makes cultural tourism unique is that people go to absorb and experience the culture of a place.*" He earlier defined "*place*" as a destination with a story to tell to a visitor. [6] Robert Glover adds that "*it is what interests travelers and people seeking leisure-time activities*". He divides product into five categories, defined as follows: [6]

- **Events;** current and historic or cultural
- **Locations;** man-made and natural environments (places with all their components sufficiently in place to attract the visitors)
- **Properties;** sites and facilities
- **Materials;** guides, books, maps (complementary pieces and promotional give-aways)

- **Operations;** controlled functions and activities that attract and/or accommodate people

He defines product development as "*the progression from idea to the realization*" of any one of the categories listed above.

3.1. The Impact of Cultural Tourism on Local Communities' Economy

The influence on local communities' economy comes to the heart of globalization reflections. These globally wide conceptual economical policies are transformed into specific and measurable parameters controlling the local economies. This qualitative approach determines local assets that are supporting the local economy. Donovan Rypkema determines local assets as "*human, natural, physical, functional and cultural*" ones that could be utilized to respond to globalization. He draws a methodology based on three sequential steps, the first of which is to identify these assets, the second is to protect them and finally to enhance and promote them. [5]

The influence of well-planned and well-managed local tourism programs extends to improving the local economy and enhancing the quality of life for local residence. The Inter-American Travel Congress highlights the domains within which the local community makes benefits as "*developing new businesses, job growth, increased income, product development, improved infrastructure, and special opportunities to link with other services and products. If approached in the right way, it can also promote community pride and yield a higher quality of life*". [7]

The degree to which the local economy is influenced varies. The benefits may include the potential for profitable domestic industries - hotels, restaurants, transport systems, souvenirs and handicrafts and guide services. On the other hand, the influence scale may be deeper, and the local tourism may attract large numbers of international visitors generating sizable amounts of foreign exchange. However, that could play an important role in diversifying local economies, and stimulating improvements to local transportation and communications infrastructure, which brings benefits to local people. In addition, there is a not quantified gain of tourist expenditure due to their abandoned formally registration in macro-economic scales. Through this, money earned through informal employment such as street vendors, informal guides, rickshaw drivers, etc. The UNEP Tourism states that "*The positive side of informal or unreported employment is that the money is returned to the local economy, and has a great multiplier effect as it is spent over and over again*." [8] The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) estimates that the indirect contribution of tourism equals 100% of that of direct tourism expenditures.[8]

4. Sustainable Tourism

Sustainability as a conceptual understanding constitutes the framework within which cultural tourism could be addressed. This raises a question about whether the term sustainable refers to tourism itself or does it describe one of its supporting initials? The answer is simply deduced from the typology of interrelationship between the cultural tourism and its constituents. However, it is important to sustain the cultural features that shape the supporting initials for any sustainable cultural tourism industry. The dynamic typology of cultural sustainability understandings draws a methodology for treating our inherited cultural over layers as a living organism. It could be developed, upgraded and reinvented to create a new interactive adapted image of that original one.

It is clear that the cultural sustainability perspective must be studied within the deep understanding of our roots. It could be considered that the cultural sustainability concept as one that comes to solve the conflict between the conservative vision of our inherited cultural over layers and the need to meet the new era challenges. Cultural sustainability is mainly concerned with the continuity of cultural values linking all of the past the present and the future. This linkage is deepening across both the geographical and the temporal scales. It is applied to territories that share a set of well defined characteristics. [9]

The paper in its next part will apply the findings of the theoretical study to Alexandria's historical commercial area. It highlights the cultural definition of the selected territory as a guideline for applying the 'Ecodevelopment understandings'.

5. Alexandria: Historical Background

Alexandria (named after its founder) lies on a stretch of land in the midst of the Mediterranean Sea, lake Mareotis, and the nearby island 'Pharos'. It was founded there in order to serve as a regional capital. The location was ideal for it was intermediate between Greece, across the Mediterranean, and the rest of Egypt. Its original plan was practical like most ancient Greek cities. It consisted of an orthogonal street pattern, with the sea being the main landscaping element. The Heptastadion was built to connect the Island of Pharos with Alexandria. Initially, it was merely a narrow structure, but later silted and formed the land area known today as the Mansheya neighborhood.[10]



Fig. 2. Alexandria's original planning features. Source: [11].

5.1. Flourishing Stages

After Alexander's death, Egypt was ruled by Ptolemy Soter. Under his reign the brilliance of Alexandria, the new capital of Egypt, started. Alexandria grew into one of the largest metropolis in the world. However, it became the world's scientific and intellectual focus. The achievements of the Ptolemies extended to the Pharos Lighthouse, the Mouseion (Great Library), the Heptastadion Dyke and the Temple of Serapis. [Fig 2] [10]

5.2. Deterioration Stages (Arab City)

During the Arabs rule (starting from 642 AD), Alexandria's prosperity had withered because of a decline in shipping. However, the city had about 300,000 inhabitants at this time. The Arabs moved the capital of Egypt to Cairo in (969AD) and Alexandria's decline continued, accelerating in the 14th cent., when the canal to the Nile silted up. The population of the city shrank, and was centered in the vicinity of the newly accreted land around the heptastadion. The area, formerly known as the Turkish town, later became the city center (El-Mansheya).

The city gradually regained importance after 1819, when El-Mahmoudiya Canal to the Nile was completed by Muhammad Ali, who developed Alexandria as a deepwater port and a naval station. [12]

5.3. Turkish Town

The study area is limited to Alexandria's commercial area (Souk) during 18th and 19th century. This Ottoman period of the city life distinguished the neck of the land that connects Pharos Island to the remains of the old Arabic city known as the '*Turkish Town*'. It was the only part of the city to be inhabited during this period; however, it was the starting point of the city's agglomerated composition since then. Nowadays, the Turkish town is divided into a number of local communities that share specific characteristics. The physically well defined boundaries create a coherent '*Being*' for each territory and that is clearly reflected upon both social and economic activities. Each of these territories has a distinguished economic base according to the activities developed within. [10]

6. Commercial Area (Souk) Analysis

The roots of the historical commercial areas of the '*Turkish town*' go back to the old Arab city of Alexandria. These commercial areas were developed along the extension of the axis going through the old City gates. They were erected out of the deteriorated city zones. However, they were specialized and that helped their sustainability and merging with the new city developments. [Fig 3] [13]

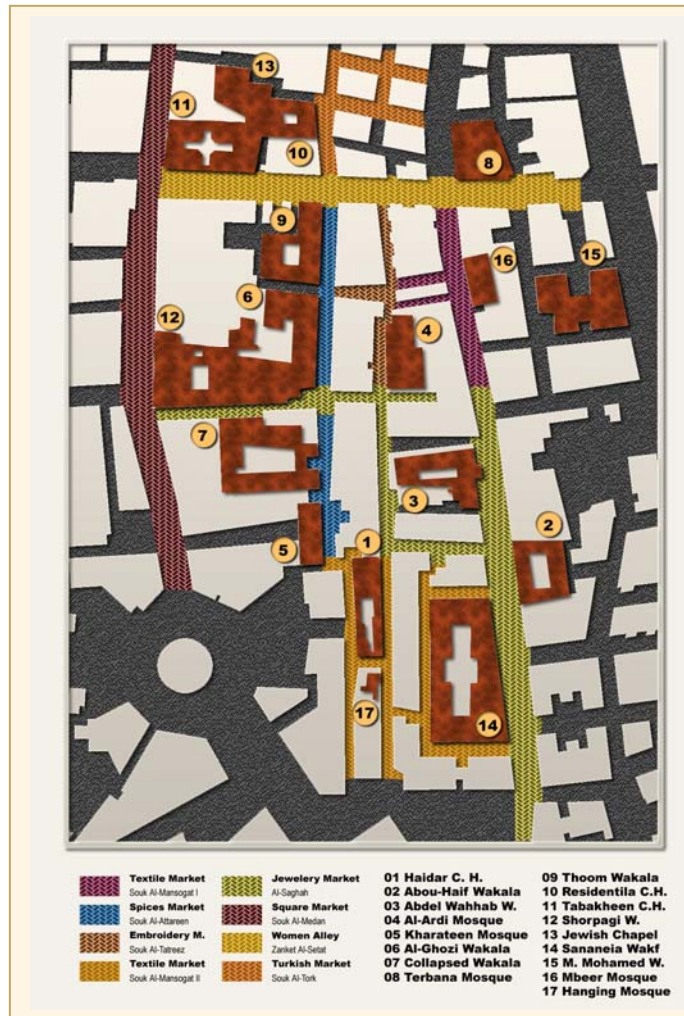


Fig. 3. Alexandria's historical commercial area (Souk)
Source: The researcher based on [13].

6.1. Morphological Analysis

The spatial pattern of the commercial areas reflects the typical Medieval Islamic city composition. It is characterized by a hierarchical definition of agglomerated spaces arranged to reflect the typology of the special social interactions within the community. These expressions were extended to formulate the solid and void articulation. That could be addressed within the next points.



Fig. 4. Physical characteristics of Alexandria's historical commercial area (Souk)
Source: The researcher



- **Scale:** The intimacy is the most important feature that distinguishes these commercial areas. There is variety in the way by which the territory expresses this value. The typology of space construction, the movement through well defined spaces, the limited building heights, their homogeneous skyline, different types of goods, their arrangement and their special colors, all of this draw the special scale that could be sensed while moving around.
- **Enclosure:** the commercial area reflects the 'Turkish town' enclosure characteristics. The movement paths are completely well defined enclosures. The degree of enclosure varies according to space definition. It ranges from internal courts in 'Wakala' buildings and 'cal de sac' streets to the main commercial streets. Not only the physical space proportions have the responsibility for dictating such sense of enclosure, so does the identification with the special characteristics that distinguishes a commercial corridor rather than another as well.
- **Sequential Experience:** the richness of the experience one gains passing through the historical commercial area refers mainly to the perception of interwoven sequential scenes. The movement across well defined areas with special qualities that distinguish each of them evolves this experience. The pattern of the historical commercial area is divided into a subdivision of specialized commercial corridors, 'Souk', that help developing this sense spreading among them. On the other hand, it is essential to consider the typology of physical construction that creates a rhythm of shade and shadow along the movement corridors.
- **Building Styles:** There are two main building typologies that are spread along the historical commercial zone. The first is the introvert one that is derived from the typical Mediterranean building morphology with some modifications related to the Turkish influence. The second is the extrovert one that reflects the influence of the Ottoman architecture style. Both two types

are simply articulated and have the same façade treatments. They have extended over the streets with wooden cantilevers to hold an extra internal space. These treatments created a special architectural language that distinguished the morphological analysis of the historical commercial areas.

- **Activities:** There are varieties of commercial activities that go on the historical commercial zone. They are geographically divided into a number of commercial corridors each of which is supporting a specific commercial activity. This division helped in conserving the main features of this historical area and supported its ability to be fit to new city developments. These activities are extended through a network of movement corridors. The typology of each varies according to the type of goods it sells. However, that creates a network of well defined territories. Among of these commercial activities are, 'Medan Souk', (square market), 'Tabakheen Souk' (cookers' market) 'Tourk Souk' (Turkish market) 'Al-Saghah' (jewelry market), 'Zanket Al-Settat' (women's alley), 'Al-Attareen Souk' (spice dealers market).



Fig. 3. Activities' typology at Alexandria's historical commercial area (Souk) Source: The researcher

7. Sustainable Cultural Tourism of Alexandria's historical Commercial Area (Souk)

Regarding a specific community, the sustainability of its cultural personality is a function of its conservative identity. However, that must be addressed within a dynamic perspective of the identity conservation. The clear understanding to the typology of cultural agglomerated personality comes to solve the contradiction between past, present and future terms in such a dynamic equation. The guarantee for a continuous line that links all of the past and the present to the future comes from keeping the values that constitute the community identity outlines. They –the values- act as genetic holders of the identity and to the cultural personality in forth.

7.1. Values Conservation

Meanwhile, the sustainability understanding maintains the futuristic vision, the study of values sustainability must go back to the roots. So, any cultural sustainable perspective must come to have a clear definition of the community values that distinguish its being. These values that emerged across the community history and along its struggle for survival are ones that draw the characteristics of the community identity that are worth being sustained. Moreover, it is needed to conserve the typology of conditions under which these values are continuously reacting.

The paper will come to apply this understanding to the historical commercial area of Alexandria. It addresses the values that developed along the area history and still draw the main features of its identity. Moreover, it highlights the media of interaction of these values as one that has to be conserved as a guarantee for sustaining the area identity.

- **Complexity & Richness:** The area's compact patterns determine such a mixture of experiences one gains when going through it. The grid distribution of commercial activities empowered the sense of ordered complexity. The orthogonal distribution of commercial market places allowed the visitor to build a number of different experiences based on the probable sequence he may go through. The movement through a variety of both space construction morphology and goods typology inspires the sense of richness. It could be considered that the sense of complexity and richness are due to:
 - **Physical structure:** the agglomerated pattern of the built environment enriches the visual experience of such a place. The richness of architectural vocabulary and the variety of their compositions enhance this quality.
 - **Activities:** the compact pattern of the commercial area and its historical roots that highlights the walk distance as a measure for identifying territories help in creating such a number of characteristic market places within a walk distance range. However, that enhances both the sense of complexity and richness for the tourist in such a type of cultural tourism.

- **Variety & Diversity:** There is a quiet relationship between this value and the previous one. The former is a reflection of these value consequences. However, it –variety & diversity value- is one of the most significant values that distinguish this area. The movement along these well defined market places –each has its unique character- supports the sense of this value. It also could be addressed within two aspects:
 - **Physical structure:** the commercial market places have two main types -according to the morphological analysis-. The first is the introvert style 'Wakala' where the shops are arranged around an enclave court. The second is the extrovert style where shops are distributed along the commercial streets. Both the two types are spread all over the area. The frequent movement among these two types inspires this value. On the other hand, the variety of enclosure scale and typology highlights this value.
 - **Activities:** The variety of activities practiced all over the commercial area enriches the sense of diversity and inspires its value. The movement through different well-defined areas enhances their perception qualities and indicates the diversity as an add value. The varieties are in the types of goods, their color, size, scale, value, smell, etc.

- **Intimacy & Coherence:** One of the main features that depict the area character. It is a clear reflection of the historical spatial needs where the human scale was the reference in determining the streets dimensions. Most of the commercial area streets have a width that does not permit the vehicles penetration. Moreover, in some market corridors, vendor counters are laid in the streets making a very small corridor to vendee path (about 70 cm width). This intimate scale is applied to all the physical enclosure creating a three dimensional setting that reflects the quality of the past.

This value is directly related to the previous ones as it guarantees the sense of unity of the commercial area as a whole. However, it keeps (*Variety & Diversity and Complexity & Richness*) values within physical limits that permit the movement experience through the commercial area to be perceived as a one being. On the other hand, the great number of vendees and area visitors inspire the sense of this value.

- **Dynamics (Flow):** It is a very important intangible value that distinguishes this historical area. The variety of all setting constituents creates a very dynamic pattern that draws the perspective of the area's identity. Moreover, the physical space proportions create movement corridors that support this value.

7.2. Setting Conservation (The interaction Media)

The previously mentioned values are interacting all the time within a specific defined physical setting. Both these values and their envelope setting draw the cultural identity that has to be sustained. The conservation of the physical setting has the same importance as keeping the values themselves. The historical over layers added on the place special configurations that emphasize its uniqueness. On the other hand, the physical conservation of these historical areas empowers the sense of both place and time, which play an important role in supporting the tourism potentials. The conservation of these built enclosures -as a container- of the continuous values reactions sustains the circumstances within which these values are reacting all the time.

Meanwhile, this issue is the key one in sustaining the physical setting for the values interaction, which suffers under a lot of deteriorating conditions in the studied area. The lack of maintenance, the bad usage, the cultural and economical changes are among the threats that influence its performance.

8. Conclusions

The cultural tourism understanding draws the linkage between the cultural sustainability concept and the territorial economic development. However, the relationship between these domains is mainly a function of their application scale. The micro scale reflects a clear vision on these relationship applications.

The paper developed an understanding of the 'ecodevelopment' concept as one that places special emphasis to the territorial development applications. It supports the endogenous development potentials as one that is responsible for the flourishing of the micro economic domain. The cultural tourism industry came to the heart of the matter as it deeply depends on the territorial cultural distinguished personality, however, the conservation of these distinction characteristics is the guarantee for its sustainability. Moreover, the paper highlighted the role of inspiring the inherited values and heritage in supporting the territorial unique being.

In its application study, the paper emphasized both, the continuity of values and the articulation of the physical setting of Alexandria's historical commercial areas (Souk) so as to guarantee that the preconditions for the cultural tourism assets are preserved and passed on from generation to another.

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