Heritage management as a force for economic and social resilience

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Heritage management as a force for economic and social resilience

Presentation Outline

• AlUla: Geographic context and strategic direction

• AlUla: Heritage overview

• AlUla: Socio-Economic context

• The role of RCU Cultural Heritage Department in promoting:

  Resilience of assets and landscapes
  Socio-economic resilience
  Resilience of memory

• Final remarks
AIUla – Geographic context

AIUla valley: a crossroads of travel routes, an attractor for settlement, a growing tourism destination

AIUla County > 22,000 km²
AlUla – Strategic context

Core Pillars & Principles

Tourism
Heritage, Arts & Culture
Nature & Wildlife
Economic & Social Development

1. Safeguard the Natural & Cultural Landscape
2. Heritage, Culture & Arts Global Destination
3. Restoring & Sustaining Ecosystems & Wildlife
4. Balanced Agriculture
5. Light-Touch Tourism
6. Subtle Connectivity
7. Revitalisation, Restoration & Regeneration
8. Local Community Development
9. Imaginative Infrastructure
10. Invisible Security

SOCIOECONOMIC FOUNDATIONS

Population & Employment
Demographics
Labour & Skills
Quality of Life
Entrepreneurship
Learning & Development

Source: Extracted from the RCU Sectorial Strategy & Framework plan
AlUla - Heritage overview

Heritage Baseline Data
597 sites
AlUla - Heritage overview

Cultural Heritage sites
Recorded through RCU Archaeological Programme
> 30,000
AIUla - Heritage overview

Communication/Artistic 71%

Techniques include:
- Carving
- Painting
- Relief

Interpretations include:
- Rock Art
- Inscription
- Inscription/Rock Art/Relief

Themes include:
- Humans & Animals
- Symbols (e.g. geometric, tribal)
- Objects (e.g. weapons)

Inscriptions include:
Arabic, Aramaic, Dadanitic, Greek, Hebrew, Latin, Minaic, Nabataean, Syriac, Thamudic
AlUla - Heritage overview

Funerary/Memorial 21%

Features include:
- Cairns
- Stone Piles
- Pits/Shafts
- & more

Interpretations include:
- “Tower Tombs”
- Ringed “Tower Tombs”
- Tomb Associated Features
- Covered Cave Graves
- Tomb/Graves/Burials
- Common Graves
- & more

Mostly looted, both in antiquity and recently

Locations vary (based on chronology?)
AlUla - Heritage overview

**Chronology:**
From Neolithic to Late Islamic

**Including:**
- Defensive
- Infrastructure/Transport
- Production sites
- Water management
- Ritual
- Hunting/Fishing
  - & more

**Defensive/Fortification:** 0.6%
**Agricultural/Pastoral and Domestic:** 9%
**Infrastructure/Transport:** 0.5%
**Unknown:** 4.3%
**Other:** 0.8%
• Unemployment among Saudi nationals in AlUla has risen since 2016, reaching 20.7% in 2021. This is in contrast with the trend of large cities like Medinah, and KSA in general.

Source: Extracted from the RCU + WSP Socioeconomic Baseline Report
• AlUla’s local economy is presently dominated by wholesale & retail trade and agriculture

Source: Extracted from the RCU + WSP Socioeconomic Baseline Report
AlUla – Socio-economic context

- There is a lack of tailored, higher-level degrees that are relevant to AlUla’s citizens and sectoral growth prospects - “There are no masters’ degrees here, and in particular a course in archaeology is needed” (RCU Community Engagement Report)

- There is potential to increase the employment rate among residents, and to address the seasonality of employment - “People recognize the change and want to be a part of it, but don’t know how” (RCU Stakeholder Engagement Session)

Source: Extracted from the RCU + WSP Socioeconomic Baseline Report

A significant proportion of the population reports having no formal education. <1% of Saudis in AlUla hold a Masters degree or Doctorate

There is a mismatch between higher education/vocational courses, and the areas of expertise needed for AlUla’s development.
Heritage management as a force for economic and social resilience

RCU Cultural Heritage department

RESILIENCE OF HERITAGE ASSETS AND LANDSCAPES
- Implementing heritage regulations
- HIA and planning consent

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RESILIENCE
- Fostering establishment of Cultural Heritage companies in KSA
- Capacity building
- Supporting tourism activation

RESILIENCE OF MEMORY
- Enhancing people’s links with Cultural Heritage by engaging with local communities
- Raising awareness of Cultural Heritage
Main Gaps in 2014 Antiquities Law

- No provision for HIA/LVIA prior to authorizing development.
- No provision for landscape protection.
- Weak regulation on human remains and fossils
- No procedure for rescue archaeology.
- Fragmented approach to heritage protection.

RCU Heritage Implementing Regulations

- Introduced the obligation for HIA/LVIA as condition of development consent.
- Introduced the concept of Landscape Protection Zones.
- Introduced regulation of Human Remains and Fossils.
- Introduced procedure for rescue archaeology.
- Introduced stronger approach on heritage protection, including a revision of heritage protection zones.
- Introduced permitting process with strong controls for both Research and Development-led cultural heritage work.
Implementing Heritage Regulations
RESILIENCE OF ASSETS AND LANDSCAPES

Implementing Heritage Regulations
ENFORCED CHANGE IN RESORT DESIGN AT PRE-PLANNING (LAND USE REQUEST) STAGE
HIA and planning processes

- No provision for HIA in law
- Heritage input only as comments in land use request review panel
- No follow-up on compliance

\[ \rightarrow \text{Weak heritage controls} \]

- Introduced formal HIA process in implementing regulations
- HIA included as mandatory step of planning process
- Controls on compliance and mitigation
Establishing heritage companies in KSA

Examples of services not provided in KSA:
- Heritage Consultancy
- Archeological Site Investigation
- Condition assessments

→ Need to source foreign companies

Pre-existing situation

First Saudi-owned CH company launched in 2021

From 2020 → effort to inform stakeholders about the RCU Cultural Heritage Implementing Regulations & HIA provisions, and discuss opportunities of setting up Heritage Companies in KSA

RCU Heritage Department Contribution

- Opening up new economic opportunities in KSA
- Employment of Saudi archaeologists
- Capacity building rather than reliance on foreign expertise
Capacity building of Saudi heritage professionals is an ethical imperative and a formal requirement to obtain a permit for all RCU cultural heritage works.

Students and graduates trained in over 30 heritage projects with international teams – several subsequently hired by RCU & private firms.

- Cultural heritage not considered as a career opportunity
- Lack of postgraduate education in cultural heritage and related sciences
- Absence of opportunities for practical training
  → Need to source foreign heritage professionals

- Training opportunities through fieldwork placements
- Employment of Saudi Archaeologists
- Capacity building in cooperation with international expertise
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RESILIENCE

Capacity building

Workshops

Fieldwork documentation (structures)

Fieldwork documentation (rock art)

Finds analysis

Field survey

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Tourism is central to the AlUla project, and cultural heritage among the main attractors of visitors. Safeguarding of cultural heritage is a core value of AlUla.

- Heritage sites overall poorly conserved
- Only 3 heritage sites open to tourists, but mostly unregulated
- No official tour guides or job opportunities in the sector

→ Minimal revenue from tourism

- Support Tourism sector through conservation of heritage sites
- Enhance the AlUla heritage narrative
- Guide and support activations of heritage sites
- Identify added value of heritage to development projects
- Enhanced job and revenue opportunities
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RESILIENCE

Supporting tourism

Restaurant (adaptive reuse of a heritage building)

AlManshiyah Plaza

Mudbrick Workshop

Heritage Trails
Community engagement is a moral obligation and a formal requirement to obtain a permit for all cultural heritage works led by RCU

Pre-existing situation

- Scarce awareness of local heritage
- Superstition
- Uncontrolled destruction of heritage assets

→ Community “detached” from their cultural heritage

RCU Heritage Department Contribution

- Constant effort to involve community in heritage activities
- Tell the story of lesser known heritage features
- Re-build a shared memory of AlUla
RESILIENCE OF MEMORY

Community Engagement & Awareness

Workshops

Site visits

Lectures at local schools/universities

Site visits with local tour guides

Meet the archaeologists!
Final remarks

Challenge is to embed cultural heritage as a vehicle for resilience in the context of rapid development through:

- Safeguarding and conservation of cultural heritage assets and landscapes. Ensuring protection from development and long-term management through robust regulatory and planning mechanisms, including robust & clear HIA process.

- Fostering socio-economic resilience through capacity building, tourism & commercial initiatives. This requires time. Need to balance immediate development-driven needs with longer-term goal of resilience & sustainability.

- Repairing linkages between communities and their heritage is crucial to maintaining sense of belonging.

- Shaping a heritage ecosystem where there are opportunities to build careers.

- Promote cultural heritage as added value to developments.
Let’s continue the conversation!
Post questions and comments in the IAIA23 app.

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