

Advances in Science, Technology & Innovation
IEREK Interdisciplinary Series for Sustainable Development

Stella Kostopoulou · Gricelda Herrera-Franco ·
Jacob Wood · Kheir Al-Kodmany *Editors*

Cities' Vocabularies and the Sustainable Development of the Silkroads

Advances in Science, Technology & Innovation

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The title of the photo: Rotunda (or Rotonda) monument in Thessaloniki, Region of Central Macedonia, Greece by Miltiadis Maleas. Brief info: An early 4th-century AD Roman monument, next to the Arch of Galerius in the city center, inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1988 as part of the Paleochristian and Byzantine monuments of Thessaloniki.

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Introduction

The Silk Road, a historic network of trade routes that connected the East and the West, played an important role in the exchange of goods, ideas, and cultural practices across civilizations. Along this extensive network of routes, cities emerged into significant trade and culture centers, evolving distinctive identities that were reflected in their architecture and arts as a result of their diverse populations and cultural influences.

This conference proceedings book is a selection of research papers from the first edition of the International Conference on “Silk Road Sustainable Tourism Development and Cultural Heritage (SRSTDCH)” held in 2021 in collaboration with Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, the European Interdisciplinary Silk Road Tourism Centre, Greece, and the fifth edition of the International Conference on “Cities’ Identity through Architecture and Arts (CITAA)” held in 2021 in collaboration with University of Pisa, Italy. The book brings together scholars from various disciplines, economists, architects, planners, tourism experts, and decision-makers to explore how the Silk Road sparked not only trade to thrive, but was also a catalyst for cultural exchange, tourism, and entrepreneurship. Through a range of case studies and interdisciplinary approaches, this book aims to provide a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the cultural interaction and sustainable development along the Silk Roads, as well as the formation of cities’ identities through architecture and arts.

The chapters in the book examine how the Silk Road influenced trade, architecture and the arts of cities along its routes. From the caravanserais and temples of Central Asia and China, to the bustling marketplaces of the Middle East and the Mediterranean, the Silk Roads connected a vast and diverse region that was rich in cultural exchange and innovation.

In addition to its emphasis on the Silk Road legacy, this book also highlights how local cultures and traditions shaped the architecture and arts of cities along the routes. From the indigenous styles and motifs found in the art and architecture of Central Asia and China, to the blending of local and foreign influences in the arts of the Middle East and the Mediterranean, this volume showcases the diversity and complexity of civilizations along the Silk Roads.

Overall, this conference proceedings book offers a thorough and nuanced examination of how the Silk Road impacted travel, trade, entrepreneurship, tourism, cultural exchange and artisanal crafts, and the development of cities’ identities through their built environments. Through its interdisciplinary approach and diverse range of case studies, the book provides a valuable resource for scholars and researchers interested in the cultural exchange and sustainable tourism development along this ancient network of trade routes, as well as the formation of distinctive identifiers of the cities’ architecture and the arts throughout the centuries and over modern times.

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The City of Ohrid as a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site: Challenges and Solutions for Cultural Tourism Development

Sasho Korunovski and Michael Risteski

Abstract

The City of Ohrid represents an important site with UNESCO status of mixed heritage located on the historic route of Via Egnatia. It is the most important tourist center in the Republic of North Macedonia and therefore faces numerous development challenges. Namely, urban and tourism development has caused several risks and dangers to its protection status in the past which is also prevalent to the present day. Since its proclamation as a World Cultural Heritage Site the city of Ohrid and its surroundings had constantly been trying to find a balance between the increase in tourist visits on one side, and the protection of its cultural and natural values, on the other. This paper will explore the developmental path of this area with its different socio-economic and environmental challenges and impacts in its pursuit to achieve long-term sustainability. In that sense, several strategic documents will be analyzed in which the most recent protection measures and activities have been envisioned to be implemented in the near future. This will also include sustainable solutions and recommendations for improvements mainly in a tourist-developmental and preservation sense. This is important for the city to transform itself into a sustainable, yet highly competitive global tourist destination.

Keywords

Ohrid • Protection • Cultural heritage • Tourism development

1 Introduction

World Heritage Sites (WHS) represent an important potential for tourism development of many regions/countries in the world. The designation “UNESCO World Heritage Site” is an important promotional tool for the development of tourism. Many destinations have built their tourist brand around these designations. Such a site is the city of Ohrid in the Republic of North Macedonia. The city with its surroundings has been proclaimed a World Cultural and Natural Site since 1979 and 1980 (Mixed Heritage Status). The Convention concerning the Protection of the World’s Cultural and Natural Heritage was adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1976 with the purpose of “identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of cultural and natural heritage of outstanding universal value” (Leask and Fyall 2006). Sites are being designated through a set of determined criteria which must be followed. The designation process is being conducted through the system of inscription of the site in the World Heritage List (WHL). This includes adopting a set of operational guidelines and periodic reporting processes. The state of conservation of World Heritage properties is being conducted by the World Heritage Committee through monitoring processes which can be either periodic or reactive (UNESCO World Heritage Centre 2012). The Ohrid region has been inscribed in the World Heritage List since 1979 (Decision No. 03COM XII.46), for its natural values according to the selection criterion (viii): “to be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth’s history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features” (UNESCO World Heritage Committee 1979). This inscription has been widened in the following year on its cultural values (Decision No. 04COM V.13), according to the following selection criteria: (i): “to represent a masterpiece of human creative

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the Ohrid region will create increased costs for the government's undertakings for solving the current problems and threats (such as increased spending for conservation activities, conducting visitor impact studies, decreasing/regulating the number of visitors in some of the cultural sites, etc.). In the long run, such higher government spending should ensure an increase in the quality of the tourism offer and higher competitiveness of the destination through developing sustainable tourist activities, redirecting tourism flows and active involvement of the local population in creating alternative tourist offers. Therefore, the practical benefits of this research are evident in the economic, social and cultural spheres. Furthermore, this paper's practical implication stems from the fact that the findings are incorporated in the newly adopted tourism strategy of the municipality of Ohrid. More precisely, it provides clear directions for cultural tourism development in the municipality that is based on the principles of sustainability. The findings provide proposals for alleviating some of the pressures on the cultural values and attractions in Ohrid, but also solutions for redirecting the current tourism flows towards different cultural localities and resources located outside the city core and within the boundaries of the municipality of Ohrid. These proposals and solutions have practical significance because they will be implemented through a detailed Action Plan within the adopted strategy. This in turn will lead the region of Ohrid to become a recognizable and sustainable tourism destination of global significance by maintaining its WHS status.

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