International Conference

New challenges for UW nature and cultural heritage tourism during the Ocean Decade

Open accessibility, sustainable UW cultural and nature tourism, impacts of climate change, upskilling and reskilling for the new generation, connection with the Blue economy

29th January-1st February 2026

Aix-Marseille University | Aix-en-Provence - Le Cube (Schuman Campus)

Sustainable, engaging and creative tourism as a driver for a better future in rural and remote areas

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Heritage and places

- For people living in a territory, it is normal that heritage and places are **linked by history, by traditions, by geography, by the narrations of ancestors**.

- However, nowadays, these liaisons **risk being broken** by forms of tourism that are looking at the destinations as mines to be exploited.

- The consequences are, among others, turistification, overtourism, gentrification, negative impacts on the natural landscapes

Tourism as a tool

- How to counteract the negative impact of tourism?

- We propose to shift from the simplistic attendance account, to a new concept of tourism as tool to complement and diversify the income of the territories, in the **economic, social, environmental and cultural domains**

- In this light, tourism can become
  - A way of giving visibility and recognition to rural areas and their inhabitants
  - A means to promote the installation and the generation of services that are beneficial both for local communities and for visitors
  - A valuable contribution to regeneration and respectful development of the areas
  - A process of rediscovery/reactivation of territorial commons based on shared resources, assets, and spaces typically managed and used collectively by the community

A factor of well-being and social cohesion

Generating innovative fair, creative and sustainable tourism approaches means to explore different ways :

- Meeting together **visitors and local communities**

- Focusing on culture, nature, knowledge, and experiences

- Leveraging on strong place attachment of inhabitants to strengthen social cohesion, bolstering the sense of identity of the rural population

- Developing inclusive development projects, focusing on elements of the territory whose heritage value has been successfully cultivated

- Taking advantage of digital networks that can allow more and more categories of workers to relocate at a distance from urban centres

- Reconnecting with flavours, traditions, craftsmanship and social practices

- Valuing spirituality and beauty of places

and much more

Heritage Communities

Communities of people who share a strong attachment to a piece of heritage, especially the heritage elements that characterise their territory (Faro Convention, 2005)

Heritage Communities represent an essential support for the development of cultural and sustainable tourism initiatives

However, a shared attachment to heritage does not guarantee the capacity of the members of the community

- to coordinate spontaneously

- to agree on the necessary rules that allow the management of the heritage to which they are attached

- i.e. to turn the local resources to a proper common

Integrating the participation of local communities in public strategies

Operational methods are needed for integrating the participation of local communities in political decisions, economic exchanges and territorial planning, such as

- Payment for services for the maintenance of heritage resources
- Liaise tourism with different economic sectors: agriculture, forestry, craftmanship, commerce, …
- Re-discovery of territorial commons
- Inclusion of minorities
- Valuing circular economy

Tourism in remote areas

- The 21st century tourists are not anonymous tourists, totally alien to the territory, who are taken from one "spot" to another, who buy standardised low-quality products and who are just sucked in by the thirst for new destinations with an ever-higher carbon footprint.

- Despite the remoteness, less-known areas can be particularly attractive for visitors because of their **richness in tangible and intangible, cultural and natural heritage**.

- **Digital services and smart data management** can enhance the accessibility and sustainability of remote and less-known cultural sites.

- Collecting, understanding and using tourism data can enhance the visibility and the attractiveness of remote cultural sites.
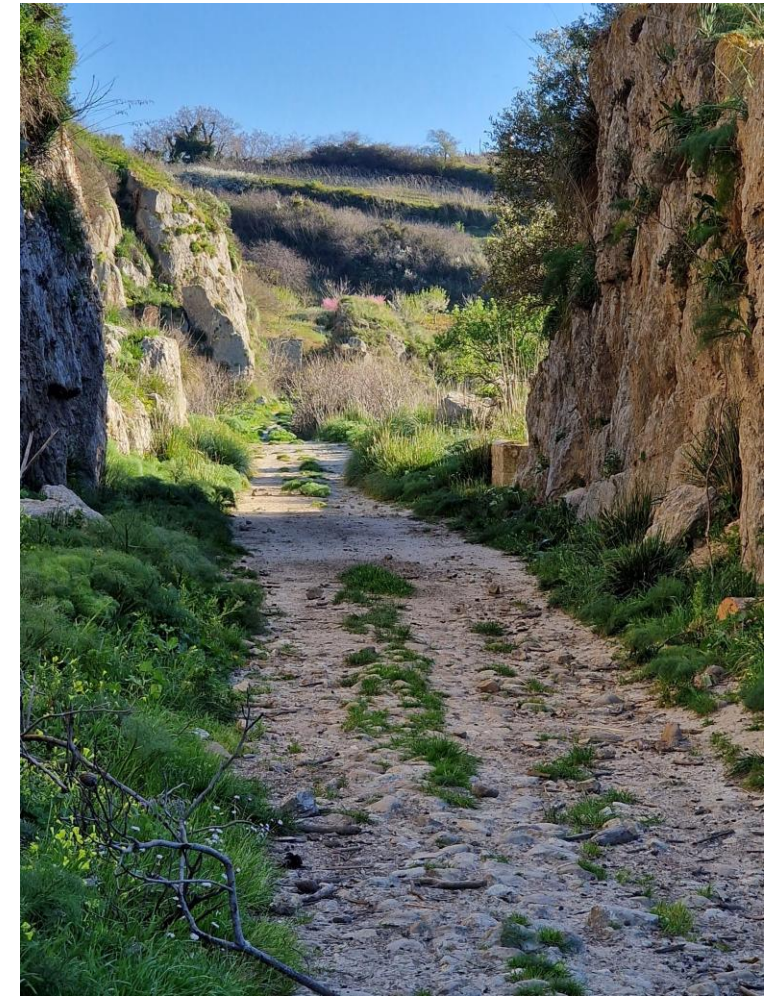
Promoting peripheral destinations

Opening up communities to display their unique strengths and local identities to interested visitors may improve confidence, support broader world-views and can produce a **sense of ownership and pride**.

The contents from cultural heritage institutions can offer knowledge on how local identities historically developed through shared and diverging underlying **frameworks of values**.

However, to introduce tourism successfully and in a sustainable way, clear **demonstrators, training programmes, guidelines, awareness actions** are needed:

- Sustainable business models

- Improving the ability to re-use archival resources

- Transforming heritage into stories to be narrated also on the digital platforms

SECreTOUR project

- SECreTour is a research and innovation action funded by the European Union under the **Horizon Europe** Programme

- The action **started on 1/3/2024, lasting 3 years,** focusing on cultural tourism in the European peripheries, assessing different local contexts, needs and types of cultural heritage

- Novel forms of tourism development are tested and experimented

- Alternative business models are studied and promoted

- Governance and citizen engagement are experimented for contributing to:
  - touristic-economic planning
  - community building
  - management of commons
  - cultural heritage protection

- **11 partners from 8 EU countries plus Albania and Switzerland**

SECreTour pilots and partners

- A series of pilot cases have been chosen to represent a wide range of European territories, communities and heritage

- They include rural and agrarian landscapes, memory places of local identities, minorities, and conflictive dark heritage.


SECreTour partners

SECreTour pilots

8 cases to experiment innovation

- **Bibracte - Morvan des Sommets**: 140 km long cultural route linking villages by making the best use of the existing dense network of historical paths in a depopulated area

- **Traditional irrigation systems in South-East Spain**: irrigation system dating mainly from the Middle Ages during the Islamic period, extending throughout the area, from the high peaks (with systems of artificial aquifer recharge and artificial pastures) to the more fertile lowland areas generating oases in the middle of the desert

- **The heritage of the Vlach ethnolinguistic minority in the Upper Vjosa valley (Albania)**: an ethnolinguistic group distinguished by their language, which is a dialect derived from Latin, and their ways of living, based primarily on pastoral transhumance.

- **Rural Roma heritage in Hungary:** the largest minority group in the Eastern-European countries characterised by varied ethnic and socio-cultural features

- **Historic graves of Ireland and the Irish diaspora** : a community-focused participatory environment sharing grassroots heritage

- **Renaissance of mining-related cultural heritage and heritage communities in central Slovakia** : a rural and remote area that has a history of mining and is associated with rich cultural heritage
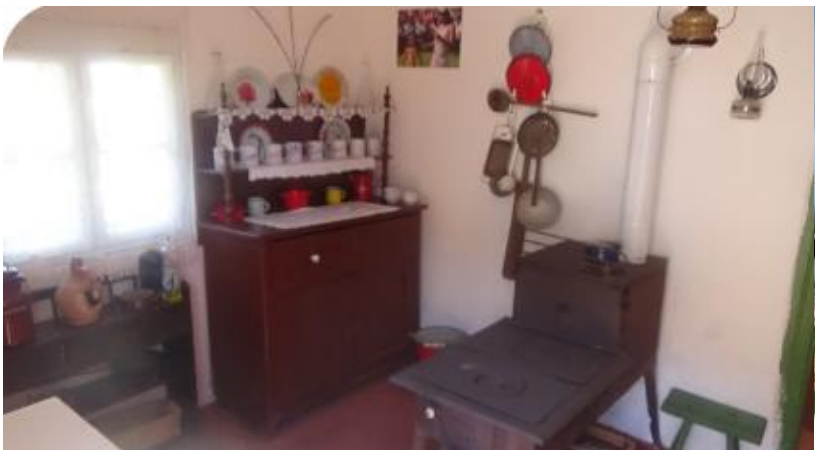
- **Digital nomadism in heritage-rich communities, Idrija (Slovenia) : a** 500-year history started with the discovery of mercury and its lively mining settle-men

- **San Giorgio, the Threshold of the Sacred Mountain (Switzerland) :** geologically made up of Mesozoic rocks characterized by a high fossil content, preserved in excellent condition, an extensive presence of works of art and religious architecture, testimonies of the living culture linked to the mountain, extremely important evidence of biodiversity

SECreTOUR
Sustainable Creative Tourism

PROMOTER

Pilots' objectives

Through these pilots, the project experiments the adoption of **new paradigms in local contexts**, facilitating effective communication and cooperation, and activating co-creative problem-solving through interdisciplinary and trans-sectoral approaches.

Specific objectives:

- To foster **bottom-up local strategies**, focusing on hidden and under-valued potentialities usually not considered, and on the experience, learning and participation of visitors

- To promote **fair and sustainable business models** based on living communities, avoiding negative impacts of touristification and reinforcing local identities and social ties

- To generate **opportunities of participation and interaction with stakeholders** and local communities by the promotion of payment for services agreement

- To foster the use of innovative approaches by local communities and stakeholders, including the use of digital services

Common approaches for a common vision

- Promoting **networking** and studying **cross-border** opportunities

- Sharing policy lessons and **recommendations**: bio-cultural heritage protection and conservation, environmental care, economic diversifications and community building

- Observing general ideas in local details and in specific governance contexts, testing cooperation and problem-solving through an **interdisciplinary approach**

- Working with a **wide range of stakeholders**, to engage with cultural heritage specialists and managers, farmers, local associations, young people, digital nomads, minorities, neo-rural population and cultural industries

- Integrating citizens and their perspectives into the process, to provide **new pathways to local communities** in facing current and future economic and societal transformations, unlocking the potential of cultural heritage and promoting new forms of cultural tourism

Thank you for your attention

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