



# ALULA

## BUILDING THE ULTIMATE TOURISM DESTINATION

REPORT OF THE UNESCO UNITWIN EXPERTS  
“CULTURE, TOURISM, DEVELOPMENT”

JANUARY 2020



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AFALULA  
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FOR ALULA  
DEVELOPMENT

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Chapter 1 was compiled by Thiago ALLIS, Chapter 2 by Francesca COMINELLI and Chapter 3 by François VELLAS.

Maria GRAVARI-BARBAS did the general editing of the report.



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## PREAMBLE

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From November 23rd to 30th, a group of 16 experts from 9 countries in Europe, Africa and Latin America gathered at Alula at the joint invitation of RCU and AFALULA to brainstorm tourism development and its social, cultural and economic implications.

The experts are members of the UNESCO UNITWIN network “Culture, Tourism, Development” coordinated by Maria GRAVARI-BARBAS, Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University.

UNITWIN networks serve as a prime means of capacity building through the exchange of knowledge and sharing in a spirit of solidarity. They promote North-South and South-South cooperation as a strategy to enrich institutions and field actors. They represent a closely-knit system of cooperation in research, documentation and training to facilitate exchanges and knowledge-sharing among universities, decision makers, non-governmental organizations, civil society and the private sector.



The UNITWIN - UNESCO network “Culture, Tourism, Development” was founded in 2002 by the UNESCO Chair “Culture, Tourism, Development” from Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. In 2020, It comprises of 30 universities through the world. It represents a worldwide pool of skills and experts.

Its goals are:

- **Creating** a worldwide system of cooperation between universities in the fields of culture, tourism and development.
- **Promoting** the concepts, principles and objectives of UNESCO incorporated in its documents of reference (Conventions of 1972, 2003 and 2005 especially, the Convention of Faro 27th October 2005, and closing texts in International Conferences – Stockholm, 1998, Johannesburg, 2001).
- **Promoting tourism** in accordance with the principles and objectives of the programme « World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism», 2012.
- **A better understanding** of nature and the complex ties between tourism, culture and a sustainable development of territories.
- **Encouraging** a responsible and ethical vision of tourism as a means of sustainable development of territories and enhancing cultural diversity
- **Helping** to develop strategies and projects which are environmentally sustainable, socially fair, sensible from a business point of view and with a cultural value.
- **Getting expertise** closer to the policy decision-makers to benefit the populations, especially those in poverty.

The UNITWIN network “Culture, Tourism, Development” works closely with the tourism program of the UNESCO World Heritage Center. Its members are experts on the relationship between tourism and local development in UNESCO World heritage sites. During recent years they have carried expertise missions on several World heritage sites around the world at the invitation of local and regional governments.

The UNITWIN AIUla mission report integrates both the “feeling” at the time of the mission, following the visits and working meetings with AFALULA and the RCU, as well as a broader reflection integrating the international experiences gathered by the entire UNESCO Chair network.





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This report gives the insights from 16 international experts from 9 countries and 14 universities from Europe, Africa and Latin America, members of the UNITWIN network “Culture, Tourism, Development”. The conclusions are the result of intensive one-week *in situ* experience, organized in visits, brainstorming sessions, meetings with local actors and staff from RCU and AFALULA.

The experts recognized the outstanding value of the area, which was approached in a holistic way and beyond the main archaeological sites. They consider that the future tourism development of the region will depend on the capacity to ensure the perfect conservation of the archaeological remains while connecting in the touristic experience all experiential aspects related to the cultural, natural and intangible resources.

They stress the importance of setting qualitative rather than quantitative goals in terms of future visitation. The goal of 2 million visitors will probably take years to be achieved given the competitiveness of the tourism product. The “success” of AIUla tourism development should be measured through a multi-criteria approach, including local social and cultural development, local inhabitants’ empowerment, environment enhancement, etc.

It is therefore needed to develop indicators for a holistic understanding of local development related to (but going further beyond) qualitative tourism performances. According to the experts this seems to be one of the most important tasks to implement on the site.



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## ANNEX 1: LIST OF THE PARTICIPANTS

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<b>COMINELLI</b>	Francesca	Paris 1 Panthéon-University
<b>CRAVIDAO</b>	Fernanda	University of Coimbra
<b>FUENTES MORALEDA</b>	Laura	Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, Madrid
<b>GARCIA HERNANDEZ</b>	Maria	Complutense University of Madrid
<b>GRAVARI-BARBAS</b>	Maria	Paris 1 Panthéon-University
<b>MORERE MOLINERO</b>	Nuria	Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, Madrid
<b>PINTO DOS SANTOS</b>	Norberto	University of Coimbra
<b>RAMOS</b>	Carmen	National University of Tres de Febrero
<b>SAHLAH</b>	Samer A.	King Saud University
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<b>VELLAS</b>	François	University of Toulouse Capitole
<b>YAGHMOUR</b>	Samer	King Abdulaziz University
<b>NEHME</b>	Laila	CNRS
<b>ALSUHAIBANI</b>	Abdulrahman	Royal Commission for AIUla
<b>DANTAU</b>	Régis	AFALULA - Human capital Director
<b>LEFEBVRE</b>	Nicolas	AFALULA - Tourism & Hospitality Director

### PERSONS MET :

<b>FOOTE</b>	Rebecca	RCU - Head of Heritage & Archaeology
<b>JONES</b>	Phillip	RCU - Chief Destination Marketing Officer
<b>SAFOUANE</b>	Youssef	RCU - Head of Social & Economic Development
<b>ALSAKRAN</b>	Rami	RCU - Capabilities Development Manager
<b>NICHOLS</b>	Jim	RCU - City Management Director
<b>ARICI</b>	Francesca	RCU - County Planning & Zoning Director
<b>EILENBERG</b>	Anne	RCU - Senior Urban Planning Specialist
<b>ALIMAM</b>	Ahmed	RCU - Engagement delivery Lead
<b>AL REBH</b>	Hussain	RCU - County Planning & Zoning Manager
<b>MOLES</b>	Jeremy	AFALULA - Architecture & Development

## ANNEX 2: PROGRAM

DATES	ACTIVITY
<b>Saturday, 23<sup>rd</sup></b>	Travels to Riyadh
Evening	Arrival to Riyadh. Installation and night at the hotel
<b>Sunday 24<sup>th</sup></b>	Flight to AlUla
Morning	Arrival and installation at the Shaden Resort
Afternoon	<b>As of 2 pm : General presentation of the workshop. Objectives and expectations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction on AlUla development plan and perspectives by ESD, DMO, CZP, HNAC and City Management teams from the Royal Commission for AlUla (RCU), with Regis Dantaux, Head of Human Capital &amp; Nicolas Lefebvre, Hospitality and Tourism Director, AFALULA</li> <li>• Introduction on the methodology of the workshop by Maria Gravari-Barbas</li> </ul>
<b>Monday, 25<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Hegra site visit</b> under the direction of Laila Nehmé, Director of Research at CNRS - UMR 8167 Orient & Méditerranée - Full day
<b>Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>AlUla Sites visit - Full day</b> (Harrat al Huwayrid, Jabal Ikmaah & Old Town under the direction of Ahmed Allmam)
<b>Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>As of 10 am, presentations and discussion with AlUla Stakeholders and heads of programs</b> - RCU participants to be confirmed  Followed by a plenary Workshop session: fine-tuning of the work methodology.
Morning	
Afternoon	<b>As of 3 pm</b> , Dadan site Visit under the direction of Abdulrahman AlSuhaibani, Archaeologist, consultant for RCU
<b>Thursday 28<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Work in Groups</b> (international experts + Saudi Colleagues) - Full day
<b>Friday 29<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Work in Groups</b> (international experts + Saudi Colleagues)
Morning	
Afternoon	<b>Synthesis</b>
<b>Saturday 30<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Restitution &amp; Discussion</b>
Morning	
Afternoon	<b>Working session of international experts.</b> Next steps and writing procedures  Departure to airport (around 7 pm)
Evening	Flight back to Riyadh
<b>Sunday Dec 1<sup>st</sup></b>	International flights from Riyadh













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