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TURISMO E PATRIMÓNIO COLONIAL ENCONTRO DE CULTURAS

CONGRESSO INTERNACIONAL

<https://tourismheritage.wixsite.com/2026>

Keynotes

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CHAM - Centro de Humanidades: Universidade NOVA Lisboa e Universidade dos Açores

ARTIS - Instituto de História de Arte, Universidade Lisboa

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INTRODUCTION 1

Heritage and Sustainable Tourism in Macaronesia

Juan Manuel Santana-Pérez

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Within the Atlantic Ocean there exist multiple insular realities. Our spatial framework extends between 43° and 12° north latitude and between 25° and 13° west longitude. Macaronesia (a term derived from the Greek makáron, meaning “happy,” and nēsoi, meaning “islands,” coined by Webb in 1835) comprises the archipelagos of the Azores, Madeira, the Selvagens Islands, the Canary Islands, and Cape Verde.

There are coastal communities, such as the Macaronesian archipelagos, that annually receive almost nine times more tourists than their total resident population. However, this situation entails a serious risk: these communities may become victims of their own success. The current challenge lies in sustaining tourism activity in a way that ensures the preservation and dissemination of both tangible and intangible heritage. The Atlanticity of these islands constitutes one of their defining identity features, and heritage plays a decisive role in the process of constructing collective identities.

This study seeks to formulate a series of proposals, most of which are already reflected in UNESCO frameworks and in various guidelines issued by the Council of Europe, along with additional recommendations by international experts that should be taken into account by insular authorities.

The tangible dimension of heritage consists of artistic works and utilitarian

structures. Other forms of heritage that also require preservation include geographical and biological heritage.

The intangible dimension of heritage encompasses language, oral traditions, traditional knowledge, gastronomy, the skills necessary for the creation of material culture, systems of values, and performing arts—in short, everything that constitutes the culture of a people in the most anthropological sense of the term.

Macaronesian culture is a hybrid formed by multiple cultural traditions. On the one hand, behaviors and customs of indigenous groups have endured. To these must be added the cultural contributions of the Europeans who conquered the territory, predominantly Castilians. Finally, the cultural practices of various African ethnic groups brought as enslaved populations must also be considered, traces of which still survive in small communities, such as Moriscos and sub-Saharan groups.

The valorization and sustainable management of cultural heritage should serve as a means for the development of local societies.

An increasing number of tourists are no longer satisfied solely with sun-and-beach tourism, but instead seek to transform their journeys into intellectually enriching experiences. Consequently, the tourism market has responded to these demands by offering new destinations and experiential products.

Tourists' changing demands range from recreational travel to the exploration and learning of traditions, culture, society, and the environment. However, intense tourist flows cause significant damage—not only to the environment, potentially leading to its degradation, but also to local communities. Numerous attempts have been made to reduce or eliminate the negative impacts of tourism, giving rise to the concept of sustainable tourism, understood as tourism that does not harm the environment and improves quality of life. Sustainability encompasses environmental, social, and economic systems.

Table 1. Tourists Received in the Macaronesian Archipelagos (2024)

Archipelago	Tourists	Total Population
Azores	4,2 million	241718
Madeira	11,7 million	259440
Canary Islands	17,77 million	2258000
Cape Verde	1,2 million	528000

Source: Author's own elaboration based on official data.

Sustainable and responsible tourism increasingly act as allies in the valorization of local community traditions and their constituent elements¹, encompassing both tangible heritage and intangible aspects such as ideas, beliefs, and gastronomy.

We understand heritage as the collective set of works and values that belong to a community - and ultimately to humanity as a whole - whether material or immaterial,

and which constitute assets that are difficult to replicate or reproduce. Heritage is inseparably linked to a specific place and/or culture.

Heritage is our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we transmit to future generations. Cultural and natural heritage constitute irreplaceable sources of life and inspiration². Heritage is the ensemble of human creations in which a community recognizes its specific values and with which it identifies³. The identification and definition of heritage therefore constitute a process related to the selection of values (Cracow Charter, 2000)⁴.

Concepts such as intangible heritage, mentalities, and culture have long been used by historiography to designate fields of study that are closely interrelated and often overlapping. It may therefore be more productive to refer instead to imaginary, figurative, ideological, and religious representations.

We face both the challenge and the opportunity of reconciling the conservation of tangible and intangible heritage with tourism. This requires careful reflection on the risks and opportunities of cultural tourism, particularly when intervening in economically and culturally sensitive spaces. Cultural heritage must be valorized and disseminated without distorting its meaning, while also meeting tourists'

¹ Naidea Nunes Nunes e Luísa Gouveia: "Património enogastronómico, turismo e sustentabilidade", *Isleña*, 75 (110-139), julho-dezembro 2024, p. 115.

² Conferencia General de la Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura –UNESCO– en su 32.^a reunión en octubre de 2003.

³ Daniel Palacios González: "Críticas interseccionales al

patrimonio", *Huarte de San Juan. Geografía e Historia*, 32 (7-14) 2025, p. 7.

⁴ *Carta de Cracovia 2000. Principios para la conservación y restauración del patrimonio construido*. Versión española del Instituto Español de Arquitectura (Universidad de Valladolid), Javier Rivera Blanco y Salvador Pérez Arroyo. Miembros del Comité Científico de la "Conferencia Internacional Cracovia 2000".

legitimate aspirations for access and enjoyment⁵.

Growing awareness of tourism's environmental impacts, within a more holistic vision of environmental conservation, has led to their incorporation into debates on heritage preservation.

Tourism transforms physical spaces, often beyond sustainable limits. The strongest asset of "new" cultural tourism lies in its contribution to tourism sustainability. Cultural tourism can enhance levels of protection and conservation of cultural heritage by facilitating access and understanding, promoting greater legibility and fostering social awareness. The State must effectively fulfill the role assigned to it by law.

True development can only be sustained through culture. In the Macaronesian archipelagos, this principle acquires the status of an identity emblem and offers an alternative to homogenizing models of postmodern thought. What we call progress is culturally conditioned. Applied to tourism sustainability, this implies accepting that tourism development is not synonymous with mere growth, and that culture must constitute the foundational element of any tourism-related activity. Tourism is a complex socio-cultural phenomenon, irreducible to economics alone, since it is fundamentally a cultural industry. The notion of cultural tourism is therefore essential for those concerned with heritage.

Since the 1960s, these islands have based much of their economic development on tourism, often with limited planning and insufficient respect for ecological and historical heritage. Historians must urgently conduct research before material remains disappear, and are ethically bound to defend the conservation of both tangible and intangible heritage.

Scholars from the Canary Islands have been particularly active in this field. A key reference is PASOS. Revista de Turismo y Patrimonio Cultural, a quarterly journal founded in 2003, which by 2025 had reached its 23rd issue. Moreover, numerous studies confirm the exhaustion of the sun-and-beach tourism model and the inefficiency of current heritage conservation policies, revealing a growing gap between these two issues. Heritage is increasingly perceived as an economizable asset, raising unavoidable ethical concerns and controversy⁶.

In Madeira, the tourism development model presents weaknesses due to limited diversification, both in market segments and age groups. Its competitiveness is based on price stagnation, which contradicts its quality-oriented positioning⁷. Tourism has been used as a scenographic support for destination structuring, particularly along the Laurisilva Coast, where heritage activation has been promoted through political discourse by social agents supported by local, regional, and even national

⁵ Josep Ballart Hernández: "Patrimonio cultural y turismo sostenible en el espacio iberoamericano: Reto y oportunidades del presente", *Diálogos. Revista del departamento de História e do Programa de Pós-Graduação em História*, v 9, n. 1, (11-21), 2005, p. 12.

⁶ Iballe Jiménez Marrero: "Canarias turismo y patrimonio:

plataforma cultural y tricontinental. Acciones conjuntas de conservación del patrimonio y un nuevo modelo de turismo cultural sostenible para Canarias", *Vector Plus*, 36 (54-61) 2011, p. 55.

⁷ João Abel de Freitas: "A inovação no turismo", *Isleinha*, 47 (165-174), julho-dezembro 2010, p. 174.

authorities, as well as by civil society as a whole⁸.

The Azores likewise present a substantial body of research addressing the relationship between heritage and tourism. One of the most paradigmatic cases is the island of Pico, where the close interplay between nature and historical-artistic production has been largely articulated through tourism, strongly grounded in Mount Pico and the island's whaling past⁹. Similarly, Angra do Heroísmo (Terceira) has been the subject of international research linking the two core variables of this study, highlighting issues of tourist overcrowding during the summer months in this UNESCO World Heritage city¹⁰.

Cape Verde, for its part, combines a form of mass sun-and-beach tourism concentrated on certain islands - yielding limited benefits for the territory - with a modest inland tourism sector that possesses considerable heritage potential but suffers from scarce investment¹¹.

The expanding reach of globalization has generated significant risks associated with the homogenization of cultures and peoples, leading to the disappearance or discontinuity of traditions. There are few concrete plans for the conservation of intangible heritage, and investment is often lacking when such heritage conflicts with the economic interests tied to tangible

assets. While the preservation and dissemination of intangible heritage are both necessary and timely, caution is required to ensure that its economic exploitation is grounded in social and identity-based dimensions, rather than being reduced to the pursuit of profitability or transformed into a decontextualized product for tourist consumption¹².

This situation has opened a debate of clear scientific interest - though not without political implications - which has contributed to advancing knowledge in the field.

Although the association between tourism and culture may appear natural, it is not always perceived as such within dominant conceptions of tourism, which tend to emphasize leisure rather than culture. Tourism - and the ways in which it is understood - has evolved rapidly. The industry prioritizes growth and productivity, applying business criteria inspired by Fordist models. It shares product-development strategies common to other sectors of the capitalist system: product standardization, spatial concentration of destinations, homogenization, and the reduction of unit costs, among others.

Traditional culture constitutes one of the most valuable forms of intangible heritage - a treasure that must be protected. Cultural

⁸ Filipa Fernandes: "A Costa da Laurisilva: a produção de um destino turístico-cultural", en Prats, Llorenç y Santana, Agustín (Eds): Turismo y patrimonio, entramados narrativos, (135-143), La Laguna (Tenerife): Pasos. Revista de Turismo y Patrimonio Cultural www.pasosonline.org. Colección PASOSEdita nº 5, 2011, p. 139.

⁹ María Constanza Ceruti: "Volcán Pico: patrimonio cultural insular y ascenso al monte más alto de las Azores", *Estudios del Patrimonio Cultural*, 19 (58-75), 2021.

¹⁰ Cristian David Ortiz García y Juan Manuel Parreño Castellano: "La turistización de la zona patrimonio mundial en Angra do Heroísmo (Azores, Portugal) como factor de desarrollo", en Gonzalo Andrés López y José Luis García Cuesta (eds.): *La*

ciudad "veinte-treinta". Miradas a los espacios urbanos del siglo XXI, (451-462), Valladolid: Asociación Española de Geografía, 2024, pp. 458-460.

¹¹ Eduardo Manuel Cáceres Morales y Lucía Martínez Quintana: "Turismo en Cabo Verde: de la dicotomía a la integración", *Pasos. Revista de Turismo y Patrimonio Cultural* 17, nº 3 www.pasosonline.org (490-507) 2019, p. 504.

¹² Celeste Jiménez de Madariaga: "El impacto del turismo en el patrimonio cultural inmaterial: espacios sociales y rituales", en José María Morillas Alcázar (ed.): *El observatorio en turismo patrimonial sostenible en Andalucía: análisis, diagnóstico, adecuación, innovación y transferencia*. (151-169), Madrid: Ramón Areces, 2023, p. 166.

heritage is increasingly incorporated into public development strategies as a key asset for socio-economic development¹³. Heritage thus represents “the link between the preservation of the past for its intrinsic value and its use as a resource for modern communities as a commercial activity.”

Throughout insular history, heritage has played a crucial role, not least because these islands served as points of arrival for the first Europeans who settled and established the earliest permanent communities.

We understand that historical knowledge pursued solely as erudition has limited social usefulness and contributes little to social progress. Hence the importance of research on the past and the conservation of historical and cultural heritage as means of achieving a qualitative advance in understanding history. This principle constitutes the central aim guiding both our research and teaching, insofar as the former must inform and enrich the latter, avoiding the frequent disconnection between theory and practice.

In the Macaronesian islands, learning one's own history becomes an urgent necessity for identifying collective identity. Cultural unity as a people offers a path toward overcoming long-standing divisions that have historically fragmented these societies. Communities that forget their past are predisposed to repeat the same mistakes; while historical knowledge does not guarantee correct choices, it does at least help identify unviable paths, thus contributing to greater equity and well-being.

The identity of a people is sustained through the preservation of historical memory, which endures over time through the tangible and intangible manifestations that have been passed down to us.

It is therefore necessary to maintain the aspiration of fully integrating the ecological - heritage approach into development strategies, beyond the limited priority currently assigned to it in political agendas. An objective assessment shows that this approach has yet to become a decisive factor shaping everyday policy decisions - many of which seriously compromise natural and historical heritage in the present and for future generations. This challenge demands a commitment to solidarity not only with those closest to us, but also with future generations, who likewise have the right to inherit a livable world, as well as with the Global South. We cannot afford to squander resources and destroy the planet unilaterally.

Given the difficulties governments have faced in incorporating and implementing environmental principles in development planning, environmental degradation has prompted the emergence of social movements responding to the destruction of natural resources, the deterioration of physical and social environments, and deficiencies in public services, all of which negatively affect quality of life.

In recent years, growing concern for nature conservation has generated renewed momentum within the social sciences, making it necessary to refocus attention on the environment. A bilateral relationship is thus established - not only between humans and nature, but also regarding how nature

¹³ Néstor García Canclini: “Los usos sociales del patrimonio cultural”, en Aguilar Criado, Encarnación: *Patrimonio*

etnológico. Nuevas perspectivas de Estudio. Sevilla: Consejería de Cultura, Junta de Andalucía, 1999, pp. 16-33.

shapes societies and influences social life and human interactions within specific ecological contexts.

An ecological perspective has become essential in contemporary definitions of History, which has evolved from the study of “man in the past” to the study of women and men situated in specific temporal and environmental contexts. Influenced by feminist scholarship, twenty-first-century historiography must also incorporate the environments in which human activities unfold. This perspective enriches traditional analytical categories used to examine economic and social development. Sustained development of productive forces depends not only on capital productivity, labor, and scientific-technological progress. Just as theocentric worldviews were replaced by ethnocentric ones at the dawn of Modernity, we now stand on the threshold of a necessary transition toward perspectives that may be described as ecocentric.

The transversal nature of culture must be considered in all development initiatives from a triple perspective: as a factor of social cohesion, as a medium for dialogue among peoples, and as a generator of employment.

Cultural heritage has the specific objective of functioning as a driver of sustainable development for the communities that safeguard it. The Council of Europe has emphasized the need to take into account the specific nature and interests of cultural heritage when formulating economic policies¹⁴.

The central axis of action lies in the valorization and sustainable management of cultural heritage for socio-economic development. This is generally articulated through socio-economic development and social improvement plans based on the sustainable management of heritage assets. Such plans should not operate independently, but rather be integrated into multi-sectoral and multi-project development programs. A notable example is the Cultural Heritage Program launched by AECID in the late 1980s, which contributed significantly to the recovery of the heritage of the former Ribeira Grande—today Cidade Velha - on the island of Santiago, Cape Verde¹⁵.

There are multiple ways to foster human development through the valorization and sustainable management of cultural heritage, including:

- Cultural Identity and Diversity: Cultural heritage plays a decisive role in structuring communities, promoting social cohesion, and reinforcing a sense of belonging. Defending cultural identity and diversity has become an increasingly pressing challenge in the face of the homogenizing risks inherent in globalization.
- Economic Activity, Investment, and Employment Generation: Cultural heritage also represents a potential source of economic activity and income. In some cases, it constitutes a primary driver of economic development. Sustainable heritage management can generate multiple economic benefits, including

¹⁴ Consejo de Europa. Serie Tratados del Consejo de Europa nº 199. Convenio marco del Consejo de Europa. Sobre el valor del patrimonio cultural para la sociedad. Faro 27 de octubre de 2005. Art. 10. b).

¹⁵ *Programa para la Recuperación del Patrimonio Histórico Arquitectónico y para el Desarrollo Turístico y Agrícola de Cidade-Velha, en la República de Cabo Verde*. Madrid: Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores y de Cooperación. 2004, 47 pp.

commercialization, job creation in services and products linked to heritage assets, as well as activities related to preservation, maintenance, and restoration¹⁶.

Recent decades have witnessed renewed scholarly interest in a series of historical themes prioritized by historians and heritage specialists, which may be summarized as follows:

- 1) *The World of Beliefs*: From elite ecclesiastical hierarchies to lived religion, popular beliefs, superstition, magical practices, purgatory, saints' cults, confraternities, relics, agony, and confession.
- 2) *Death*: Long neglected by nineteenth- and early twentieth-century historiography, yet a core element of intangible heritage.
- 3) *Sex and Love*: Love practices, sexual stereotypes, and sexist archetypes.
- 4) *Childhood and Education*: Literacy, public instruction, gender differences, teacher training, curricula, schools, and iconography.
- 5) *The "Others"*: Moriscos, Roma communities, Jews, foreigners, Indigenous peoples, and Black populations.
- 6) *Instruments of Dissemination*: Books and readers, the social use of writing, the press, propaganda, public relations, satire, and pamphlets.
- 7) *The World of the Poor*: Social perceptions of poverty, ways of life, social danger, mechanisms of

repression, hospitals, hospices, foundling homes, and institutions for marginalized women.

Cultural industries currently constitute a rapidly expanding fourth sector, driven by the development of information and communication technologies and tourism, and represent a promising field for future growth.

Heritage is at risk depending on its management and the regulation of tourist flows. The challenge is not limited to conservation alone, but also to interpretation and understanding, which often fail to take into account the specific characteristics of tourist audiences¹⁷.

Post-Fordist tourism has revived the notion of cultural tourism as one of the possibilities of contemporary tourism, linked to new leisure opportunities offered by post-industrial society. Contemporary tourism appears to be in a constant state of transformation, as demand is heterogeneous and the social role of leisure continues to evolve. Post-industrial or postmodern leisure once again becomes a source of personal enrichment and self-cultivation.

Tourism can only be transformed into a sustainable activity through greater training, education, clearer recognition of rights, increased participation, enhanced dialogue, and a more equitable distribution of competencies among administrative levels. Sustainability can only be effectively implemented through the leadership of UNESCO, governmental and

¹⁶ *Estrategias de Cultura y Desarrollo de la Cooperación Española*. Ministerio de Asuntos exteriores y Cooperación. 2007, 65 pp. [chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.cooperacionespanola.es/wp-content/uploads/documentos/cultura_y_desarrollo.pdf](https://www.cooperacionespanola.es/wp-content/uploads/documentos/cultura_y_desarrollo.pdf)

¹⁷ Llorenç Prats y Agustín Santana: "Turismo, identidad y patrimonio, las reglas del juego", en Prats, Llorenç y Santana, Agustín (Eds): *Turismo y patrimonio, entramados narrativos*, (1-10), La Laguna (Tenerife): *Pasos. Revista de Turismo y Patrimonio Cultural* www.pasosonline.org. Colección PASOSEdita nº 5, 2011, p. 3.

non-governmental organizations, and the private sector, supported by internationally binding regulations and the promotion of ethical codes and best practices.

The tourism of the future must be built upon the principle that “there is no aesthetics without ethics,” with the aim of preserving cultural landscapes and cultural heritage, and ultimately ensuring tourism sustainability.

The management of tourism resources - particularly cultural heritage - must be brought closer to local territories and their communities. One of the key factors for achieving balanced social and economic tourism development lies in promoting the creation of cultural products and services for direct commercialization.

For all these reasons, institutions must be urged, within the scope of their competencies, to intervene with the aim of preserving these areas, promoting initiatives that safeguard historical values, and fostering the protection and restoration of material assets that bear witness to the past.