

**Traditions and Transformations: Tourism, Heritage and Cultural Change in the Middle East and North Africa Region (2009, April 4-7), Amman, The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.**

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The International Conference hosted by the Centre for Tourism and Cultural Change, Leeds Metropolitan University, United Kingdom, and the Council for British Research in the Levant was held at the Al-Hussein Cultural Centre, a cultural landmark, in the heart of downtown Amman, Jordan. By promoting dialogue across all disciplinary boundaries, the conference offered research papers presented on a rich variety of issues drawing upon the latest research and critical thinking. Opportunities existed to learn of the different methodologies and theories being applied to the inter-relations between tourism, culture and heritage. Some of the key themes of interest addressed at the conference included:

- The political economies of tourism;
- Tourism in the construction of places / nations;
- The role of archaeology in tourism development;
- Structures / infrastructures of MENA tourism — building / architecture / design for tourism & tourists;
- Tourism and the role of the museum;
- The conservation of heritage in tourism;
- The practices and performances of ‘tradition’;
- Intangible heritage and its role in tourism;
- Rural and urban tourism practices.

At the opening ceremonies the Patron of the Conference, Her Royal Highness Princess Sumaya Bint Al Hassan of Jordan, gave a remarkable speech on the rich culture, traditions, and heritage of Jordan that was uniquely linked to tourism in the region. Other notable speakers included Professor Bill Finlayson, Director, Council for British Research in the Levant, UK/Jordan, Professor Mike Robinson, Director, Centre for Tourism and Cultural Change, Leeds Metropolitan University, UK, Her Excellency Maha Khatib, Jordan Minister of Tourism, His Excellency Dr. Sabri Rbeihat, Jordan Minister of Culture, His Excellency Eng. Omar Al-Ma’ani, Mayor of Amman, Dr. Ghassan Assaleh, Islamic educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, keynote speaker Eugenio Yunis, United Nation’s World Tourism Organization, Spain, keynote speaker Dr Seteney Shami, Director of the Middle East and the North Africa Programme, Social Science Research Council, and keynote speaker Dr. Waleed Hazbun, John Hopkins University. During the conference there was an interesting study visit to the City of Salt that followed with a reception hosted at the residence of the British Ambassador, H.E. James Watt.

Over 200 delegates from across the Middle East and the North Africa (MENA) region, along with experts from over 40 countries were brought together for this conference to address

some of the most pressing issues relating to the relationship between tourism, culture, and heritage. With tourism being a well established phenomenon across the MENA region and despite political instabilities it demonstrates remarkable resilience. As well as being a major economic force, and a key driver for development, tourism is also an important mechanism for social exchange and identity building at both the individual and regional/national levels. Overall the conference provided a great opportunity for scholars to present and share their expertise on these important issues impacting the Mena region, tourism, and greater society.