

Cultural and Natural Heritage Sites in Touristic Areas

Lebanon scale





Analysis of Threats and Enabling Factors for Sustainable Tourism at Pilot Scale

Cultural and natural heritage sites in touristic areas Lebanon scale



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OVERVIEW

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REVIEW

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List of abbreviations

MoT	Ministry of Tourism (Lebanon)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

I. Introduction

This report is going to study the threats to co-evolution in touristic areas at a national scale and cultural and natural heritage sites in Lebanon tourism region.

The current deliverable is going to deal with Lebanon touristic sites that have been declared by the UNESCO as cultural and natural heritage ones. It will first provide an overview on the existing World Heritage sites in Lebanon, as well as analyze their natural and cultural importance, and investigate their effect on Lebanon Tourism sector development. The report will then identify and discuss the threats and risks affecting them to end up finally by suggesting recommendations. These may contribute to improving not only the protection strategies of cultural and natural heritage sites in touristic coastal destinations but also their effective management mainly at the national scale.

The concept of heritage sites was first introduced in 1972 through the Cultural and Natural World Heritage Convention whose aim is mainly to protect and preserve cultural and natural heritages around the globe. The convention clearly highlights the way in which people should interact with nature, as well as the fundamentals required to preserve the balance between people's needs and nature sustainability. In fact, cultural heritages have usually reflected different communities' lifestyles and the ways they transfer from one generation to another. Generally, cultural heritage includes monuments (*e.g.*, architectural works, monumental sculptures, and paintings), archaic buildings, and sites that involve a universal value in terms of aesthetics, ethnology, anthropology, history, art, or science. Moreover, natural heritages consist of physical and biological structures, geological and physiographical patterns (*e.g.*, habitat of threatened species), natural sites with features that have value in terms of science, biodiversity conservation and natural beauty (UNESCO, 2021).

There are currently 1,121 UNESCO World Heritage Sites (869 cultural, 213 natural and 39 mixed sites) around the world (updated data in November 2020). Italy and China are ranked on the top of the list thanks to their largest number of UNESCO heritage sites in the world. These heritage sites are considered strong magnets for tourists, enhancing, and supporting the sustainability of the latter's industry (UNESCO, 2021).

Lebanon became a member of UNESCO on the 4th of November 1946. Then, on the 3rd of February 1983 the UNESCO World Heritage Sites Convention was ratified, and since then Lebanon has been recognized for 5 well known World Heritage Sites, with a list of 10 sites that are to be considered soon for nomination. Besides, Lebanon encompasses several cities like Tripoli, Batroun, Byblos, Baalbek, and Tyre, which can be considered as "Art-Cities". In fact, Art Cities are among the most targeted tourist destinations thanks to their amazing artistic and architectural masterpieces exhibited either in

cultural events and manifestations or in national and international festivals. To protect their unique touristic and cultural values and ensure tourism sustainability (Deluca *et al.*, 2020), several measures should be taken for further effective management and better productivity of the sector.

II. Scope and sources of Information

As one of the oldest countries in the world, several ancient civilizations dating back to 3,500 B.C. can be easily traced in this country. In fact, referring to Lebanon history, it becomes obvious that until now Lebanon has frequently suffered from several social turmoil and wars, regional conflicts, as well as political and economic instability. Despite all these troubles, the preserved UNESCO World Heritage Sites have helped efficiently in maintaining the tourism sector in Lebanon. It is worth mentioning that all the information and data involved in the current report and mainly those covering the cultural and natural World Heritage Sites in the coastal areas of Lebanon, is based on published, or other similar technical reports (UNESCO, MoT *etc.*). The World Heritage Sites will be represented in the form of detailed information and maps. In addition, a risk and status analysis will be presented. The relationship between these sites and the Lebanon tourism sector will as well be studied relying on visitor data from the MoT.

The data gathered thanks to the above methodology will ultimately entail several recommendations aiming both at more effective protection and more productive management of these sites on a national scale.

III. Overview of the State of Cultural Heritage Sites in Lebanon

III.1. Geographical Distribution and Characteristics of Cultural heritage sites in Lebanon

Lebanon has a rich and diverse cultural heritage which is inherited throughout several civilizations all round its oldest and remotest history. This cultural diversity is obviously mirrored in its tangible and intangible heritage components displayed successfully in all its various festivals, music, cuisine, architecture, as well as UNESCO World Heritage Sites and its historic urban development.

Despite its small size, Lebanon hosts five, UNESCO-declared World Heritage Sites. Among these five, only two (Byblos and Tyre) are located on the coastal area, overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. These five Lebanese World Heritage Sites are detailed in Table 1 and their locations are presented in Figure 1. Obviously, these sites echo the following features mentioned below the table.

In addition, there is a list of 10 properties that are waiting for being ranked as UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Lebanon. These properties include: The historical city of Batroun, Echmoun Temple, the archeological site of Nahr El Kalb, the castles of Mount Amel, the ancient city of Tripoli and others.

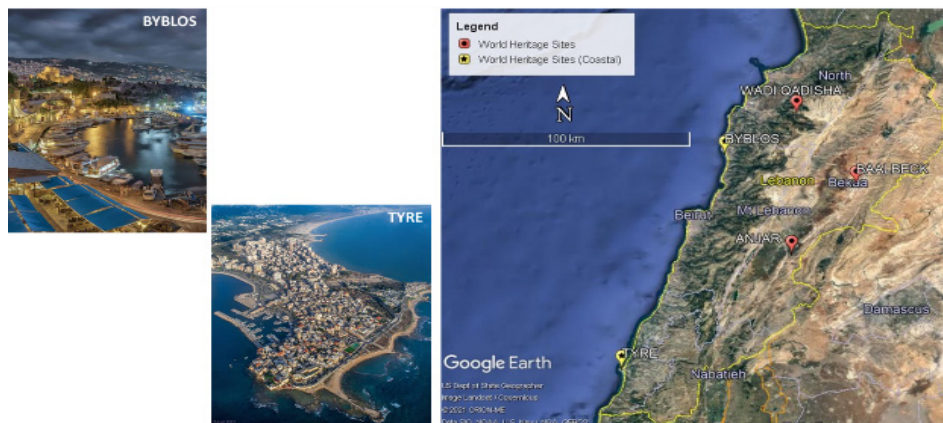


Figure 1. Geographical Distribution of the 5 UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Lebanon with photos of the two WHS located on the coastal area.

Table 1. Lebanon UNESCO Cultural World Heritage Sites Locations and Characteristics According to UNESCO Criteria (UNESCO, 2021).

UNESCO World Heritage Site	Date of inscription	Coordinates	District	Criteria
Anjar	1984	N 33° 43' 32.988" E 35 55' 46.992"	Zahle, Beqaa Governorate	(iii), (iv)
Baalbek	1984	N 34° 0' 25.452" E 36° 12' 17.784"	Baalbek, Beqaa Governorate	(i), (iv)
Byblos	1984	N 34° 7' 9.012" E 35° 38' 51"	Jbeil, Governorate of Mount Lebanon	(iii), (iv), (vi)
Wadi Qadisha (the Holy Valley) and the Forest of the Cedars of God (Horsh Arz el-Rab)	1998	N 34° 14' 35.988" E 36° 2' 56.004"	Becharre District, Governorate of North Lebanon	(iii), (iv)
Tyre	1984	N 33° 16' 18.984" E 35° 11' 39.984"	Tyre, Governorate of South Lebanon	(iii), (vi)

- (i) Representing a masterpiece of human creative genius
- (iii) Bearing a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is either still surviving or has disappeared.
- (iv) Being an outstanding and a typical example of a specific type of building, as well as architectural or technological building compound or landscape which stand for (a) significant historical stages(s) throughout the human history.
- (vi) Directly associating the events or the reviving traditions, with the current ideas and beliefs, as well as with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance.

III.1.1. Anjar

The city of Anjar was founded by Caliph Walid I, the sixth Umayyad Caliph, at the beginning of the 8th century (Figure 2). The ruins reveal an outstanding and reminiscent ancient and archaic palace-city that clearly reflects the professional and adept city planning under the Umayyads. In fact, The Umayyad city of Anjar is approximately 114,000 square meters and spreads across a rectangular area that is surrounded by a two-meter-thick wall firmly reinforced by 40 towers.

Anjar is an example of an inland commercial center, at the crossroads of two important avenues: one leading from Beirut to Damascus and the other crossing the Bekaa and leading from Homs to Tiberiade. The actual village of Anjar is famous for its strong Armenian ties. Anjar is as well recognized as Hima area and acknowledged as a part of Hima-to-Hima program (Ministry of Tourism, 2020).



Figure 2. The ancient city of Anjar.

III.1.2. Baalbeck

Baalbeck is also known as Heliopolis, the City of the Sun which was once a Phoenician worship center for a triad of deities maintaining the site's religious function during Hellenistic and Roman times. This site in its turn was converted into a fortress in Islamic times (Figure 3). It is one of the finest examples of Imperial Roman architecture, and it consists of 3 temples dedicated to Jupiter, Bacchus, and Venus (Figure 4).

The Temple of Bacchus is one of the best-preserved remains of a Roman temple in the world, featuring on its monumental entrance carvings related to the cult of Bacchus. The six most famous columns of Baalbeck were used to be part of the 54 twenty-meter-high columns surrounding the cellar of the temple of Jupiter (Ministry of Tourism, 2020).



Figure 3. The ancient city of Baalbeck.



Baalbeck-Temple of Bacchus <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=72627726>



A 1921 bird's eye view reconstruction of the Baalbek temple complex <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=82430558>



Temple of Jupiter, Baalbeck <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=4488711>



The Great Court of ancient Heliopolis's temple complex <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=10555712>

Figure 4. The ancient Heliopolis of Baalbek with the famous temples.

III.1.3. Byblos

The city of Byblos has been always regarded as one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world since Neolithic times (Figure 5). It is also considered as being the origin of our contemporary alphabet with the most ancient Phoenician engraving carved on the legendary sarcophagus of King Ahiram. Since the Bronze Age, Byblos has echoed one of the earliest primary examples of urban organizations in the Mediterranean region. It is also known for its close and tight relationship with Pharaonic Egypt and the trade of cedar wood that was essential for the monumental temples' construction in Egypt.

Besides, the city has proved to be the best-preserved Roman remains on the Lebanese coast, including a theater. It is distinguished for its ancient harbor, seaside fish restaurants, ancient souks, and charming residential neighborhoods dating back to the Middle Ages, as well as an enormous wealth of historic sites and ruins (Ministry of Tourism, 2020).



Figure 5. The ancient coastal city of Byblos.

III.1.4. Wadi Qadisha and the Forest of the Cedars of God

Wadi Qadisha or “Wadi Qadisha” is one of the deepest and most beautiful valleys in Lebanon (Figure 6). It is full of caves and rock-shelters that were inhabited during the third millennium B.C. Moreover, it consists of the most important settlement sites of the first Christian monasteries in the world, thereby giving shelter to several monastic communities.

The monasteries of Qadisha are among the most significant surviving examples of the strength of the Christian faith. In addition to Wadi Qadisha, the Cedars of God Forest, located at an altitude between 1,900 and 2,050 m, is considered part of this UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is one of the last forests containing the cedar tree species *Cedrus libani*, which are cited 103 times in the Bible (Ministry of Tourism, 2020).

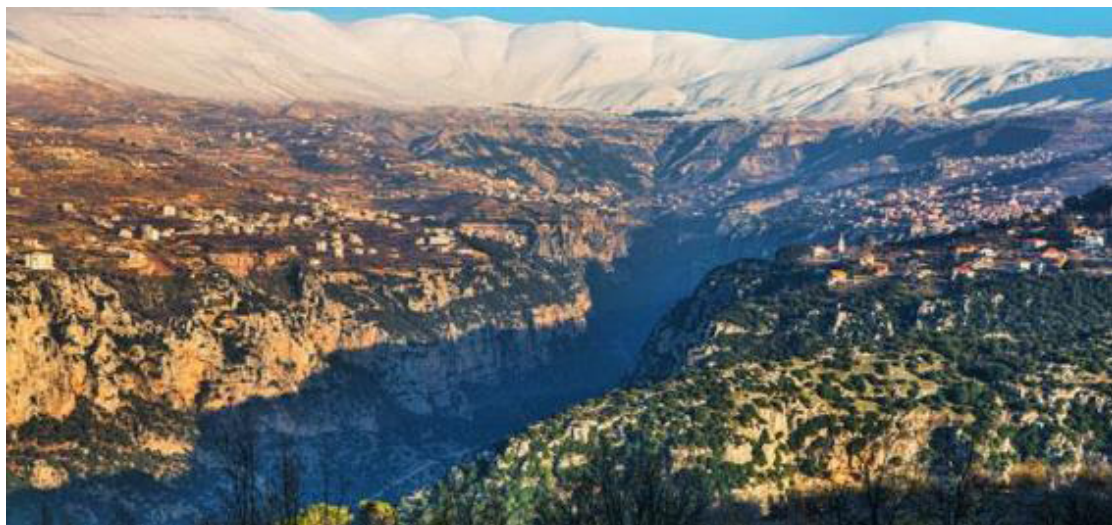


Figure 6. The monastery valley of Wadi Qadisha.

III.1.5. Tyre

Tyre city is known as “Queen of the Seas”. It was presumably founded in 2750 B.C. and considered as the metropolis of Phoenicia in the ancient times (Figure 7). In fact, it is a coastal city and was considered as the most important center for maritime and land commerce with colonies in the eastern Mediterranean region (Figure 8). The Phoenicians were known to be master seafarers and traders who had created a robust network across and beyond the Mediterranean Sea, spreading technologies and ideas while traveling and trafficking all around the world for the purpose of trade.

Tyre is famous for several legends that are likely to have occurred in the region. In fact, it is the place of purple pigment discovery as well as Cadmos birthplace. It is as well credited for the introduction of the alphabet to Greece and Europe. It is also the birthplace of Elissa, founder of ancient Carthage of Tunisia. The city as well had hosted two archaeological sites (Figure 9) that reflect its former glory (Ministry of Tourism, 2020).



Figure 7. The ancient coastal city of Tyre.

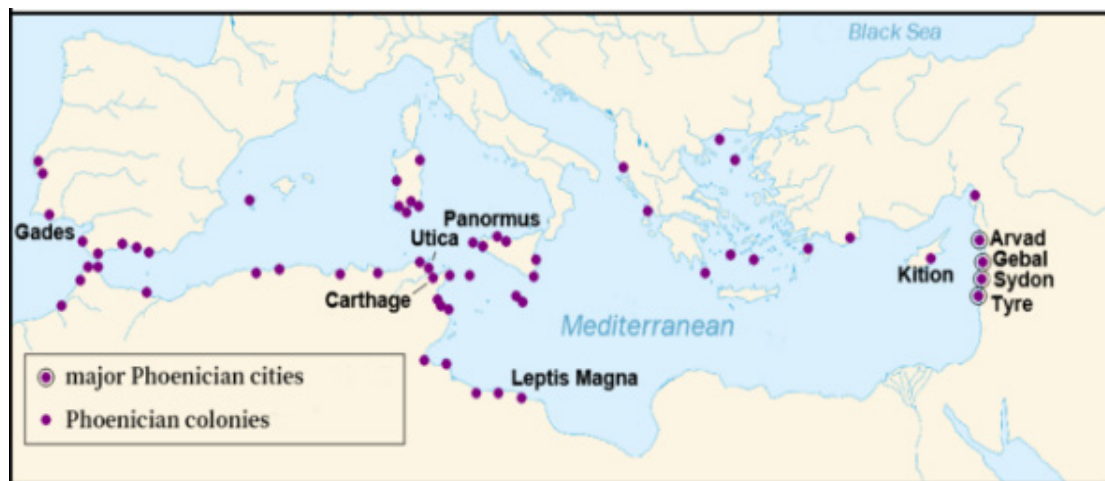


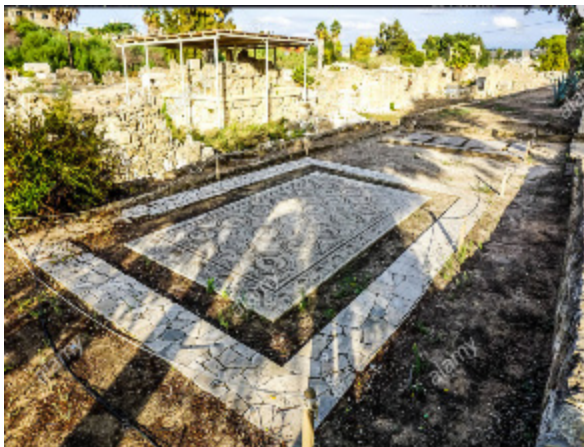
Figure 8. Map of Phoenician colonies during the 11th- 6th Centuries BCE <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=88266410>



Tyre Necropolis



Tyre, Main Street



Tyre Hippodrome and Picturesque Mosaic

Figure 9. Old City of Tyre with the Hippodrome, mosaic, and necropolis.

III.2. Threats affecting World Heritage Sites in Lebanon

Lebanon cultural heritage sites are increasingly threatened by the changing social and economic conditions, in addition to the conventional and known reasons of decay. Any deterioration or disappearance of a cultural or natural heritage is harmful not only to the local population but also to the natural environment, and it represents worldwide serious loss in terms of heritage (UNESCO, 2021). In fact, such calamities may lead to irreversible loss of ecosystem functions throughout the whole surrounding that need to be boosted and revived through sustainable policies and practices.

Several biotic and abiotic detrimental forces like climate change and earthquakes, as well as the Lebanese civil war, socio-economic crisis, and political instability, all these factors have deeply affected both the natural heritage sites and the cultural and touristic sectors in Lebanon. This civil local unrest along with Beirut port explosion in August 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic impact, the country's situation has worsened further. In fact, all the above factors have led to worse long-term impacts both on the country's socioeconomic resilience and its status as World Heritage Sites (UNESCO, 2020).

Table 2 summarizes the threats and the state of conservation of the Lebanese UNESCO World Heritage Sites as presented recently in several UNESCO reports (UNESCO, 2020).

Table 2. Threats faced by the Lebanese UNESCO World Heritage Sites (* represents the issues resolved).

UNESCO World Heritage Site	Threats (Latest report)	Factors affecting the property identified in previous reports
Anjar	1997 Military training	-
Baalbek	1999 - Management activities, systems, and plan - Relative humidity - Water (rain/water table)	- Water infiltration affecting the walls. - Road project. - Lack of master plan. - Extensive rehabilitation work contrary to established procedures.
Byblos	2019 - Erosion and silt deposition - Housing - Impacts of tourism and recreation - Management systems/ management plan	- Port expansion project * - Need for a Management Plan and a Master Plan* - Plans for an extension of the jetty* - Tourism infrastructure: "Diplomatic Club" project with above ground structures of reinforced concrete built at the south of the property. - Management: Unclear boundary definition of property and buffer. - Environmental risks -coastal erosion of the Byblos mound due to the heavy tidal impact of the sea.
Wadi Qadisha (the Holy Valley) and Forest of the Cedars of God (Horsh Arz el-Rab)	2019 - Financial resources - Housing - Human resources - Illegal activities - Impacts of tourism and recreation - Land conversion - Legal framework - Livestock farming / grazing of domesticated animals - Major visitor accommodation and associated infrastructure - Management systems/ management plan	- Absence of legislative framework and comprehensive management plan - Absence of coordination mechanisms - Illegal constructions and urban encroachments - Degradation of the mural paintings and buildings - Uncontrolled tourist development and absence of visitor management - Lack of resources for the management structure

Tyre	● 2019 ● Ground transport infrastructure ● Housing ● Impacts of tourism and recreational activities ● Legal framework ● Management systems/ management plan ● Other Threats: Insufficient maintenance ● Road construction project (issue resolved) ● Need for an Urban Master Plan for the city ● Lack of management mechanism (including legislation) ● Uncontrolled housing development next to the property ● Absence of a management plan, unclear property boundaries and legal status on the extent of the property ● Insufficient legal framework for an efficient buffer such as lack of a maritime protection zone around the seashores of Tyre ● Management system affected by the shortage of human resources directly leading to insufficient maintenance, vegetation control and fire prevention and lack of consistent preservation plan ● Transportation Infrastructure: planning of major highway near the property and repeatedly local intentions of the redevelopment of the port ● Sea-shore environmental local conditions affecting physical fabric, especially soft stone surfaces. ● Insufficient drainage of stagnating waters and uncontrolled surface water flows undermine wall foundations and stability of structures	● Need for an international safeguarding campaign* ● Construction of a tourist complex (land fill of the bay) * ● Construction project of a large fish market * ● Construction project of a coastal motorway * ● Project to build a new touristic marina *
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III.3. World Heritage Sites and the tourism industry in Lebanon

During summer seasons, Lebanon has always hosted several international music and entertainment festivals, especially in Baalbek and Byblos. Recently, musical events have been organized in the Byblos and Cedars area. In addition, Lebanon's publicly accessible beaches, such as Byblos gravelly and Tyre sandy beaches, as well as its favorable summer weather conditions, have made it a perfect destination for summer getaways. Before 2019, the so-called phenomenon of over-tourism (DeLuca *et al.*, 2020) has emerged as a significant threat to the residents' quality of life in Byblos and Tyre. Consequently, it has become essential for the authorities to better organize and manage more effectively the flow of tourists accessing Art-Cities to maintain sustainable tourism and to protect the environment.

Visitors can also enjoy breath-taking hiking trails throughout the country all year round (DeLuca *et al.*, 2020). However, the tourist flow and subsequently the tourism industry were negatively affected by COVID-19 pandemic that has affected the globe and prevented such events and gatherings from being organized.

Lebanon's cultural and tourism sectors are closely and tightly interrelated. In fact, the presence of 5 World Heritage Sites in Lebanon has always ameliorated and supported the touristic industry in the country which has always had an important positive impact on the image of the country and on the local economic conditions. In fact, most tourists arriving in Lebanon look forward to visiting at least one of the 5 World Heritage Sites, mainly Baalbek, Byblos, and Tyre (Figure 10).

Both the diverse cultural aspects and the remotest ancient history of Lebanon make it an important and attractive destination. Yet, the inseparable relation between both sectors, culture and tourism, reveals that the current unfavorable environment threatening mobility, in particular for international arrivals, is mainly the outcome of the social turmoil and the health crises impact. These calamities could have a devastating impact on the cultural sector worldwide, but in particular in Lebanon (UNESCO, 2020).

Cultural heritage's important contribution in promoting local tourism for national development and in ensuring national and local peace as well as more effective and productive management and governance, can ensure further conservation and sustainability of these sites. Thereby, strengthening the tourism industry and generating more profitable activities in the Lebanese Art-Cities.

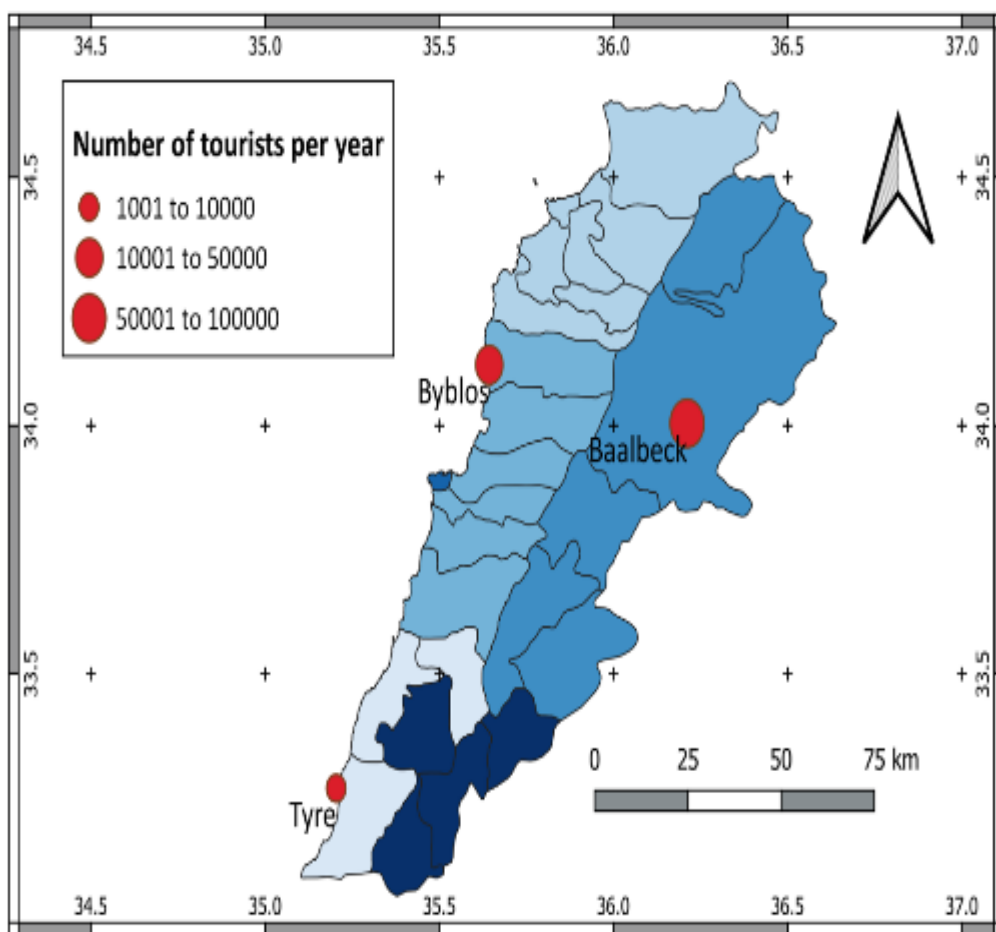


Figure 10. Most visited touristic heritage sites in Lebanon.

IV. Towards better protection and management

Cultural heritages are considered as the most valuable assets for any country or any region. These heritages obviously reflect the identity and traditions of the local region; they act as well as touristic attractions that provide socio economic and moral benefits, thereby enriching the local and World cultures. Therefore, the preservation, management and protection of such heritages are the duties of the concerned country or region. Cultural heritage management necessarily leads to the creation of a balance between the touristic and economic industries. Besides, it ensures the sites physical integrity conservation, as well as their educational, historical, and cultural values promotion and sensibilization.

A cultural heritage is a complex entity, thereby persuading communities to adopt holistic management measures that mainly target structures seems to be a priority. In fact, cultural heritage management consists of several objectives as well as institutional and organizational frameworks (and obstacles), social outlooks, forms of knowledge as well, values (both for present and future generations, often conflicting) and other factors. All the above need to be effectively evaluated when considering heritage management to establish and maintain suitable management approaches (Figure 11). Overcoming such challenges and considering all stakeholders involved in the process are vital for the cultural property future of the heritage sites with outstanding universal value being managed (UNESCO / ICCROM / ICOMOS / IUCN, 2013).

Lebanon institutional defects threaten both the cultural and touristic sectors. In fact, severe instability prevents issuing and implementing effective policies aiming to strengthen, manage and protect the cultural heritage. In addition, the shortage of updated regulations in urban planning is causing an intrusion of urban expansion into heritage sites. Besides, the ambiguous and ineffective management of urban areas, has led to the exhaustion of the available resources, as well as the destruction, and decay of the old, archaic buildings in favor of new constructions, with significant environmental and cultural impact (Seif, 2017).

The implication of local communities in management actions and plans contributes to a better and more effective applicable management. In addition, once the local communities and authorities become aware of the cultural sites importance, then, the protection and sustainable management become easier and more productive.

Currently, the country's situation is obviously too critical. Consequently, a holistic effective long-term strategy should be implemented and should also involve good governance, enhanced legal protection, community involvement, and wise management of the country's heritage to ensure longer-term sustainability of the heritage sites and their values (Seif, 2017).

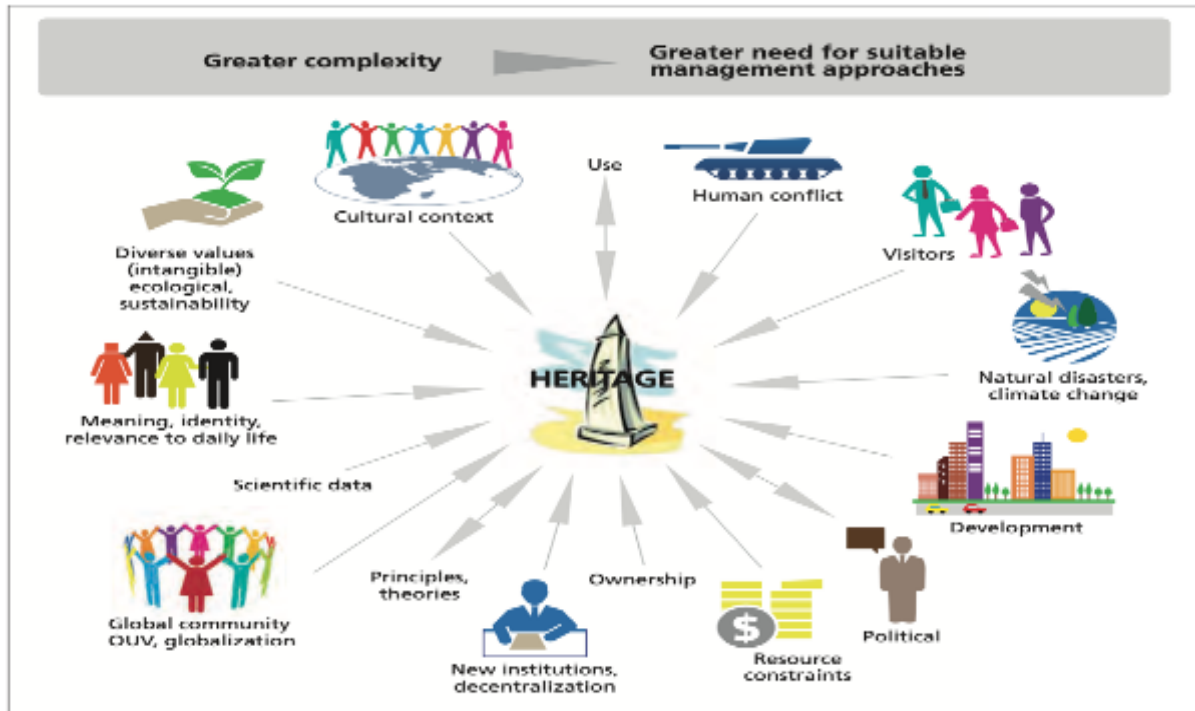


Figure 11. Some examples of old and new issues in heritage management of sites with Outstanding Heritage Value (UNESCO / ICCROM / ICOMOS / IUCN, 2013).

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