

# The Mobilization of Heritage into Touristic Territories Construction and Hinterlands Development: The Case of Souss Hinterlands-Morocco

Samira Ghailane\*

Cadi Ayyad University,  
Marrakesh, Morocco

**Abstract:** From historical monuments, natural sites, archaeological sites, to festivals and local products, these constitute heritage resources that not only meet a tourist demand but also diversify the offer. Heritage resources must be valued and mobilized in tourism development projects. Existing heritage thus represents assets and potential to develop tourism in Morocco in general and in the hinterland in particular. The development initiatives undertaken through territorial projects of tourism mobilize various territorial and heritage resources. We therefore find it interesting to focus our thinking on the logic of building these touristic territories and the heritage processes affecting their resources. Heritage is a social construction and the implementation of territorial projects is a pillar for heritage dynamics. This leads us to believe that there is a synergy between heritage and development. In this context, the objective of our research focused on the forms of heritage processes affecting heritage objects, focusing on the different territorial and heritage resources mobilized in tourism development in the Souss hinterlands. The aim of this research was to study the interrelationships between heritage, tourism and territorial development by determining the conditions under which heritage can be a vector for sustainable development.

**Keywords:** *Heritage process, tourism, development, sustainability, Hinterlands, Souss*

**Received:** 18 December 2019; **Accepted:** 23 April 2020; **Published:** 19 June 2020

## INTRODUCTION

This research was based on several questions. The main question was to clarify and explain the complex relationships that exist between heritage, tourism and development in the Souss hinterlands. To address this question, an analysis on the forms and heritage mobilization logics in rural areas was conducted through the lens of the various actors (institutional, private and associative) and the perception of tourists. ‘Tourism and heritage are closely bounded’ (Kittaniy, 2019; Lazzarotti, 2013); and this appears through several examples in the world where tourism activities are getting developed around heritage.

The emergence of tourism projects mobilizing heritage in the hinterlands can be understood in the context of rural tourism where it is the subject of particular attention from the Moroccan public authorities and civil society in order to compensate the marginality which the rural suffered for a long time compared to the seaside tourism development and the imperial cities. The tourist projects then bet on the territorial specificities and make local heritage an asset to develop the rural territories. These areas have experienced then a new dynamic of development for several years.

---

\*Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed Samira Ghailane, Cadi Ayyad University, Marrakesh, Morocco. E-mail: [samira.ghailane@gmail.com](mailto:samira.ghailane@gmail.com)

We are now talking about sustainable tourism, ecotourism, solidarity tourism, etc. These called "alternative" forms of tourism, which appeal to various heritages existing, can overcome the negative impacts that mass tourism can induce, and also contribute to sustainable development. These forms of tourism are part of territorial development logic where they depend on 1) the involvement of local populations in the different phases of the tourism project, 2) the respect of cultures and nature and 3) an equitable sharing of the resources. The different logics of tourism can stimulate touristic territories' construction.

In this context, tourism in some areas acts as an enhancement process, which can be used as a tool of territorial development. The Souss is a fertile field for heritage processes overseen both by institutions and civil society. These heritage process include, for example, the restoration and enhancement of certain ancestral constructions (as for example, Igoudar), the promotion of local products and local know-how (craftsmanship), the preservation of natural species within the Souss Massa National Park, etc. This paper, therefore, focused on the questioning: "To what extent does the heritage process allow touristic and territorial development of the Souss hinterlands?" In the following pages, we present the heritage in general before determining the field era. In the end, before the conclusion, we summarize the different results collected from our research.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of heritage has progressed and has extended from heritage to transmit and potential to manage, to a resource to be valued. It then went from the objective of protection in order to be transmitted, to the objective of valuation into the process of territorial development. In this context, the heritage process is considered as the valuation of heritage potentials by ensuring their efficient transformation into economic resources. Heritage then represents a form of economic capital. Some authors bring the concepts of heritage protection and territorial development closer together, arguing, "this familiarity which unites the concepts of heritage and territory undoubtedly takes origin slowly, but constant effort... to extend to the space of heritage concept" (Guy, 1994). Heritage, by "spatial extension", would be the object, its environment - physical and/or human - and the representations they carry. Heritage is a complex reality that combines four interdependent dimensions: economic, cultural, social and environmental.

As a result, heritage has acquired the status of resource to become an essential element in the process of construction and development of territories. When taking sustainable development into account for territorial development, the territorial resource dimension must be given priority: "a characteristic of a specific territory built with a view to development" (Hervé & Bernard, 2007). Recent works on territorial development in rural areas has adopted the concept of resource for questions of ownership and differentiation of products and territories. We then speak of several resources: heritage (Campagne & Pecqueur, 2014), cultural (Declève & Hibo, 2004), natural (Camagni, Maillat, & Matteaccioli, 2004) and generally a combination of these (Chang, Wu, Hsu, & Yang, 2017; Hirczak, Moalla, Mollard, Pecqueur, & Rambonilaza, 2008; Sawatsuk, Darmawijaya, Ratchusanti, & Phaokrueng, 2018). This territorial approach concerning heritage is developed in particular by (François, Hirczak, & Senil, 2006; Landel, 2007). For these authors, territorial resources are defined as a result of actors' constructs with a material and immaterial dimension (Hervé & Bernard, 2007). Trying to understand the heritage as a territorial resource, therefore, amounts to wondering about the conditions under which it can be mobilized as a resource. Guy (1998) highlighted the strong and cross-links between heritage and the territory. In fact, development actors now consider heritage as a resource for their territory. Since heritage is a territorial resource, we can consider the idea of heritage resources (Boujrouf, 2014). The heritage resource can be defined as the "result of a strategy established by a group of actors who cooperate around the same goal of recognizing local particularities, or specificities they have appropriated and which they want to value through a territorial project". Heritage resource refers to "permanence and long-term" (Senil & Landel, 2016). As a result, it can appear to be adapted to a perspective of sustainability insofar as it is opposed to resources used over a very short time.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### *Study Field*

The Souss is a southern region of Morocco that gets around Agadir city and extends to the foot of the High Atlas Mountains to the east and the Sahara to the south (Zaoual, 1990). The climate of the Souss region is pre-Saharan. It is a plain delimited by the mountain ranges of the High Atlas in the north and the Anti-Atlas in the south, the convergence of these mountain ranges in the east, and the Atlantic coast in the west. The plain of Souss is characterized by a highly

diversified agricultural production and a unique ecosystem. The Souss is the land of the argan forest. Argan (*Argania Spinosa*) is an endemic species from the tertiary period; it is the emblematic tree of the region. This forest forms a barrier to the progression of desertification in this semi-arid (Turner, 2009, 2011).

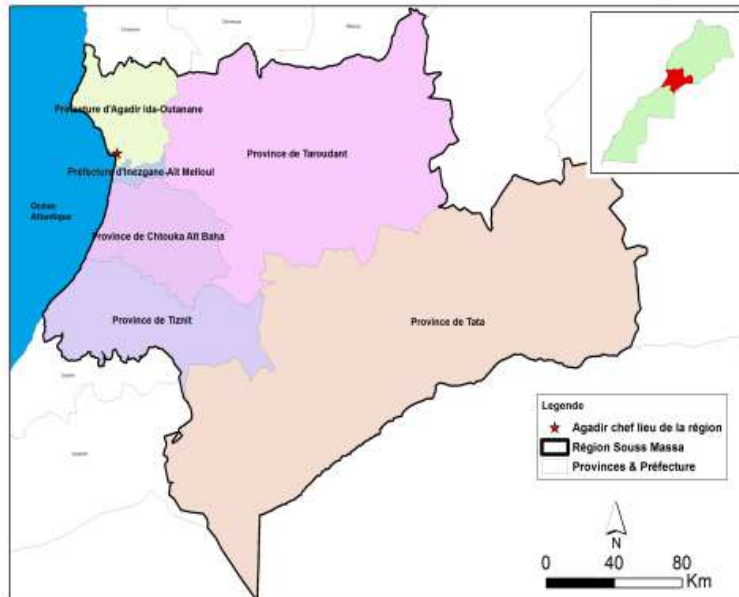


Figure 1 The administrative region of Souss Massax

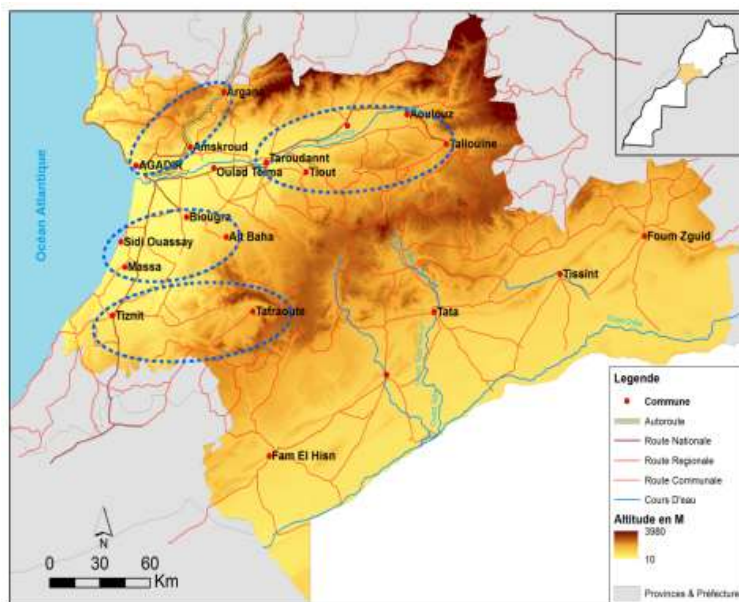


Figure 2 Study area map

The selected territories (circled in Figure 2) show an emergence of territorial dynamics mobilizing various heritages. Consequently, touristic projects are born in order to promote the existing touristic potentials and at the same time to contribute to the development of the territory and the local population. These dynamics touch on several fields, in particular tourism, the craft industry, agriculture, etc. That is manifested through the creation of income-generating activities, such as cooperatives, and tourism projects, such as gites or inns, etc.

### Study Method

To answer our questions, we first established a census of the heritage resources mobilized and likely to be mobilized in the process of promoting tourism in the Souss region. The objective of this census is to assess the heritage potential of the region and to see the heritage objects that have been integrated into the tourism enhancement processes. In

parallel, we studied geographic, socioeconomic, and demographic data as well as statistical data on tourism in the Souss region. These data allowed us to establish a general diagnosis of the study area and to identify the current state of tourism development in the region by highlighting its strengths and weaknesses.

We used both qualitative and quantitative methods. The first qualitative approach engaged institutional actors such as delegations of tourism and culture, local authorities, Regional Tourism Council (RTC), and tourism actors. These were constituted by semi-structured interviews with the following stakeholders: private actors (hosts, restaurants, guides), actors of the social and solidarity economy (associations, cooperatives). These actors intervene directly and indirectly at the regional, provincial and municipal levels in touristic activities and the protection and enhancement of heritage. Thus, we found interesting collecting information through interviews that allowed us to define the different logics of mobilization and promoting heritage and, moreover, to see how this mobilization can participate in touristic territories' construction.

The second approach, the quantitative consisted of an analysis of the tourists survey. A sampling method was used to determine the minimum sample size required for this study. Data were collected from both international and domestic tourists in order to capture the diversified opinion about the Souss heritage perception of the study population.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

From this research, we collected many results as following:

- The inventory of heritage resources in Souss shows their richness and diversity. These represent a real touristic potential which can generate the development of several types of tourism and diversify the touristic offer of the region but also increase its attractiveness.
- We observe emergence of global heritage awareness both from the local community and the public authorities. This collective awareness is stimulating the recognition of specific resources; that awareness contributes to making of them a heritage.
- The dynamics of the heritage process relate above all to a global mobilization of the local population supported by civil society and public institutions. That fact makes it possible to develop the heritage resource but also register it on the Unesco heritage lists as the example of several representative resources in our region.
- The enhancement of heritage tourism is part of the dynamics of tourism development by integrating heritage resources into the territorial offer; however, touristic activity in the hinterlands is still underdeveloped compared to the heritage potential which they contain.
- We are in front of a tourist informed and aware of the challenges of heritage. Attracted in the first place by the landscape and natural heritage of the region, the tourists interviewed showed an increasing interest in the local cultural heritage. However, a large majority do not make a difference between the particular Souss heritage and the heritage of Morocco in general, due to a lack of availability of information concerning the local heritage. On the other hand, tourists are attracted by local products which have labels already, especially argan oil and its derivatives. The tourist survey analysis brought out that tourism activity, starting from Agadir, is spreading in the hinterland where touristic "sub-territories" are developing. Annex 2 shows the main touristic "sub-territories" (brown circles) in the Souss hinterlands.
- The analysis of semi-structured interviews allowed us to develop a typology of heritage/tourism/development relationships in the Souss hinterlands. This typology has put forward three approaches to mobilizing heritage: 1) an approach in terms of concrete touristic activities related to nature, which concerns the private actors of tourism; 2) an approach in terms of tourism and territorial development related to national strategies and policies; 3) an approach in terms of development and heritage strongly related to the development of local products.
- Each phase is structured in different dimensions of actions and heritage process defining which heritage resources and which types of actors are concerned. We only speak of strategic mobilization when all the actors concerned by the territory are mobilized, and the heritage development processes are triggered.

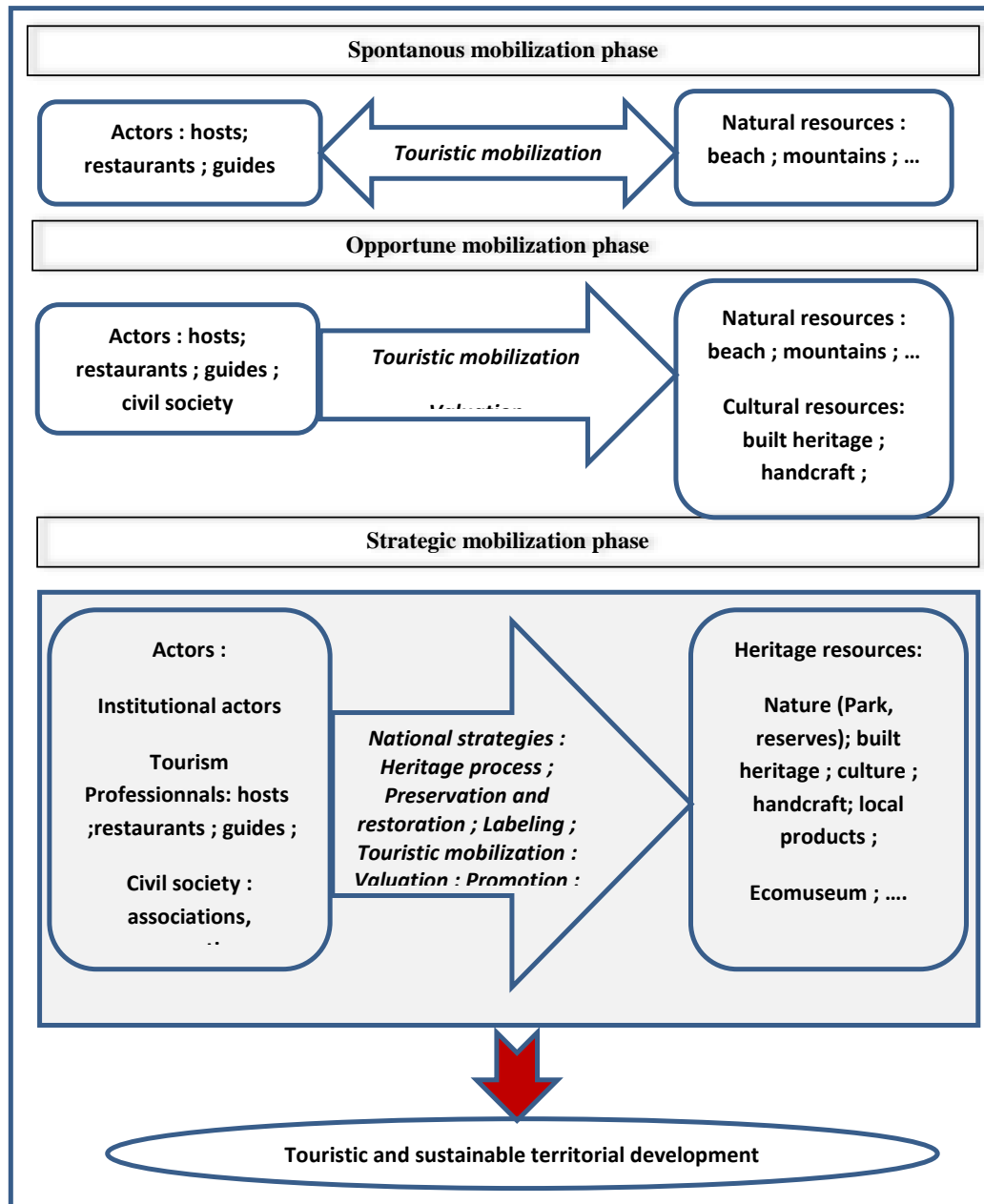


Figure 3 Touristic mobilization of heritage resources (Ghailane, 2019)

- These approaches, once identified, show also that the mobilizations of heritage potentials have gone through phases to become resources for development in the Souss hinterlands. We believe that the mobilization of heritage takes place in three phases: spontaneous, opportune, and strategic.
- Heritage can be a binder for territorial development. The territory of Souss thus illustrates all the complexity of this relation. This heritage/development co-construction depends on the strategies of actors. The "basket of goods" strategy Hirczak (2007) seems to be the most comprehensive; the case of Argan shows this dependence in the relation of heritage/tourism. This supports our idea that heritage is a territorial resource that can be activated in a development strategy focused on specification.

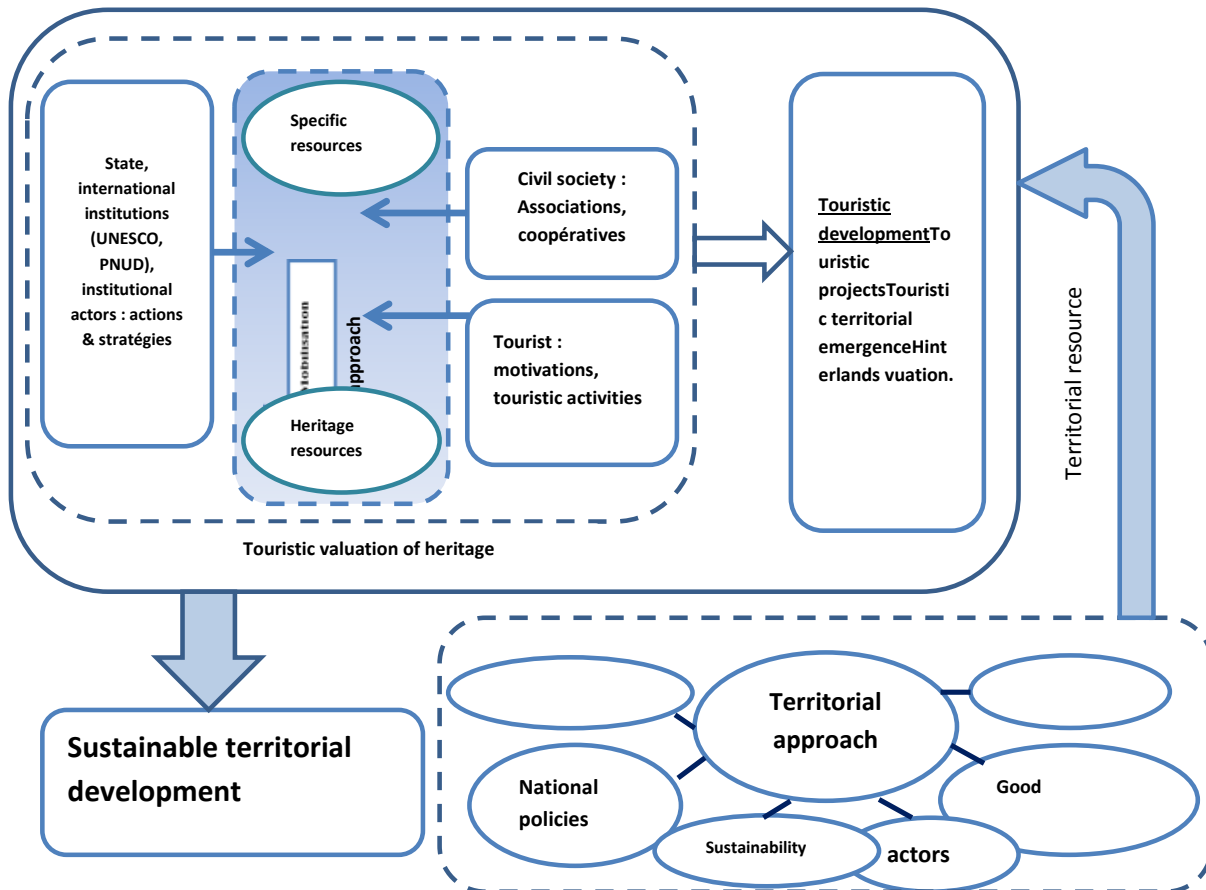


Figure 4 Summary diagram of the complex relation heritage/tourism/sustainable territorial development (Ghailane, 2019)

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Field research revealed that the heritage potential of the resources is not yet well-valued. The strategies of actors must be concerted at all scales, and the involvement of the local population would determine the logics of heritage and territorial construction. Also, in the current context marked by concerns about heritage development, it turns out to be a major condition for adapting to the competitiveness of touristic areas. Specificity is one of the keys to the success of the sustainable territorial development model.

The results of this research help to explain the complex relationships that exist between the heritage process, the touristic valuation of heritage and territorial development. These results highlight the mobilization of different territorial approaches: heritage approach, approach in terms of tourism development and approach in terms of territorial resources for development.

As all other research studies, this research also has its limitations. Some limitations identified are related to methodological choices made. The empirical investigation was biased by the use of some cases of study and budgetary limitations. Finally, some of the questions addressed in this research should be explored thoroughly and treated with an expanded theoretical material. This is particularly the case for the question of territorial construction.

## REFERENCES

- Boujrouf, S. (2014). Heritage and development resources of tourist territories in the High Atlas and the southern regions of Morocco. *Journal of Alpine Research*, 102(1), 1-6. doi:<https://doi.org/10.4000/rga.2259>
- Camagni, R., Maillat, D., & Matteaccioli, A. é. (2004). *Natural and cultural resources, local environments and development*. Edes.
- Campagne, P., & Pecqueur, B. (2014). *Territorial development: An emerging response to globalization* (Vol. 204). Paris, France: ECLM.

- Chang, T. C., Wu, S. F., Hsu, S. C., & Yang, C. C. (2017). A study of the tourism industry in east taiwan. *Journal of Advanced Research in Social Sciences and Humanities*, 2(1), 61-66. doi:<https://doi.org/10.26500/jarssh-02-2017-0108>
- Declève, B., & Hibo, D. (2004). *D 'e territorial development and cultural mutations*. Ottignies-Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium: Leuven University Press.
- François, H., Hirczak, M., & Senil, N. (2006). Territory and heritage: The co-construction of a dynamic and its resources. *Revue Economie Regionale Urbaine*(5), 683-700.
- Ghailane, S. (2019). *The mobilization of heritage in the construction of tourist territories and the development of the Hinterlands. The case of the hinterlands of the Souss region* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Cadi Ayyad University, Marrakech, Morocco.
- Guy, D. M. (1994). Heritage and territory, a conceptual relationship. *Spaces et Societies*, 4, 15-34.
- Guy, D. M. (1998). *Social geography and territories*. Paris, France: Nathan.
- Hervé, G., & Bernard, P. (2007). *The territorial resource*. Paris, France: Economica.
- Hirczak, M. (2007). *The co-construction of agri-food and environmental quality in territorial development strategies: An analysis from products from the Rhône-Alpes region* (Tech. Rep.). Joseph Fourier University, Grenoble, France.
- Hirczak, M., Moalla, M., Mollard, A. é., Pecqueur, B., & Rambonilaza, M. (2008). The modle of the basket of goods. Analysis grid and field observations. *Économie Rurale: Agricultures, Alimentations, Territoires*, 308, 55–70. doi:<https://doi.org/10.4000/economierurale.366>
- Kittaniy, S. (2019). Statecraft as art and practice in Islamic civilization: The image of the muslim ruler in Islamic heritage. *International Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences*, 5(5), 208–214. doi:<https://doi.org/10.20469/ijhss.5.20005-5>
- Landel, P.-A. (2007). Invention of heritage and construction of territories. In *The territorial resource*. Paris, France: Economica.
- Lazzarotti, O. (2013). Tourism and heritage: ad augusta per angustia. *Annals of Geography*, 629, 91-110.
- Sawatsuk, B., Darmawijaya, I. G., Ratchusanti, S., & Phaokrueng, A. (2018). Factors determining the sustainable success of community-based tourism: Evidence of good corporate governance of Mae Kam Pong Homestay, Thailand. *International Journal of Business and Economic Affairs*, 3(1), 13-20. doi:<https://doi.org/10.24088/ijbea-2018-31002>
- Senil, N., & Landel, P.-A. (2016). From the territorial resource to the heritage resource. In E. Glon & B. Pecqueur (Eds.), *At the heart of creative territories. Proximities and territorial resources*. Paris, France: Rennes University Press.
- Turner, B. (2009). Religious message and transnational interventionism: Constructing legal practice in the Moroccan Souss. In *Permutations of order: Religion and law as contested sovereignties* (pp. 185–203). Farnham, UK: Ashgate.
- Turner, B. (2011). Legal framework of agricultural associations in the Souss and the role of religion. In *From the anthropology of muslim law* (pp. 35–41).
- Zaoual, H. (1990). The economic system of the Soussi: A berber people of southern Morocco. *The European Journal of Development Research*, 2(1), 59–64.