



AGRO-FOOD, TOURISM AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

An integrated cluster approach

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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In a globalizing world even small differences are becoming increasingly significant in the development of local economies; therefore, a place-based territorial approach, which attempts to capitalize on distinct local characteristics, is an appropriate strategy to promote economic growth at the regional level.

Linkages and synergies between **food, tourism** and the **creative industries** can provide a platform for local economic development and for turning comparative advantages into competitive advantages. These linkages offer considerable potential to grow demand and develop new products, experiences and markets.

The relationship between food and tourism is well known: many tourists travel for reasons of seeking culinary experience which includes the pursuit of reconnection with nature, resilience to globalisation, the search for freshness, taste and authenticity, support for local producers, and environmental concerns. At the same time, tourism has become part of the cultural economy and the food experiences can be used for branding and marketing destinations. Integrating creative content with tourism experiences can add value by reaching new target groups, improving destination image and competitiveness, and supporting the growth of the creative industries and creative exports.

DELICIOUS MONTENEGRO

*The UNIDO experience in preserving and promoting origin-linked products is a valuable example of an integrated approach. “Delicious Montenegro” is a collective brand and web platform developed by UNIDO to promote market access of Montenegro’s typical products and improve the visibility of Montenegro as an attractive tourism destination. Working in collaboration with Montenegro’s Business University, over 150 producers from the agri-food, tourism and creative industries sectors have been mapped and listings created on the **Delicious Montenegro Platform**.*

<http://deliciousmontenegro.me/>

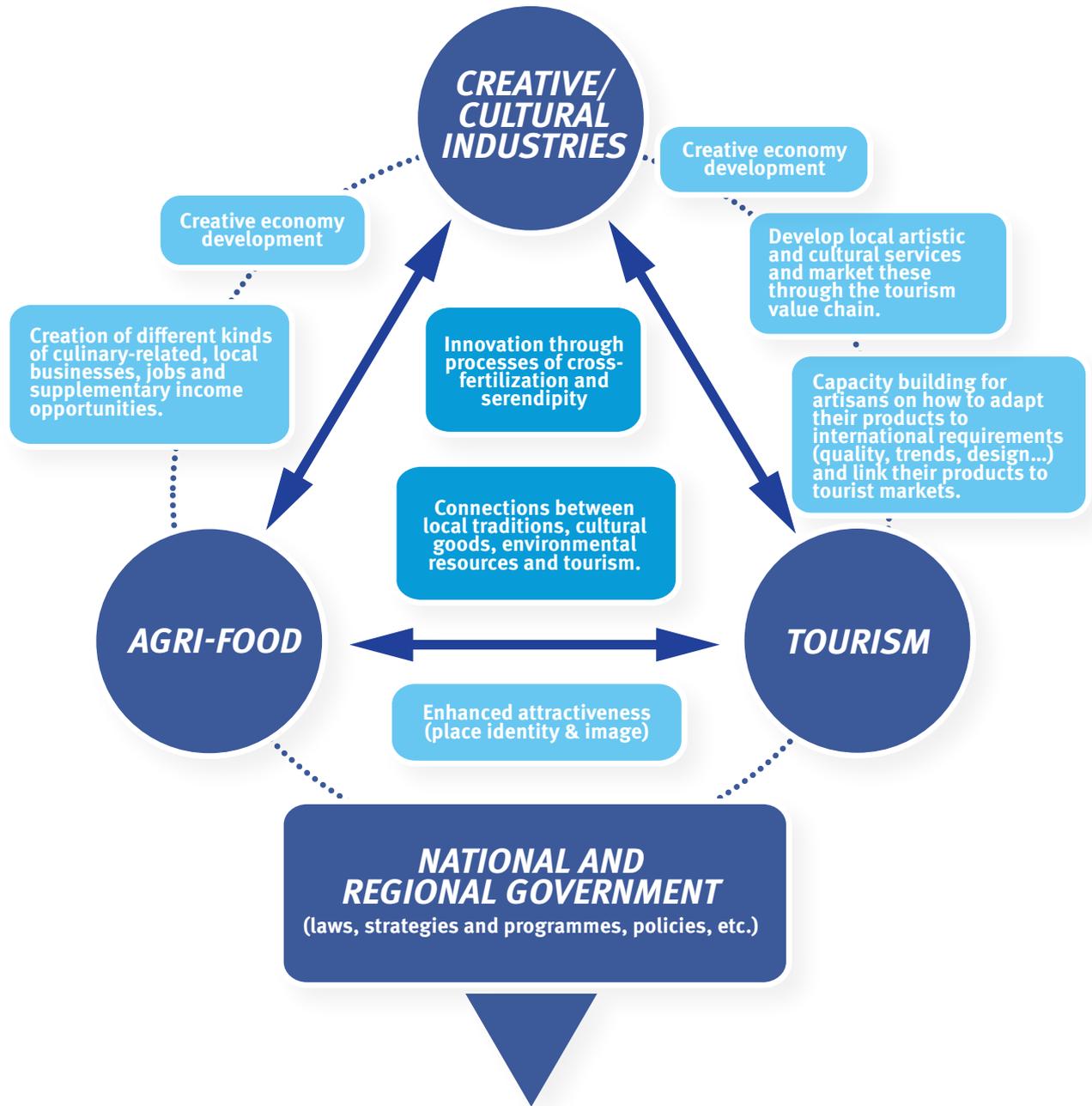


AN INTEGRATED CLUSTER APPROACH

Because of the important linkages between food, tourism and cultural and creative industries, it is important to develop an integrated, holistic approach to policy development and implementation.

The approach we suggest is to focus on innovative activities and interventions that foster development of **'integrated clusters'** built through the combination (and the synergistic linkages) of the primary sector (agriculture) and tertiary service sectors (tourism) activities with strong links to the cultural sector (creative industry). This implies the need of shifting from a sectoral orientation towards a **territorial approach**, in which the key pillar is in the ability of local actors to valorise the whole set of territorial goods and services in a complementary way. The 'integrated cluster' is not exclusively touristic or exclusively specialized in one production covered by agro-food sector., On the contrary, these features, all present, are interdependent, together with the exploitation of cultural and creative resources.

Figure 1. Analytical framework for an 'integrated cluster' approach



CLUSTER APPROACH

Regional development platform
and 'related variety'

The production system in an 'integrated cluster' is characterized by the presence of an agglomeration of enterprises developed around the distinctive resources or 'cultural and territorial capital'. The process of valorisation involves different complementary sectors, and new activities contribute to make the economic structure more complete and widen the opportunities for development.

The main territorial product can be considered a ‘total cultural experience’, which is the result of the combination of typical food products, cultural and creative services and products, and tourism services. The quality of each of these elements affects the perceived quality of the ‘total cultural experience’ and the reputation of a product depends on the quality of all its components as well as of the territory where it is produced.



CREATIVE MEDITERRANEAN

In the Southern Mediterranean countries there is a strong interest to create new opportunities for inclusive economic development through culture and creative industries such as information technology, craft, tourism, textile, fashion and cosmetics. UNIDO project “Development of Cultural and Creative Industries and Clusters in the South Mediterranean Region” <http://www.medcreative.org/> supports 14 clusters in 7 countries to foster the development of cultural and creative industries.

The project accompanies the craftsmen who participate in the clusters from scratch to the sales of the product. This initiative has enabled them to transform their cultural heritage into unique, trendy collections. Craftsmen owe their success to creativity and know-how. Valuing these skills is a way to continually improve the clusters activity, their market access and the product sales, which is the best trigger to improving living conditions and earnings. Creativity as a key to resilience, is at the core of this project.

READ MORE ABOUT:

- *Habitat Design Cluster of Cairo*
- *Marrakech Creative Interiors Cluster*
- *Nablus Furniture Cluster*

Our approach identifies four elements that underpin the formation and operation of an ‘integrated cluster’: (i) **territorial assets**; (ii) **stakeholder collaboration**; (iii) **leadership**; and (iv) **communication and information flows**.

In order to exploit territorial assets by developing linkages and synergies between tourism, agri-food sector and the creative industries, we propose the application of a ‘regional development platform’ as an instrumental policy tool for regional development. The establishment of a ‘platform’ is thought of in terms of productive sectors with ‘related variety’, and defined according to basic local know-how and competences. The regional development platform is not only a tool of political planning, but also a mechanism to develop and build a dialogue around new ideas, a ‘public space’ open to creative dialogue so as to agree upon and arrange the possible trajectories of regional development.

Collaboration between different stakeholders is an essential feature of the integrated cluster approach. Stakeholder collaboration deals with three general aspects: (i) the initial identification and involvement of key stakeholders; (ii) the maintenance of collaborations (consensus-based decision making); (iii) the long-term implementation of collaborative outcomes.

Leadership is important in facilitating stakeholder collaboration, strengthening links between different sectors in the local economy and ensuring that communication and information flows occur between participants in the cluster. The issue of leadership is particularly important in a peripheral context.

An ‘integrated cluster’ needs new forms of communication and information flows; information technology is of great importance in this regard: websites, blogs, Facebook, Twitter, e-newsletters, forums, workshops, meetings, and training sessions.

For constructing an ‘integrated cluster’ a crucial role is played by public authorities, which should adopt a collaborative governance. This new way of understanding governance brings public and private stakeholders together in collective forums with public agencies to engage in consensus-oriented decision making. It also ensures that processes are broadly inclusive of all stakeholders, including both powerful and less powerful actors. In this respect there is a strong responsibility put on public agencies to set an appropriate institutional design so these processes are broadly inclusive of all stakeholders as well as ensure facilitative leadership for setting and maintaining clear ground rules, building trust, facilitating dialogue and exploring mutual gains.

IMPACT

An Integrated Cluster Approach for the development of agro-food, tourism and creative industries contributes to achieving Sustainable Development Goals in various ways. Territorial products are often produced by marginalized populations and in particular by women. Therefore, supporting them will have a positive impact on reducing poverty (SDG 1) and enhancing gender equality (SDG 5).

By supporting development of agro-food, tourism and creative industries, which are often concentrated in peripheral regions, the Integrated Approach contributes to reducing regional inequalities within national borders (SDG 10). Better communication between stakeholders of the three sectors together with a collaborative decision making and governance structure fosters regional development not at the expense of but by preserving natural and cultural heritage, through raising awareness about the importance of biodiversity sustainable utilization of resources for valorisation of territorial assets (SDG 15).

The Integrated Cluster Approach supports development and access to niche and new market (especially export) for agro-food, tourism and creative industries. Through improving demand and market access for territorial assets, the Integrated Cluster Approach can have positive impact on income generation and job opportunities, which directly contributes to inclusive and sustainable economic growth (SDG 8). By increasing investment, employment and income generation opportunities in peripheral areas, an Integrated Approach can reduce migration to cities and thereby support agricultural communities that have direct impact on food security (SDG 2).

Last but not least, an Integrated Cluster Approach for the development of agro-food, tourism and creative industries ensures **inclusive and sustainable industrial development** (SDG 9).





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