

Cultural Practices contributing to Sustainable Development

The Harmony List of Best



Bedouin Hospitality





But the hospitality of the Bedouin is legendary and strangers are welcomed into the Bedouin home with wonderful shows of courtesy and respect. The dangers and hardship of the desert have fostered this approach and, as they are isolated people, encountering others is cause for celebration.

A guest is always welcome. The Bedouins believe any guest is the Guest of God who is warmly welcomed. You will be invited to drink coffee and to accept the Bedouin hospitality. To be nice to a guest is to honour God and in return God will be good to you. A new arrival is often reason enough for a feast. These occasions are celebrated in Bedouin poetry, sayings and songs.



THE HARMONY LIST

Diversity and dialogue, the hallmark of UNESCO ever since its inception, now rank at the very top of the international political agenda. As collective forces indispensable for sustainable development, they have become instruments to guarantee peace and world cohesion, in a world where each culture preserves its identity and dignity.

Since the early 90s the concept of sustainable development has undergone a veritable revolution. It has now been largely demonstrated that sustainable development and cultural growth are interdependent. This implies that development should respond to the needs of present generations without compromising the capacity of future generations to satisfy theirs, be it in the environmental, economic or cultural fields.

Culture in its widest meaning also includes all our systems of beliefs, values, attitudes, customs and institutions. It affects our social relations and the way we perceive ourselves and the world around us, and how we interact with other people and the rest of nature. It is also a key element of economic development.

The world today is witnessing increasingly globalized exchanges that should bring real and potential advantages to people instead of widening disparities and increasing inequalities among them. The challenge we therefore face is to make culture and cultural diversity key elements of all activities aiming at sustainable development.

The partnership between UNESCO's **International Fund for the Promotion of Culture**

(IFPC) and **Integral Development Asset Management** (I.D.E.A.M) constitutes a model for collaboration with the world of business on the important objectives of the international community. The activity chosen for this purpose fully illustrates this approach. Indeed, the Harmony List thus created is intended to highlight the best cultural practices contributing to sustainable development. The objective of the Harmony List is to demonstrate how much cultural diversity is a link for a constant and federating dialogue between all expressions of identity.

To inaugurate the Harmony List, the IFPC and the Médicis Committee, a think tank created by I.D.E.A.M bringing together groups committed to sustainable development in the financial domain, chose two practices: Bedouin Hospitality and the "Bush schools" project set up by the Eeyou or Cree Indians of the James Bay region in Northern Canada. The two were selected from a list of 10 practices from countries in all regions of the world.

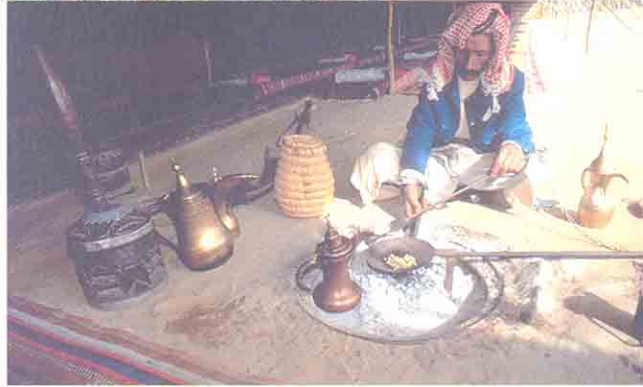
Diversity and dialogue are inseparable, and harmony is the celebration of their encounter. The Harmony List does not claim to be exhaustive; it simply wishes to honour these practices.

HOSPITALITY

BEDOUIN



The word "Bedu" or Bedouin comes from the Arabic word "Badawi", meaning "a dweller of the desert". Bedouins endure the desert and have learnt to survive its unforgiving climate. They treat it with due reverence, knowing that the wilderness has no respect for fools. The traditional Bedouin way of life has come about by adopting measures that ensure survival. There are few societies whose existence is as harmonious as that of the Bedouin. They walk a tight line between life and death, balancing with tenacity and skill. They understand their flocks of goats and camels, forging a symbiotic relationship with them so that each depends on the other for survival. The herds rely on their masters for protection; the masters depend on their herds for milk, meat and skins. The constant wandering is no aimless venture; it is a carefully planned expedition for new pastures.



Coffee is an important symbol of hospitality. Bedouin coffee is unsweetened and flavoured with cardamom. Serving coffee to visitors is an age-old custom derived from Bedouin traditions. Coffee making equipment is very prized by Bedouins, as this equipment is among their few possessions that they can share with a guest.

Coffee, or *qahwa*, is often prepared personally by the master of the tent. He roasts the beans over a fire in a *mahmas*, a roasting spoon, which are then cooled in a wooden dish, the *mabrada*. The crushing of the beans is an art in itself: they are placed in an often elaborately decorated wooden mortar (*mihbash*) and pounded with a haunting rhythm produced by the beat of the pestle against the mortar. This drumming sound is the signal for men to gather at the coffee tent for the exchange of news and recounting of stories. It is said that in the old days, each head of household took a turn inviting elders and guests to coffee with an individualized rhythm on his *mihbash* that identified the tent that was hosting the coffee break.



Created in 1974, the **International Fund for the Promotion of Culture** (IFPC) supports cultural development projects and aims to help creators and cultural entrepreneurs to find additional funds. Managed by an Administrative Council comprising 15 personalities appointed by UNESCO's Director-General, it enjoys a large degree of autonomy.



I. D. E. A. M., Integral Development Asset Management (Crédit Agricole Group), is a portfolio management company exclusively offering socially responsible investment strategies dedicated to institutional and corporate clients based in Europe. It currently manages assets amounting to 750 million Euros. Its management philosophy centres on the selection of stocks based on sustainable development criteria.

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The coffee is then boiled with cardamom, transferred to the classic beaked Arabian coffee pot of tinned copper or brass (*dalla*) and served in a small ceramic cup (*finjan*). Three cups of coffee is polite. The first cup poured is tasted by the host to make the guest feel safe; the second cup is tasted by the guest himself; the third cup is also drunk by the guest, who then shakes his cup to signal that he has finished and hands it back to his host. Once a guest drinks the coffee he is under the protection of the host.

Businesses aiming to promote sustainable development have a great deal to learn from this tradition of hospitality. Indeed, welcoming other people, whether employees or clients, is the mainspring of good communication: there are still far too many human deserts in the business world.



CRITERIA

The Harmony List of best cultural practices contributing to sustainable development aims to highlight successful practices that contribute significantly to improving the quality of life and integrating the cultural dimension in economic and social development in a lasting manner.

The main criteria for a best practice are:

- ◆ Maintaining harmony between human beings and their surroundings
- ◆ Respect for the natural and cultural environment
- ◆ Relevance to local conditions and development levels
- ◆ Being a source of inspiration for resolving contemporary problems
- ◆ Recognition of differences and receptivity to social and cultural diversity
- ◆ Promotion of equality, including gender equality and social equity
- ◆ Contribution to strengthening the status and decision-making power of populations, neighbourhoods and communities, and taking account of their contributions
- ◆ Empowerment of individuals and communities
- ◆ Social integration and reduction of exclusion
- ◆ Job creation and poverty reduction
- ◆ Improvement of traditional cultural practices while remaining faithful to their original values
- ◆ Potential for transfer, adaptation and reproduction

