

Article

Place-Based Perspectives on Understanding the Value of Sustainable Heritage-Inspired Arts and Crafts in Jordan

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Abstract: This article highlights the challenges of rigorously evaluating and meaningfully communicating the socio-economic impacts of arts and crafts in northern Jordan. This article aims to identify and analyse the challenges confronting place-based arts and crafts industries in Jordan and propose valid policies and practices to address these challenges. The methodology employed involved a comprehensive review of the existing literature to elucidate the challenges faced by heritage-based artisans, and we propose several policies aimed at promoting and safeguarding the arts and crafts heritage. The findings supporting this research were derived from a series of practical workshops and focus group interviews conducted in 2022. This article also presents empirical evidence to highlight the identified challenges. It emphasises the importance of the proposed policy recommendations for the Jordanian sector, providing the audience with a sense of empowerment and an understanding of the potential solutions. This work could offer insights into how local communities innovatively leverage creative capacities, create localised impact, and address local challenges. We argue that the value of arts and crafts is better understood locally to provide impactful experiences based on community-led and community-generated creativity and flexibility. A creative participatory approach is used to create contemporary art designs and train young people on artistic and craft-making skills, application, and production as a credible precedent and best practice for developing creative cultural “enterprises” in Jordan.

Keywords: arts and crafts engagement; cultural heritage values; creative placemaking; Jordan



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1. Introduction

The scholarship on conserving tangible heritage, such as monuments and other physical structures, is substantial and context-based [1–3]. Most studies looking at handicraft production appear in the literature on tourism development and entrepreneurship, since it creates job opportunities and income, reducing some poverty [4–6]. However, research on place-based arts and crafts industries is notably limited. Place-based crafts represent arts practices linked with geographical locations and, in particular, contexts that encapsulate cultural, environmental, and historical attributes by using local designs, materials, and techniques and acting as tangible manifestations of a community’s heritage and legacy. These crafts transcend mere objects but are situated within a complex network of social and ecological connections that imbue them with value and meaning [7]. The role of place in the production of crafts is elucidated by Tilley [8], who posits that place functions not merely as a setting for human activities but also as a dynamic force in shaping identity. Place-based crafts represent more than mere products; they embody processes that facilitate the interaction among individuals, their surroundings, and their cultural traditions.

The process of identity formation through craft production is complex and involves the interplay of personal, cultural, and social identities. Community-based arts and crafts experts see their creations as reflections of their own identities, with their knowledge, skills, and creativity being integral to their sense of place and collective identity. In addition,

community-based arts and crafts production enables individuals to articulate their personal identities while also fostering connections to their cultural heritage [9].

The relation between place-based crafts and identity becomes linked to the memory of its community and its rooted practices. In addition, individual and collective memory is vital to passing down knowledge and skills across generations. Typically, craft practices are acquired through apprenticeship and oral traditions, which are firmly embedded in a location's unique cultural and environmental settings [10]. Place-based crafts are crucial to sustaining cultural traditions by ensuring their relevance in modern contexts [11]. Arts and crafts act as a channel between the past and the present, allowing communities to preserve their cultural heritage while adapting to new circumstances, which is crucial to safeguarding their cultural diversity and enhancing the resilience of communities against external challenges. In addition, place-based arts and crafts contribute to place reputation and place image, which "represents the highest level of generalisation of territorial perception". According to Matlovičová [12], place image serves as a subjective interpretation of an objectively established identity. She elaborates that this image reflects the perception of identity within an individual's awareness, incorporating both cognitive and evaluative aspects. Place identity is defined as a collection of features and characteristics that distinguish a particular territory from others.

Place-based arts and crafts associated with heritage sites encounter considerable obstacles in contemporary society. The forces of urbanisation and globalisation have contributed to the diminishing presence of numerous traditional crafts, as mass machine productions using advanced technologies such as 3D printing increasingly supplant handmade products. This shift has precipitated a decline in the transmission of craft knowledge and skills and a weakening of the cultural identities that are intricately linked to these artisanal practices [13]. Nevertheless, there exist avenues for the rejuvenation of place-based crafts. The rising need for sustainable and locally sourced products, coupled with the growth of cultural tourism, has fostered a renewed interest in traditional craftsmanship. Efforts that bolster craft artisans, including fair trade initiatives, cultural preservation programs, and craft cooperatives, have been instrumental in safeguarding these practices and the identities they embody [14,15].

The cultural heritage represented by traditional crafts possesses a distinct character, as the associated techniques and skills cannot be directly engaged with or experienced without supplementary means. This intangible aspect of cultural heritage presents significant challenges in its demonstration and preservation, making it particularly vulnerable to extinction. In addition, the absence of a designated organisation responsible for safeguarding arts and crafts heritage exacerbates the vulnerability of many traditional crafting techniques. Consequently, crafts heritage is at risk, necessitating urgent attention to protect the inherited skills and knowledge. It is imperative to systematically categorise, thoroughly comprehend, and address the challenges confronting arts and crafts heritage to ensure the survival of these age-old traditions and avoid their disappearance. This work also emphasises the role of the audience, such as scholars, researchers, policymakers, and practitioners, in preserving cultural heritage, making them feel responsible and engaged in the process.

This article demonstrates place-based crafts as sitting at the nexus of several inertials of tourism, local development, and sustainability strategising. We explore place-based arts and crafts in the context of managed cultural heritage sites in Jordan and examine their potential for cultural and economic value in sustainable community development processes. Given that past or former practices, such as handcraft production, possess the potential materials for local community, identity, and economic development, this research explores and attempts to optimise the uses of such resources. The potential impacts of place-based crafts are quite extant, as manifested in the various routinised tourism products and their apparent storehouse of local memory, pride, and development in the minority's communities in local destinations. Although cracks in the entire system of place-based craft production remain (such as inflexible heritage interpretation and didactic presentation, network asymmetries between rural craftspeople and stakeholders, and perceived participation challenges), this

body of craft-based research advances interdisciplinary work with and among business, aesthetics, and policies in cultural-focused productivity efforts.

This article contributes to the scholarly debate on “heritage as discursive practices” that the nation-state uses to forge a shared identity, acquire political legitimacy, and indoctrinate its populace [16] (p. 230). We examine how various group interests and contemporary ideologies use stories, clichés, information, imagination, technology, and other elements to create and recreate heritage in ways that establish, sustain, and perpetuate power relations [17]. This notion reflects that the government needs more material resources, and cultural activities rely on the private sector. Accordingly, it structures the fabric of society, including craftsmen and their industries, into networks of the desired image. This work investigates how the correct administration of cultural initiatives is essential, since cultural heritage unquestionably has a significant role in the socio-economic growth of communities and nations [18]. We try to understand how the local community’s engagement helps unpack the complexity of communicating its significance, how they encounter their cultural heritage, what stories and narratives they tell through their practices, and how it builds their identity. We, finally, demonstrate the value of heritage-inspired creative arts and crafts in developing an innovative and sustainable economy and livelihoods through community-led enterprise, knowledge exchange, and skill training and development in Jordan and propose a framework to enable positive outputs for the youth’s engagement with their heritage [19].

2. Methodology

This study employs a multi-method approach to comprehensively examine the impact of heritage-led arts and crafts initiatives in Jordan, focusing on the intersections of cultural identity, economic development, and community empowerment. The research design integrates document and policy analysis, semi-structured interviews with 20 artisans across Jordan, and an assessment of various community training programs and government support initiatives. This approach ensures a holistic understanding of the socio-cultural context and the practical challenges faced by artisans while being theoretically grounded in Lefebvre’s and Bourdieu’s frameworks.

2.1. Document and Policy Analysis

This research involved a thorough analysis of key policy documents, government reports, and international guidelines that influence the cultural heritage sector in Jordan. Resources such as the “Jordan Tourism and Conflict with Local Communities” report and sector profiles from the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities provided essential insights into the socio-economic and regulatory frameworks affecting the arts and crafts industry. Drawing on document analysis methodologies [20,21], this study systematically evaluated the alignment—or misalignment—between national strategies and local practices, particularly concerning heritage conservation, tourism development, and artisan support. This analysis identified critical gaps and opportunities within the existing policy landscape, providing a foundation for assessing the sustainability of heritage-led initiatives. Lefebvre’s concept of the production of space [22] was particularly relevant here, as the analysis explored how these policies influence the socio-spatial practices that shape artisans’ cultural environments and identities.

2.2. Semi-Structured Interviews

This study conducted semi-structured interviews with 20 artisans from various regions in Jordan, focusing on traditional crafts such as pottery, weaving, and embroidery. A purposive sampling method was employed to ensure diverse representation across gender, age, and socio-economic backgrounds. Participants were selected based on their active involvement in heritage-inspired crafts, allowing this research to capture nuanced perspectives on topics such as training programs, market access, and the role of cultural identity in their work. The interviews explored themes like artisans’ experiences with government

and NGO-led initiatives, challenges in sustaining traditional practices, and strategies for balancing cultural preservation with commercial viability. Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and cultural capital [23] underpin this analysis, illustrating how the artisans' traditional knowledge and skills shaped by their socio-cultural environment interact with market demands and entrepreneurial efforts. The narratives revealed the artisans' strategies for navigating the tensions between preserving cultural identity and adapting to the evolving economic landscape.

2.3. Community and Government Training Initiatives

The study also evaluated the effectiveness of several training programs designed to enhance both the creative and business skills of artisans. Initiatives like the "ACOR-Sustainable Cultural Heritage through Engagement of Local Communities Project" served as case studies for assessing capacity-building efforts. The analysis emphasised how these programs aim to build cultural capital by integrating traditional practices with modern entrepreneurial skills, thereby expanding artisans' economic opportunities while preserving their cultural heritage. There were three phases:

- **Design workshop (Phase 1—September 2022):** Held in Umm Qais, this workshop focused on artistic design principles and colour theory, providing participants with hands-on experience in integrating heritage patterns into contemporary crafts. Sessions ranged from creative idea generation to final product presentations (Figure 1), fostering skills that bridge traditional craftsmanship and modern design practices. Lefebvre's notion of representational space is applied here to highlight how artisans' designs reflect the lived experience of their cultural environments and contribute to the production of culturally meaningful spaces.



Figure 1. Cont.

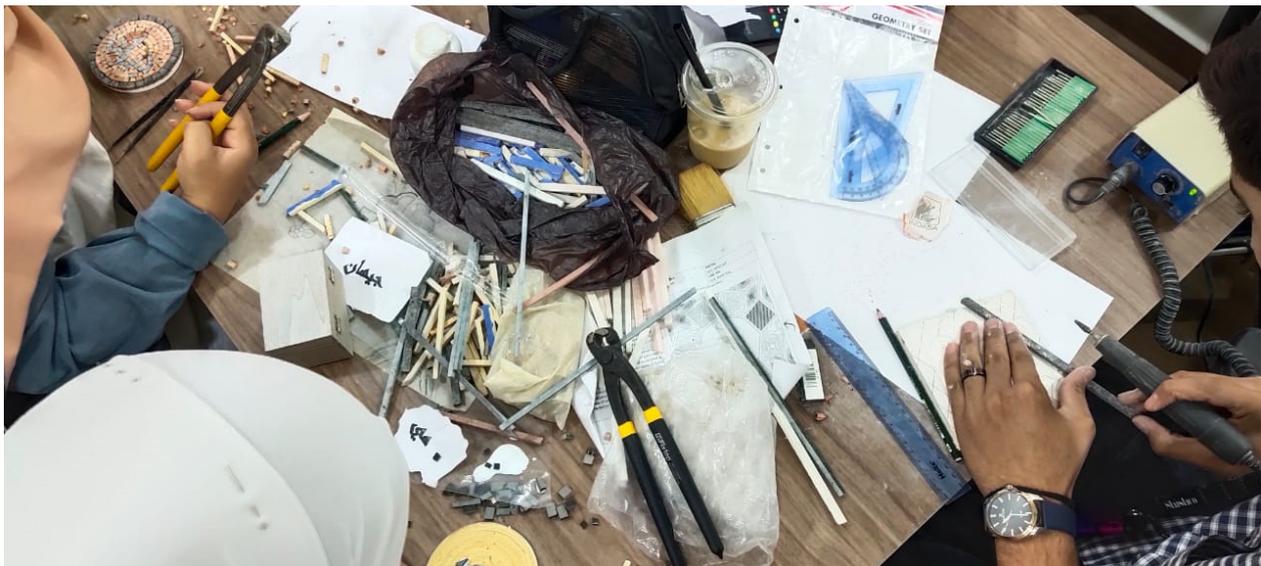


Figure 1. Community artists in a Phase 1 design workshop brainstorming and developing initial concepts (the researchers, 2023).

- Business model workshop (Phase 2—February 2023):** This workshop concentrated on converting creative ideas into viable business models. Participants, mostly women, engaged in exercises aimed at identifying business opportunities, understanding customer needs, and constructing entrepreneurial strategies (Figure 2). The training focused on transforming the artisans’ habitus by equipping them with the tools to operate within market-driven fields while retaining their cultural authenticity. Bourdieu’s idea of field is relevant here, as the artisans learned to navigate the intersections between cultural capital and economic capital in a competitive market.

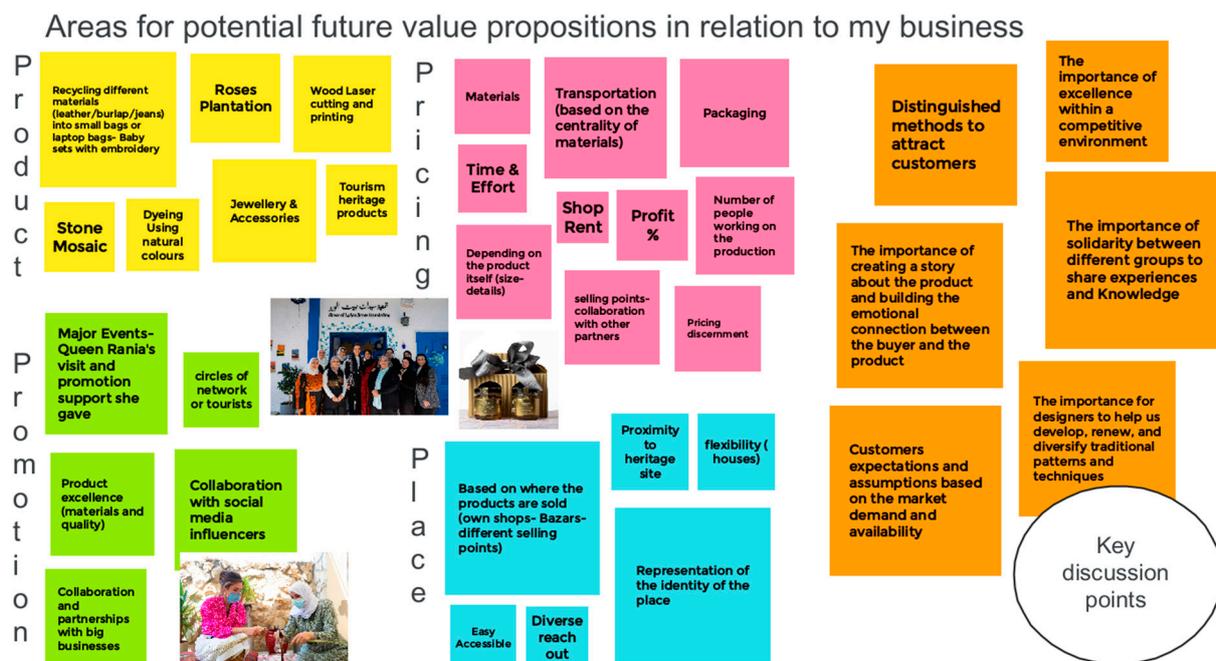


Figure 2. Business model workshop thoughts and discussions by different local artists (the researchers, 2023).

- Broader community impact and knowledge exchange (Phase 3):** The third phase involved expanding the impact of training to the wider community. The initial 7 par-

ticipants recruited community members with relevant craft knowledge, particularly youth aged 18–35, based on their connection to the identity of Umm Qais [24]. These community-driven workshops and training sessions focused on establishing businesses while assessing the strengths and weaknesses of various crafts. This phase culminated in the production of heritage-inspired arts and crafts that reflect the community's identity. By fostering the co-production of knowledge and expanding skill sets, this initiative strengthened community cohesion and contributed to local economic resilience (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Community training by local artists (the researchers, 2023).

2.4. Validation and Reliability

To ensure the validity, reliability, and overall robustness of the findings, this study employed a triangulation strategy that integrated data from interviews, document analysis, and participant observations. Drawing on established best practices in qualitative research validation [20,25], thematic analysis and coding were applied to identify recurring patterns related to place identity, cultural continuity, and the socio-economic impact of arts and crafts initiatives. By cross-referencing multiple data sources and applying rigorous document analysis methods, the research design ensures transparency, replicability, and consistency, aligning with both ethnographic methodologies and theoretical frameworks from Lefebvre and Bourdieu. This comprehensive approach allows for a nuanced understanding of how space, identity, and socio-cultural practices intersect within the heritage-led arts and crafts sector in Jordan while addressing the broader socio-political and economic contexts that shape the artisans' work. The combination of methodological rigour and theoretical alignment enhances the study's credibility and ensures that its findings are both reliable and valid.

3. Crafting the Local

Jordan is a middle-income country in the Middle East (Figure 4), and more than half of the country's population and industries are concentrated in the capital of Amman. Like many developing countries in transition with uneven distribution of resources and population, many parts of Jordan suffer from poverty and high unemployment for the young generation [26,27]. Urban and rural landscapes and traditional cultures are disappearing due to urbanisation and population migration for socio-economic development [28]. Protecting heritage and traditional culture is becoming urgent for the country. A systematic and complete legal framework has not been formed, and the existing legislation on heritage is fragmented and cannot respond fully to demands [29]. Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) has yet to be genuinely included in heritage practices, neglecting many values of intangible elements, including handicrafts [30].



Figure 4. The location of Umm Qais in Jordan. Map. Source: https://dmaps.com/carte.php?num_car=5404&lang=en (accessed on 18 October 2023).

The social structure of the Jordanian society consists of various cultural segments that shape the country's cultural heritage through intangible cultural heritage (ICH) practices, such as traditional crafts, traditional festivals, folk music, and performing arts. Yet, the country's progression endeavours involving cultural heritage have focused on its existing tangible heritage with limited attention to its ICH. Local laws, international laws, and conventions have primarily focused on safeguarding the tangible heritage from illegal excavations, theft, destruction, and trafficking [31]. As a result, tourism experiences became focused on visiting various cultural sites as the major heritage draw in tourism [32]. Arinat's [33] study implies a gap in specific policymaking regarding preserving and developing handicrafts in Jordan. He claims that handicrafts are not only a tourism product but a critical focus on the government's perspective to provide additional support and aid required to meet current challenges. Currently, there are no laws and policies specifically targeting the protection and development of handicrafts, and this part is often vaguely covered in policies related to the development of heritage tourism. However, since 2017, Jordan has attempted to enact a general strategy emphasising the function of ICH within the community in line with sustainable development [34]. For example, the latest Jordan Tourism Strategy of 2021–2025 mentions protecting heritage and developing tourism products and experiences [35]. However, the priority of heritage protection remains focused on tangible heritage, with no mention of ICH or handicrafts. Moreover, the different programs or initiatives have focused on individual cases that could support the local communities' development without an overall vision for the country's economic development. Within the management bodies and programs of the Jordanian government, we were looking for specialised institutions, activities, or plans that led to establishing programs for capacity building in ICH.

For Jordan, handicrafts are essential to the tourist experience; they reflect regional customs and indigenous cultures and remind visitors of the locations visited and their experiences [36]. Such items serve as a vehicle for a society to communicate its morals and spiritual beliefs. Equally important, they play a significant role in the social and cultural identity transmitted through generations [37]. Such advantages of handicrafts may be seen in nations where tourism is a significant economic sector. Tourism in Jordan is the biggest export industry, the second-largest employment in the private sector, and the second-highest foreign currency creator, contributing 19.4% of the country's overall GDP [38]. Nevertheless, Jordan's tourism industry is functioning much below its potential despite its advantage and significance to the economy.

Local tourism's growth is aided by preserving social memory at archaeological sites, representing communities' identity. Due to their significant tangible and intangible values, archaeological heritage sites have evolved into desirable destinations for tourism and recreation. Archaeological sites are inextricably linked to the environment in which they are found; their meanings are fashioned together and meld with the surroundings [39,40]. In heritage management and planning, the value question is more significant [39,41–44]. According to Tri Anggraini, Sadasivam, and Alpana [45], a nation's legacy gives it identity, and culture supports growth. As such, there may be opportunities to revive the potential of places that produce distinctive products for the tourism industry and ancillary businesses that contribute to job growth and positively contribute to the quality of life. Thus, heritage serves as a reflection of the intellectual and social environment of the present.

According to Mateja, Davis, and Pipan [46], cultural values are a kind of territorial capital or source of growth that locals and visitors may experience and enjoy, which can benefit society and the economy. Despite being long seen as opposing economic progress, heritage and its conservation are now considered valuable allies in a nation's development. Social value may be established by assessing social cohesiveness, community empowerment, skill and development learning, gross added value, multiplier economic impacts, tourist visits, and consumption. Balan and Vasile [47] present a different perspective on the idea that a nation's culture significantly impacts its history of economic growth. The battle among states to attain competitive advancement in regional development strategy and the economic crises may be seen in the framework of the new economy as a defence mechanism against potential dangers posed by globalisation. As a result, a country's ability to compete for international investment is often based on its particular and distinctive intangible resources. Finding the unique characteristics of Jordan on which to build its distinctiveness is still an issue. This issue is due to the fragmentation of the legal system in Jordan; it cannot satisfy the demands of urban populations while also meeting the objectives of sustainable historical conservation for all forms of history [48,49].

Nevertheless, arts and crafts entrepreneurs are considered informal [49]. This informality is due to cultural appropriation, media intrusion, and globalisation. These all contribute to a condition of cultural erosion. There is some debate in this regard, since heritage practises express heritage values differently depending on the socio-political environment in which they are used [43]. Based on what defines local or national requirements and viewpoints, some values and traditions are regulated, interpreted, or discouraged. Accordingly, many Jordanian historical sites lack mission statements and goals or choose not to publish them.

Furthermore, the management goals for visitors' comprehension could be more measurable objectives in the current plans. In Jordan, there has been a general inclination for government authorities to prioritise managing and protecting high-profile sites, such as archaeological monuments, structures, and villages [50]. This was reflected in Jordan's tourism strategy 2021–2025, which builds on Jordan's five major heritage/archaeological sites [35]:

“Primary sites for this activity are Petra, Wadi Rum, the Dead Sea, the Baptism Site and Amman will aim to upgrade cultural and heritage offerings in these and other secondary locations”.

The secondary archaeological sites and the conventional urban architectural neighbourhoods are mostly disregarded. The fundamental problem with Jordan's heritage management practices results from a muddled understanding of the importance of heritage and the values that go along with it. Consequently, heritage-inspired arts and crafts attributed to such heritage values should be given more attention as a representation of intangible cultural heritage due to the lack of consensus on the vision and goals for development. Based on stakeholders' discussions on Jordan's policies,

“Jordan's cultural heritage conservation policies and strategies end up being documents on the shelf. The strategies lack real practical work, they are not able to reach to the micro roots for implementation. . . understanding the available resources for the community and how they can be integrated with a clear executive plan”.

The above statement explains the discussion with Al Haija [51], who mentioned that there are a considerable feeling of discontent and, sometimes, a confrontation between the host community and local government because most public works are focused more on the demands and satisfaction of tourists than on local infrastructure and public services. This dissatisfaction is due to the Jordanian government facing various challenges, including a lack of domestic resources and capacity to manage such processes. These issues impact the policy formulation within the Jordanian government and have forced them to work with the private sector to develop plans in various sectors, including housing, education, health, and transportation, particularly over the past ten years.

4. Why Community Involvement in Safeguarding ICH?

The extant literature addressing arts and crafts production within Jordan's economy remains relatively narrow in focus, predominantly concerned with cataloguing traditional handicrafts, mapping the roles of key stakeholders, and identifying gender disparities in participation (Figure 5) [6,33,52–56]. This limited scope fails to sufficiently consider the centrality of local communities and the embeddedness of cultural identity in traditional handicraft practices. The National Strategy for Tourism Handcraft Development in Jordan (2010–2015) [57], though a critical initial step, remains outdated and lacks follow-up initiatives from key stakeholders, reflecting a gap in coordinated, community-driven heritage preservation efforts.

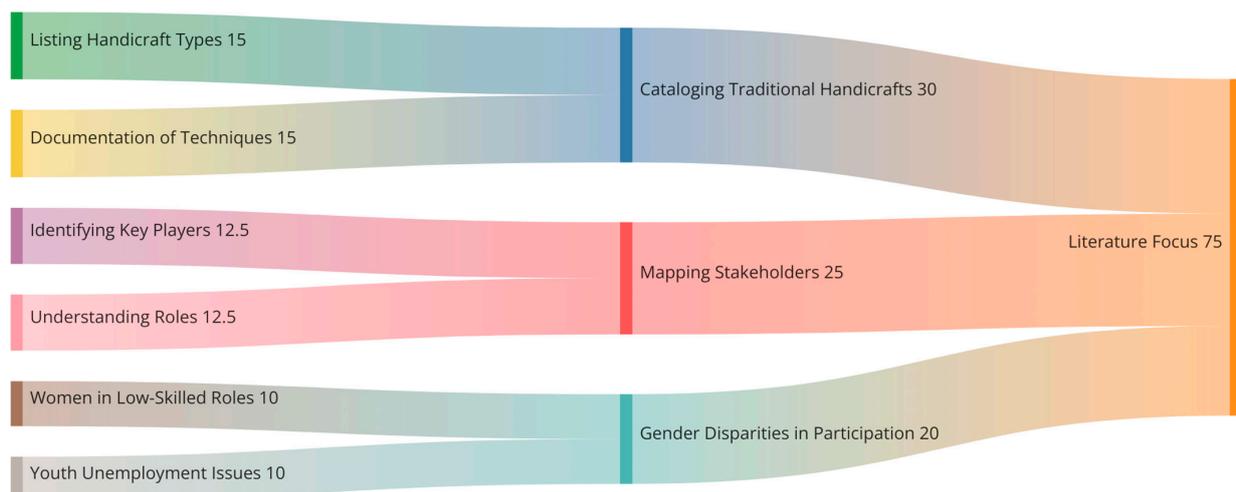


Figure 5. The literature that focuses on arts and crafts production in Jordan.

Handicrafts, recognised as intangible cultural heritage (ICH), are fundamental in shaping and reinforcing local identities. UNESCO's 1989 Recommendation on Safeguarding Traditional Culture and Folklore underscores the integral role communities play in ICH preservation. It argues that the perpetuation and recreation of these practices hinge on a community's engagement with its environment, history, and socio-cultural context [58]. Yet,

these efforts are vulnerable to power dynamics that prioritise state-centric heritage agendas at the expense of marginalised communities. As Brown [59] notes, governmental interventions often shift cultural resources from politically weaker groups to more dominant entities (Figure 5). In Jordan, this dynamic manifests in the handicraft sector's informality, where it primarily serves marginalised populations, including women in low-skilled roles and unemployed youth [60]. Community involvement, however, remains pivotal in safeguarding ICH. For instance, local NGOs like the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) have integrated conservation with socio-economic development by promoting handicrafts linked to Jordan's natural heritage. The RSCN's initiatives, including eco-tourism projects, have bolstered local communities' livelihoods by merging conservation efforts with craft production, marketed under the "Wild Jordan" brand. Similarly, The Princess Taghrid Institute for Development and Training (PTI) plays a crucial role by empowering marginalised young women through skill-based training in crafts such as embroidery and cooking, providing them with pathways to economic independence. The critical role of community involvement in ICH safeguarding is further illustrated by direct accounts from local artisans, who lament the inaccessibility of resources due to entrenched gatekeeping:

"All grants and assistance that are given are taken by certain individuals based on mutual relationships and interests, without giving a chance to different people. However, the same individuals who receive these aids are repeated," one participant notes (A1, A3, A6, A7, 2023).

This reflection exposes the systemic issues of informality and lack of transparency, underlining the need for more inclusive and community-centred approaches to heritage preservation. Handicrafts, as spaces of appearance, facilitate the production of distinct local identities through collective self-expression [61], underscoring the cultural significance of community engagement in creating an authentic Jordanian product.

5. Arts and Crafts and the Creative Economy in Jordan

5.1. Jordan's Handicraft Sector

The arts and crafts sector in Jordan remains marginal within national tourism strategies, despite its deep cultural relevance. Traditional crafts, such as embroidery, weaving, pottery, and glasswork, are geographically and culturally distinct, reflecting the diverse heritage of different regions [6]. For instance, Madaba is renowned for mosaic and weaving traditions, while southern regions are noted for glasswork and jewellery [62]. However, the sector's fragmentation, lack of formal classification, and absence of comprehensive economic data obscure its contributions to national income, perpetuating a cycle of underinvestment and neglect.

Efforts to foster greater accountability and resource allocation have been sporadic and largely uncoordinated. Initiatives led by NGOs like the Ghor al Safi Women's Group and the Iraq al-Amir Women's Cooperative Society have facilitated rural community engagement in handicraft production, yet these programs remain isolated. The bureaucratic and financial challenges faced by artisans further hinder formalisation.

5.2. Institutional and Governance Framework

The governance landscape for handicrafts in Jordan involves multiple state and non-state actors, including the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, the Ministry of Industry and Trade, the Ministry of Labour, and the Ministry of Social Development. However, overlapping jurisdictions and centralised governance structures result in inefficiency, lack of coordination, and limited policy impact (Figure 6). The Ministry of Tourism's focus on licensed enterprises excludes many artisans operating informally, while international initiatives led by USAID and others remain fragmented, without a cohesive national strategy.

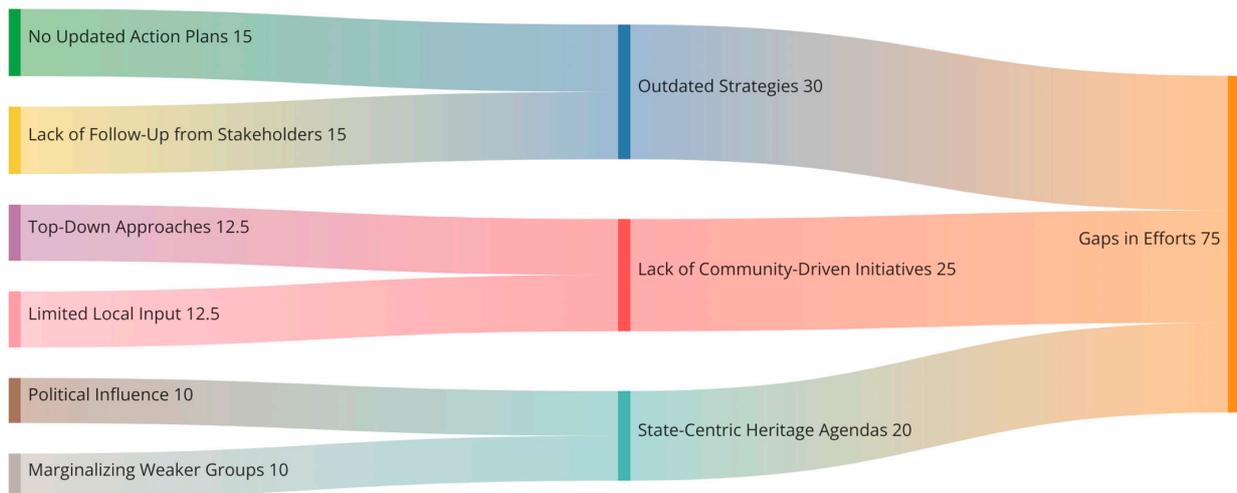


Figure 6. Illustrating gaps in current efforts and community-driven initiatives.

The inherent complexity of the handicraft sector—encompassing traditional techniques, skilled labour, and geographically specific practices—demands a holistic policy approach. The Vocational Training Corporation (VTC) and the Ministry of Social Development’s financial aid programs offer some support, but these measures are neither comprehensive nor sector-specific (Figure 6). Additionally, the absence of specialised institutions dedicated to the sector limits capacity-building opportunities and stymies development. Addressing these governance challenges necessitates an integrated policy framework that harmonises the roles of various stakeholders while prioritising community-driven heritage initiatives. Ultimately, such an approach would leverage the sector’s dual potential for economic growth and cultural preservation, transforming Jordan’s crafts into both a symbol of national identity and a vehicle for sustainable development (Figure 7).

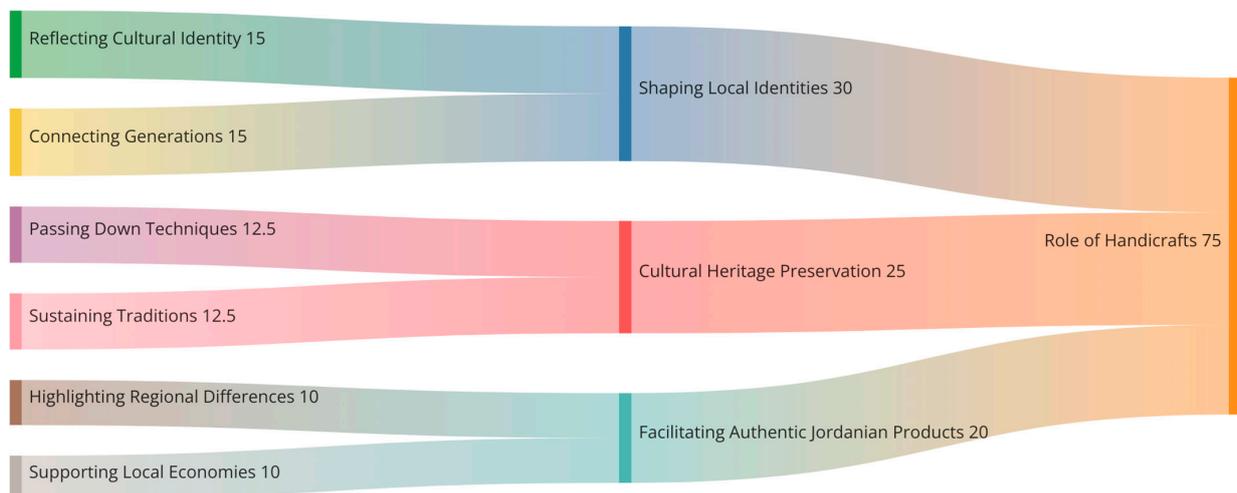


Figure 7. Illustrating the role of handicrafts in shaping local identities.

6. Perspectives on Cultural Identity and Spatial Dynamics in Jordan’s Handicraft Sector

The intricate relationship between traditional crafts and the socio-spatial context of Jordan reveals a complex interplay among cultural identity, economic survival, and spatial constraints. These crafts, deeply embedded within their communities, function as vehicles for sustaining cultural heritage while navigating the pressures of modernisation and global economic forces. By drawing on Lefebvre’s theory of socially produced space and Bourdieu’s concept of habitus [22,23], this section explores how these theoretical lenses illuminate the lived experiences of Jordanian artisans.

6.1. Place-Based Perspectives

The findings underscore that the production of crafts in Jordan is intrinsically linked to local communities' geographical and cultural identity. Artisans consistently referenced how the distinct natural environment, such as the varied colours of the Dead Sea soil, informs their creative process:

“The Dead Sea has various shades of red and yellow in its soil. . . This inspired the establishment of the project using the natural colours in nature in our production” (Participant A16).

Lefebvre's notion of socially produced space is particularly relevant here, as it reveals how the spatial environment, enriched by cultural and social meanings, becomes integral to the production and reception of these crafts.

Place-based perspectives focus on how the unique characteristics of a specific location and its environment, culture, and history directly shape the practices and identities of the communities living there (Figure 8). Unlike spatial and temporal perspectives, which emphasise broader socio-political and historical forces, place-based perspectives highlight the intimate relationship between cultural practices and their localised settings, emphasising how communities' identities are deeply tied to the physical and symbolic qualities of their surroundings.

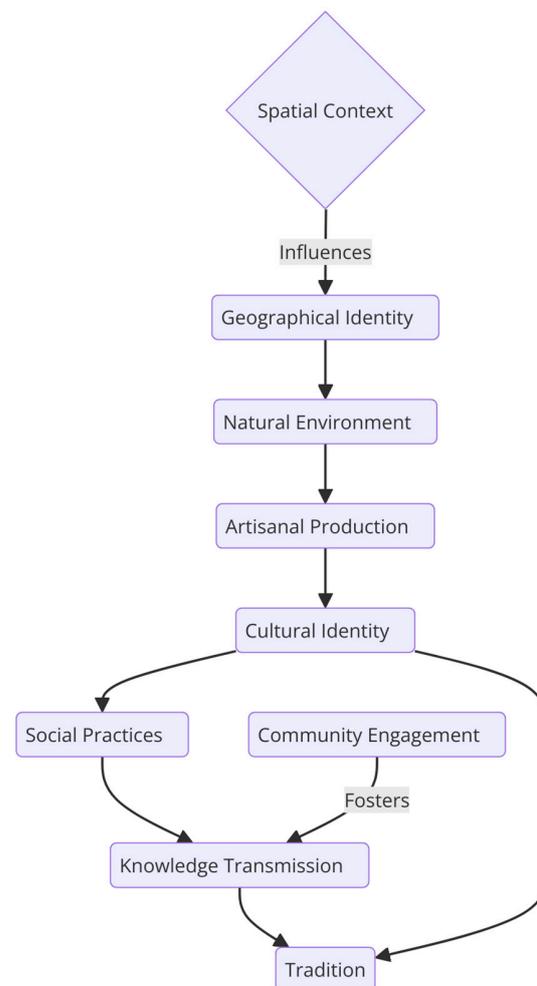


Figure 8. Place-based perspectives in Jordanian handicrafts. All the purple parts are the components of Jordanian handicrafts, and the two grey parts are the mechanisms of different factors. For example, the specific context influences other factors, and community engagement will stimulate and cultivate knowledge transformation

Handicrafts in Jordan are not only economic activities but are central to cultural expression and its living heritage [63]. They embody traditional techniques, designs, and motifs that reflect the unique identities of different regions and communities. Through these crafts, local communities articulate their cultural identity, revealing their customs, beliefs, and artistic traditions. This process aligns with Bourdieu's concept of habitus [23], which is evident in how these artisans internalise and perpetuate cultural practices, shaping their craftwork as an expression of deeply rooted traditions. This is captured in the reflection of an artisan from Madaba:

"Mosaics... since I was young, seeing mosaics has been a cultural heritage... It would be a shame to overlook their significance" (Participant A18).

Such narratives highlight how habitus, formed through the generational transmission of knowledge, reinforces place identity and social cohesion. This alignment between habitus and place identity resonates with Mousazadeh's [64] findings, which emphasise that place attachment and identity are key determinants of life satisfaction within urban communities.

Additionally, handicraft production is often characterised by strong community participation, especially in rural areas. Artisans and craftspeople frequently gather to create and share their crafts, passing on skills and knowledge from one generation to the next. This communal engagement fosters a sense of belonging and helps preserve shared cultural practices. Such participation also strengthens the bond within communities, ensuring the continuity of cultural heritage while contributing to a collective identity rooted in shared traditions.

6.2. Spatial and Temporal Perspectives

Spatial and temporal perspectives differ from place-based perspectives in that they examine the broader socio-political, economic, and historical factors that influence cultural practices across different locations and time periods. Spatial perspectives focus on how socio-economic forces, spatial configurations, and power dynamics impact access to resources, opportunities, and spaces. Temporal perspectives, on the other hand, emphasise how cultural practices evolve, adapt, or persist over time, often highlighting the tensions between tradition and modernity.

The spatial limitations that many artisans face working from home due to high rental costs near tourist sites illustrate the broader socio-economic forces at play (Figure 9). According to Lefebvre's theory, these spatial constraints are not merely logistical but are shaped by broader socio-political dynamics that dictate access to resources. This is reflected in the concerns of an artisan who noted the following:

"Because I am using chemical materials, I am afraid that children may be exposed to them" (Participant A17).

The home-based nature of these enterprises, while offering flexibility, also imposes boundaries on productivity and creative exploration, echoing Lefebvre's critique of how space can be a tool of control.

The significance of sense of place is also a key dimension within this context. Handicrafts in Jordan are often inspired by the natural environment, historical landmarks, and local resources. By incorporating these elements into their crafts, artisans create a sense of place that connects the community to its surroundings. Handicrafts become symbolic representations of the community's relationship with the environment, reinforcing their attachment to the land and their cultural roots. This reflects the importance of spatial identity in shaping both personal and collective identities within these communities.

Temporal constraints further complicate this dynamic. The persistence of traditional techniques, such as the kufiya soap-making method (Figure 9), reflects the artisans' efforts to maintain cultural continuity despite the pressures of modern economic demands:

"Soap in Palestine and Jordan was made using the kufiya method... Now I work similarly but sometimes trainees pay for the traditional method" (Participant A17).

Bourdieu’s concept of habitus [23] is crucial to understanding how these deeply ingrained practices persist within evolving socio-economic contexts, illustrating how the artisans’ cultural capital is maintained even as they adapt to new market realities. Handicrafts also play a vital role in cultural continuity by linking past, present, and future generations. The knowledge and skills passed down through these crafts ensure that traditional techniques remain alive, maintaining a sense of continuity and identity over time.

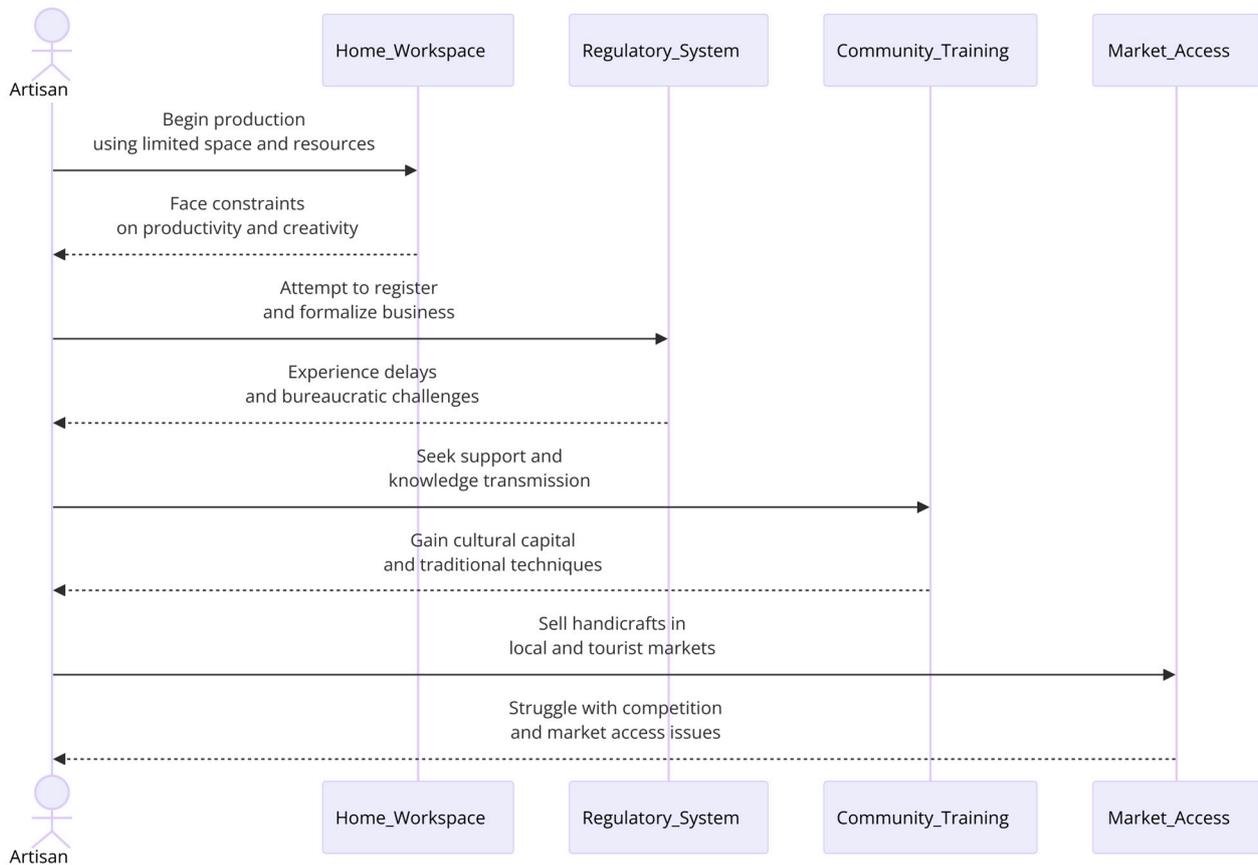


Figure 9. Illustration of the spatial and temporal constraints faced by Jordanian artisans. Solid arrows represent the standard process for artists looking to start their own businesses based on ICH arts and crafts, while dashed arrows indicate the challenges and obstacles encountered at each stage.

6.3. Regulative Perspectives

Regulative perspectives focus on the policies, legal frameworks, and bureaucratic structures that influence cultural production, shaping the opportunities and constraints faced by artisans. These perspectives examine how regulations either support or hinder the formalisation and growth of cultural practices, often revealing tensions between traditional values and modern governance. In the context of Jordanian handicrafts, these regulations can dictate access to resources, market integration, and even the preservation of cultural heritage.

The study reveals significant regulatory challenges that hinder the formalisation and growth of handicraft enterprises. Many artisans remain unregistered due to the complexities and costs associated with licensing, a reflection of Lefebvre’s argument that space and bureaucracy are often leveraged as mechanisms of control and exclusion. This tension is captured in the experience of one participant:

“I struggled and exhausted myself with the licensing process and eventually cancelled the license. . . I spent two months going back and forth dealing with paperwork and requirements” (Participant A7).

These barriers perpetuate the marginalisation of artisans, limiting their economic potential and contributing to a fragmented sector that operates largely informally. Bourdieu's theory of field and capital further explains this marginalisation [23]. The artisans' cultural capital, embodied in their skills and knowledge, is undervalued within an economic system that prioritises financial capital. This disconnect underscores the challenges artisans face in navigating regulatory frameworks that fail to recognise the socio-cultural value of their work, thereby perpetuating a cycle of economic exclusion and cultural undervaluation.

However, despite these challenges, handicrafts offer crucial economic empowerment opportunities, particularly in rural areas, where alternative sources of income are limited. By engaging in handicraft production, community members can generate income, support their households, and contribute to local economies. This economic empowerment strengthens communities, fostering a sense of pride and self-sufficiency while preserving cultural heritage.

7. Challenges and Recommendations

7.1. Challenges for Multiple Stakeholders

Government

Based on the review of previous studies and existing policy, the Jordanian government currently faces some challenges in developing the handicraft industry: (a) It needs to develop a strategy to unite all forces and integrate various resources to promote the protection and development of handicrafts; (b) the government needs to improve the legislation to motivate public awareness of valuing and respecting handicrafts and participants; (c) it needs to develop strategies to encourage multiple stakeholders to collaborate and provide artisans with technical support, facilitating the preservation and development of handicrafts. In addition, our case study in Jordan shows that even though the country has some policies at the government level, there are still challenges in practice. The government needs to improve capacities and strategies to implement a specific plan, and its policy formulation and implementation must be consistent and unified; government departments also need to clarify their roles and assume their due responsibilities. Additionally, there is a need to clarify the definition of handicrafts and the handicraft protection approach in strategies and laws.

Artisans

When the macro-level challenges faced by the government are reflected at the grassroots level, such as artisans, the challenges faced by participants occur in practice. Past research shows that artisans need more information and channels to access potential partners and build practical collaborations. They and their works need more public awareness and respect based on a multiple-value evaluation. And they have minimal skills to preserve and develop handicrafts, which heavily prevents their effective participation. Specifically, female entrepreneurs cannot make their due contributions in the handicraft sector, affected by social and cultural contexts. On the other hand, more concrete challenges were identified during our research in Jordan. Artisans do not understand how to become beneficiaries and owners/leaders of collaboration, achieving their development by increasing their capabilities through cooperative activities. They need to unite to establish complete industry operation approach and order, including an outsourcing mechanism. For female practitioners, there seem to be more difficulties, mainly in four aspects in setting up and running their businesses: lack of capital; lack of physical space (e.g., bazaars); lack of production, operation, and marketing skills; and lack of cooperation and support by government and other stakeholders.

Other stakeholders

As mentioned, other stakeholders and organisations, such as NGOs, have made significant contributions to the preservation and development of Jordanian handicrafts, but their role remains limited by policy and legal challenges at the government level. They have yet to contribute to achieving extensive collaborations with practitioners. And business

schools, as an important trainer, have yet to provide sufficient systematic knowledge on running a business for practitioners. Our research found that stakeholders need complete strategies and plans for collaborating with artisans, including practical exit mechanisms. They need to play a role in supporting artisans to build capacities rather than providing financial support only. Also, they need to support artisans in the development of some specific business skills, for example, by providing appropriate pricing guidance.

7.2. Comprehensive Recommendations

7.2.1. Opportunities

Besides the challenges, our research also found some opportunities to alleviate the challenges that exist in handicrafts. Most participants recognise the diverse heritage and cultural value contained in handicraft production, and gaining awareness and recognition from society is the focus of the next effort. Although not all the businesses run by participants depend on or focus on local heritage sites, culture and heritage are dominant themes throughout their creations. Their handmade products adopt traditional art forms related to Jordan's heritage, such as mosaic effect painting, Jordanian/Palestinian cultural embroidery art, designs on the ruins and carvings of Petra, Nabataean embroidery, and Ajami designs on wood. Making handicrafts is, for them, the preservation and inheritance of history, identity, and culture rather than only a way to make money.

Awareness of collaboration and professional entrepreneurial methods can make the entrepreneurial path smoother, and encouraging collaboration and developing professional skills is one of the directions for future efforts. Participants had many motivations for starting their businesses, such as hobbies, taking it as a part-time job, subsidizing for household expenses, or having a relevant professional background. Entrepreneurs with a strong sense of mission and intention are often more likely to succeed. They find ways to use professional skills to carry out the complete entrepreneurial process, understanding to seek collaborations with government and multiple stakeholders. Therefore, their entrepreneurial process includes missionary meanings, such as protecting traditional culture or supporting vulnerable female groups. Moreover, they also pay more attention to ensuring sustainable business development in standardised ways, for example, by applying for patents.

Social media supported by the Internet can be beneficial in mitigating the challenges of hard-to-reach markets and skills training. There is a strong dependence by participants on the Internet for different aspects of their business. The most common reason for using the Internet is for marketing and reaching a broader audience. Moreover, it is used as an educational resource for increasing knowledge of different materials and handicrafts or for buying raw materials. Some participants also choose to outsource their marketing to online platforms, for instance, Souq Fann and Craft. The platforms are in exchange for a profit cut by handling all aspects of the sales procedure and shipping.

The government has begun to provide some support for handicrafts, and expanding the effectiveness of these supports is a future effort. Positively, although there is no complete policy support, some government financial support is available for the arts and crafts sector. For example, the government agency named **Jordan Enterprise Development Corporation (JEDCO)** provides financial and non-financial support to small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), including those in the arts and crafts sector. It offers funding programs: **the SME Development Fund** provides financing for startups and small businesses; **the Jordan Innovation Fund** provides funding for innovative projects. Additionally, **MOC** provides financial support to artists and cultural organisations. It offers funding for various projects, including exhibitions, festivals, and cultural exchange programmes. Furthermore, there are other initiatives and programmes aimed at supporting the arts and crafts sector. For instance, **the Crafts District** is an initiative by the Greater Amman Municipality (GAM) to create a dedicated area for artisans and craftspeople in the city. It provides affordable workspace for artisans, as well as retail space and marketing support to help them reach new customers. In addition, **Cultural Exchanges** are supported by the Jordanian government, which supports cultural exchange programmes between Jordan and

other countries, providing opportunities for artisans and craftspeople to showcase their work and develop new markets. For example, in 2019, the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts organised an exhibition of Jordanian handicrafts in Spain as part of a cultural exchange programme. Also, the Jordanian government has taken steps to streamline administrative procedures and reduce the regulatory burden on businesses. For example, the government has launched initiatives to promote entrepreneurship and innovation, such as **the Jordan Innovation Fund**, which provides funding and support to innovative startups. However, it is worth noting that limited amounts, bureaucracy, and poor publicity still make it difficult for participants to access all the above resources. The current support provided by the government for handicrafts to artisans makes it challenging to achieve the maximum effect, and more work is needed to create a more business-friendly environment that supports entrepreneurship and economic growth.

Scholars have also responded to this need for top-down adjustments, from policies and regulations to practical levels. Arinat [33] suggested that the government should make efforts from eight perspectives, although he has yet to provide an integrated framework to consider all issues discussed above comprehensively:

- Establishing one official body responsible for the handicraft sector;
- Providing legislative mechanisms;
- Promoting and marketing handicrafts;
- Providing raw materials;
- Providing funds;
- Providing studies and research on handicrafts;
- Building up the artisan's abilities;
- Introducing and awareness of handicrafts.

7.2.2. Examples from Other Regions

- Morocco's Handicraft Sector and Vision 2020 [65]

Challenges: Morocco's handicraft sector has faced significant challenges related to market access, lack of standardised quality, and the vulnerability of traditional artisans to global competition. Additionally, the lack of formal organisation among artisans and the sector's informal nature have hindered growth and sustainability. Artisans, especially in rural areas, struggle with accessing broader markets and maintaining the authenticity of their crafts while adapting to modern demands.

Initiatives: The Moroccan government introduced Vision 2020 to integrate traditional crafts into the tourism sector and support artisans through training, marketing, and financial initiatives. The program focused on modernising craft production while preserving traditional techniques, expanding market access through digital platforms, and encouraging international collaborations. The government also launched programs to enhance product design, improve the quality of craftsmanship, and provide artisans with access to financial support, ultimately making the sector more resilient and globally competitive.

- Preservation of Palestinian Embroidery (Tatreez) [66]

Challenges: Palestinian embroidery (Tatreez) faces political instability, displacement, and the commercialisation of traditional designs. Artisans, particularly women, are often marginalised and need access to markets beyond their local communities. The ongoing conflict and displacement have disrupted the transmission of these cultural practices across generations, threatening the continuity of Tatreez traditions.

Initiatives: Numerous NGOs and international organisations have developed programs to support Palestinian women in preserving Tatreez while gaining economic independence. These initiatives provide training in entrepreneurship, market access through fair trade networks, and platforms to sell products internationally. For example, organisations like Darzah and the Palestine Heritage Center work to protect the authenticity of Tatreez by ensuring that traditional techniques are preserved and that artisans are compensated. These initiatives have empowered female artisans economically while maintaining their cultural heritage.

- Revival of Traditional Crafts in Egypt (Khayamiya and Fustat Pottery) [67]

Challenges: Traditional crafts like Khayamiya (tent making) and Fustat pottery in Egypt have been threatened by modernisation, urbanisation, and the decline in demand for handmade products. Artisans face competition from mass-produced goods, and many traditional crafts have been reduced to tourist souvenirs, compromising their cultural significance. Additionally, the lack of governmental support and limited market access have contributed to the decline of these crafts.

Initiatives: To counter these challenges, the Egyptian government and various NGOs have focused on integrating traditional crafts into urban regeneration and tourism projects. For example, the Khayamiya market in Cairo has been revitalised through collaborations among local artisans, NGOs, and government initiatives that promote the craft as an essential part of Egypt's cultural heritage. Training programs have also been established to improve the quality and authenticity of products, helping artisans reach broader markets locally and internationally. Additionally, integrating crafts into cultural tourism has provided sustainable livelihoods for artisans while preserving these unique traditions.

- Tunisia's Handicraft Strategy [68]

Challenges: Tunisia's handicraft industry has struggled with issues related to the lack of infrastructure, limited access to international markets, and the marginalisation of female artisans. Additionally, the sector's informal nature and inadequate training have hindered artisans' ability to compete in a globalised market.

Initiatives: The Tunisian government has implemented programs focused on empowering women in the handicraft sector and improving product quality through training and standardisation initiatives. Programs like "Tasdir+" have provided export support for artisans, helping them access international markets. The government has also encouraged cluster development and infrastructure improvements, such as dedicated handicraft zones, to facilitate collaborations and enhance market visibility. Furthermore, initiatives to strengthen branding and promote Tunisian crafts at international fairs have significantly boosted the sector.

7.2.3. Guidelines for Jordan's Handicraft Industry

Therefore, we propose guidance to provide potential approaches for the government to consider making a comprehensive strategy by issuing relevant laws, making policies, and supporting associated practices to reverse the current handicraft situation. It involves stimulating social attention and awareness of the value of handicrafts, promoting creative and broad collaborations, and providing participants with reasonable technical and entrepreneurial support. It is a complete social mobilisation mechanism and programme with the commitment of the government.

Raise awareness approach: The value of handicrafts is blurred for the public; hence, it includes critical steps, such as defining, evaluating, and communicating the significance of handicrafts to various degrees. The conservation of handicrafts is a comprehensive mechanism encompassing procedures such as recognising, defining, classifying, and normalising to effectively grab the public's attention and increase awareness of preserving handicrafts and inheritors. Assessment is a process that includes positioning handicrafts at different levels, formulating evaluation criteria and nomination methods, and a long-term follow-up monitoring and evaluation mechanism. It allows different regions within the country to precisely investigate, protect, and support the handicrafts and artisans in their territories, building regional identity and awareness to improve the current uneven and severe distribution of resources. Through different levels of civic education and communication strategies, the public can effectively improve their judgment on the value of handicrafts and awareness of protecting and respecting handicrafts and artisans. It includes strategies for setting up related extracurricular activities and electives at educational institutions at different levels and encouraging media publicity.

Improve collaborations approach: Collaborations between handicrafts and multiple stakeholders do not just refer to bringing them into the tourism industry by commercialisa-

tion, becoming a profit point for tourism. While we expect it will bring creative economic benefits to the tourism industry, the sustainability of handicraft values is the foundation of everything. Multiple approaches of collaboration that encourage sustainability, diversity, and respect for the cultural and social values of handicrafts are encompassed. It requires identifying various stakeholders and types of collaborative projects, encouraging more collaboration methods, and finding proactive pathways for increased grassroots participation. It identifies broad and diverse stakeholders and projects related to handicrafts rather than fixing them on the image of tourism products produced by artisans and sold at heritage sites. Encouragement and preferential regulations allow participants to unite collaborative forces in negotiating with other stakeholders. It encourages knowledge exchange nationally and internationally to compensate for the current shortage of research and practical development in handicrafts. Preferential policies are to encourage outstanding collaborations identified and developed to inspire confidence among participants in the sector. Community participation is a sustainable path in many aspects, significantly when solving issues requiring mobilising grassroots forces. As a community-based heritage project, the ecomuseum benefits artisans' continuous participation, production, and practice, ensuring the inheritance and development of intangible culture. The interaction of contemporary artists with communities, especially artisans who are away from main cities, is also an effective way to increase community participation skills and opportunities.

Develop skills and entrepreneurship approach: The need for more skills and professional knowledge in setting up a business is a significant concern. Hence, strategies focusing on professional and long-term education to reverse this situation are required. Moreover, the contribution and reputations of women in handicrafts require to be amplified. The idea of encouraging handicraft participants to be active in entrepreneurship is beneficial. However, associated business courses in HEIs have to be updated to meet real market needs. Furthermore, diversified practical teaching sessions and systematic career development courses can support students to develop skills close to the market. Entrepreneur long-term training is the current shortcoming; hence, it aims to develop community education and vocational education, committing to training communities in craftsmanship, entrepreneurial skills, and other abilities to develop broad collaborations in practice. To encourage women and young people to make social contributions by preserving and developing handicrafts, a welfare package for female and youth entrepreneurs supports them in simplifying start-up procedures and obtaining funds. Outstanding female participants should be publicly recognised to inspire more women to join the sector.

8. Conclusions

This study offers a nuanced exploration of how place-based arts and crafts in Jordan act as a bridge between cultural heritage and socio-economic development, situated within the broader framework of intangible cultural heritage preservation. The analysis brings together Lefebvre's concept of socially produced space and Bourdieu's habitus to provide deeper insights into the intricate relationship among cultural identity, spatial dynamics, and economic practices. These theoretical lenses were crucial to unravelling the ways in which local artisans' creative processes are shaped by both their geographical contexts and socio-cultural legacies.

The literature review identified a critical gap in the understanding of how crafts, as culturally rooted practices, can be leveraged within the context of global and local challenges. The analysis in this research demonstrates that while the Jordanian handicraft sector is hampered by fragmented policies, limited resources, and inadequate infrastructure, the crafts themselves remain resilient expressions of place identity and cultural continuity. This was evident in the empirical findings, where artisans' reflections on their work highlighted a profound connection between their craft and their sense of belonging to specific places, such as the symbolic use of natural colours from the Dead Sea in local crafts.

Practically, the study's findings reveal that the handicraft sector in Jordan operates within a constrained environment marked by inefficiency in governance, inadequate market

access, and a lack of comprehensive support mechanisms. The challenges at both the macro-level (government policy and institutional support) and micro-level (artisan practices and community engagement) are interlinked and require coordinated interventions. The study recommends an integrated strategy that includes the formulation of clear legislative frameworks, the enhancement of stakeholder collaborations, and the development of targeted capacity-building programmes. These recommendations are rooted in a context-sensitive approach, recognising that solutions must align with the specific socio-cultural dynamics of Jordan while also drawing from successful examples in similar global contexts, such as the preservation of Palestinian embroidery (Tatreez) and the revitalisation of traditional crafts in Egypt (e.g., Khayamiya and Fustat pottery).

Furthermore, this research acknowledges that the findings, while grounded in the specific context of Jordan, have broader applicability. The parallels drawn with global initiatives underscore the need for localised solutions that also embrace universal principles of cultural preservation, community empowerment, and sustainable development. By connecting these global perspectives with local realities, the study contributes to both the theoretical discourse and practical efforts aimed at revitalising the handicraft sector.

This conclusion demonstrates how theoretical concepts directly inform the understanding of practical challenges and opportunities within the Jordanian context. By synthesising local knowledge with global insights, the study presents a framework that not only preserves Jordan's cultural heritage but also fosters economic resilience and community empowerment. This approach ensures that the relevance of the findings extends beyond the immediate context, providing a model that can be adapted to other regions facing similar socio-cultural and economic challenges.

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