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**Med-O-Med, cultural landscapes of  
the Mediterranean and the Middle East**

The **Islamic Culture Foundation** is a non-profit, strictly independent Spanish organisation whose main objective is to find far-reaching solutions to potential problems of intercultural communication which affect our modern societies, through research and dissemination of rigorous information about the Islamic world and its historical and cultural links with the West.

It was **created in 1982** by the **Islamic academic** and humanist **Cherif Abderrahman Jah**, who stills acts as President, and the prestigious, late Spanish anthropologist Julio Caro Baroja, who was Honorary Chairman.

**Based in Madrid** and with a delegation in **Rabat, Morocco**, the **Islamic Culture Foundation** has promoted a **large number of projects in several countries**: congresses on the legacy of **al-Andalus** or the contributions of Islamic civilisation to **European Culture**, exhibitions on a wide variety of topics, educational and community activities, debates and lectures, courses for volunteers and teachers, musical performances and publications, in all cases from an academic and generalist approach.

Throughout its **30-year history** the Islamic Culture Foundation has worked hand in hand with a large number of **Spanish and international institutions**. It has established itself as a respected and authentic voice in its sphere of action.





**Med-O-Med Cultural Landscapes of the Mediterranean and the Middle East** is an international development cooperation programme established in 2009 by the **Islamic Culture Foundation (FUNCI)** in Spain, aimed at making up for the shortage of funds available for conserving biodiversity and natural and cultural heritage in the Muslim majority countries of the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

Inherent to Islam is a culture that encourages the respect for nature and the responsible management of natural resources.

Med-O-Med takes into account the enormous legacy brought by the Islamic civilization in its relationship with nature and the landscape.

**The goal of Med-O-Med:** Conservation of natural and cultural heritage while respecting the identity of peoples.

**Med-O-Med deals with several interconnected topics, always under sustainability and cultural criteria, which are:**

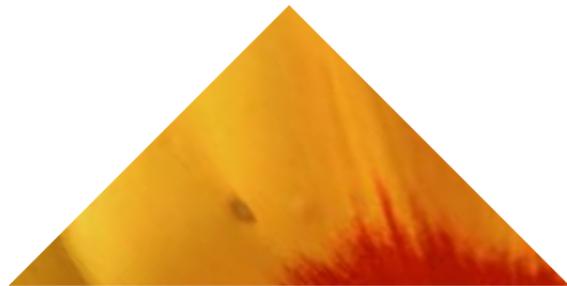
- 1.** Creation and rehabilitation of green spaces for public use: gardens and cultural heritage
- 2.** Education and awareness-building
- 3.** Networking and knowledge transfer
- 4.** Research and compilation of inventories.



**1. Creation and rehabilitation  
of green spaces for public use:  
gardens and cultural heritage**



**2. Education and awareness-building**



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**4. Research and compilation  
of inventories**





# 1. Creation and rehabilitation of green spaces for public use: gardens and cultural heritage



# Rehabilitation of the Agdal gardens in Marrakesh

The **Agdal is one of the most important Islamic gardens in the world**, the biggest and only one from the Almohad period dating back to the 12th century and comprises an area of approximately 500 hectares

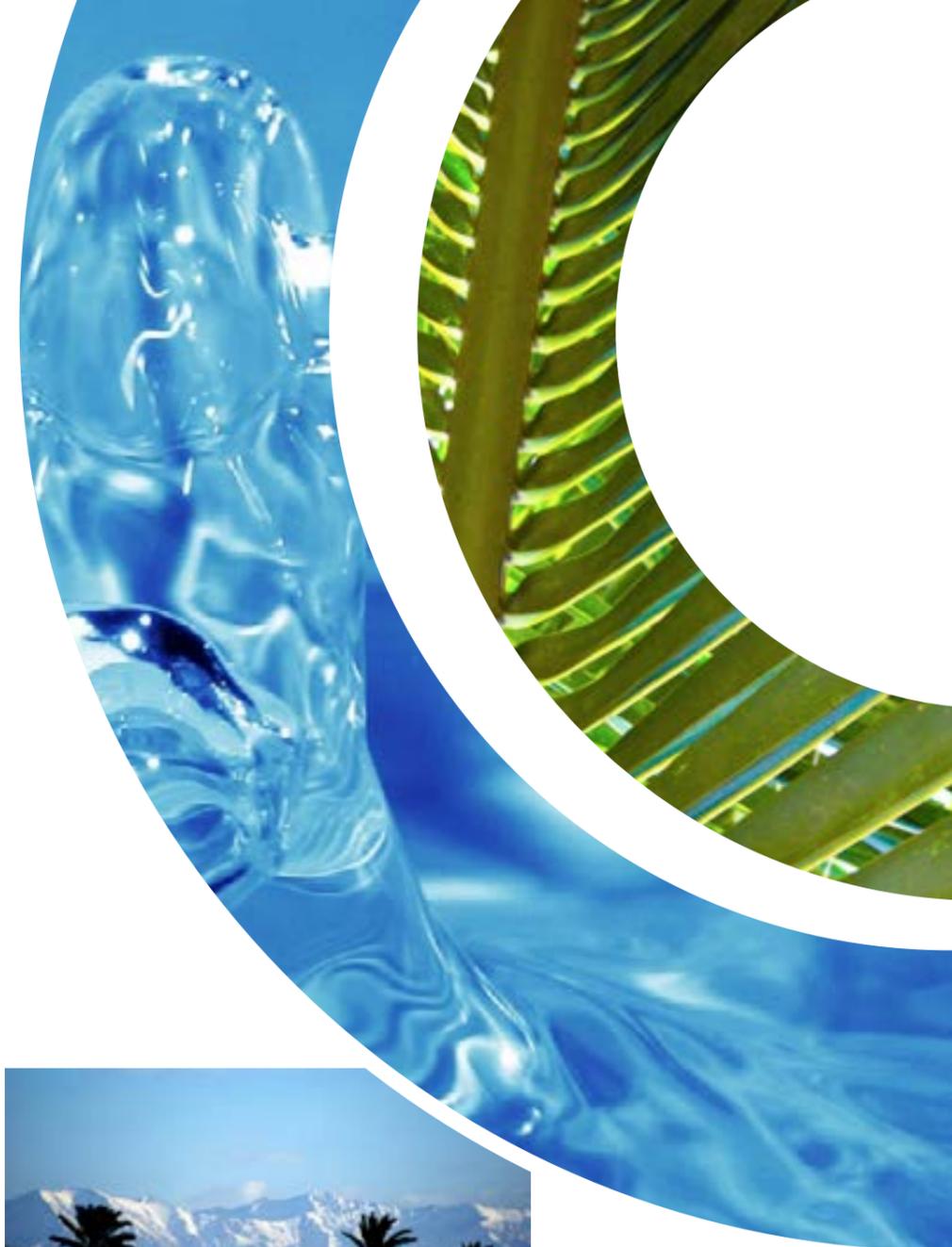
The Agdal is inscribed by **UNESCO as World Heritage** and represents a paradigmatic cultural landscape, as understood by the Florence Charter in **1982 and UNESCO**.

What is to be found in the Agdal gardens?

- **Archaeology remains:** pavilions, kiosks and remains of the palace belonging to various dynasties, stables dating from Almohad times and industrial sugar mill, oil mill and powder plants.
- **Vegetation:** Crops of citrus, olive-trees, figs, pomegranates, in addition to unique botanical collections.
- **Water:** large water ponds and a complex irrigation system made up of artesian wells (khotara), underground canals (qanats) and surface canals (sequia)

The Agdal as an example of sustainable development, respectful of the **Islamic cultural tradition**. What are our goals?

- **Education** and awareness-raising approach
- **Job creation** through the rehabilitation works
- **Touristic and cultural** promotion for Marrakech
- **Knowledge** and conservation of biodiversity as well as archaeological and architectural heritage
- **Development** of ecological agriculture and natural resource management



# Public Garden in Dounya Park - Algeria

Creation of a leisure and educational garden “Garden of the Kingdom of Spain” as a part of the environmental initiative involving the Dounya Park, located in the neighbourhood of Dely Ibrahim, (Algiers).

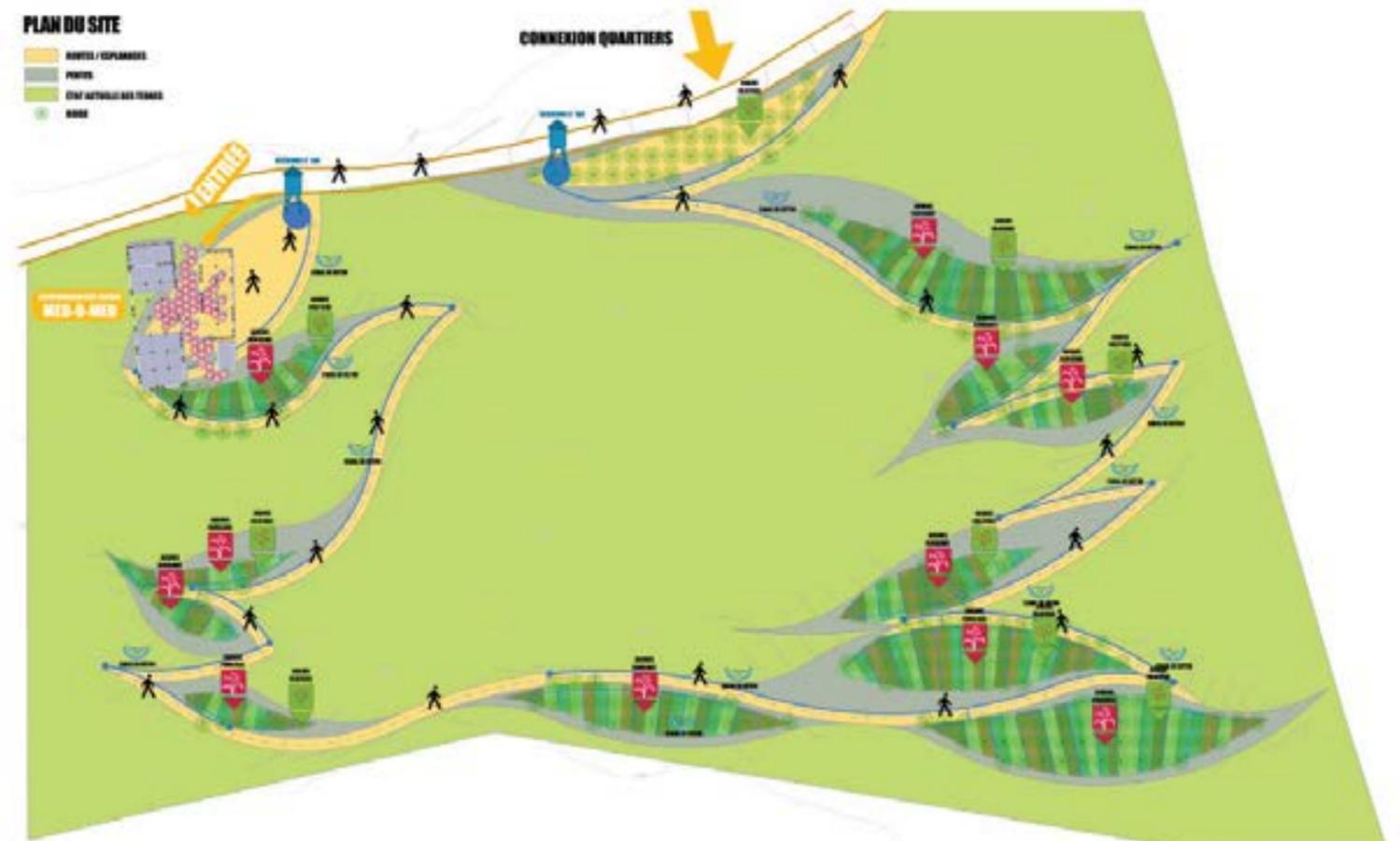
This project is supported by the **Algerian Ministry Environment and Land Management and the Spanish Embassy in Algiers.**

The garden design is a contemporary reinterpretation of an andalusian garden, in which the trees and plants are natives to the **Mediterranean Region.**

An environmental interpretation centre will be built aimed to raise awareness among the population. Educational programmes for schools and visitors and conservation of endangered flora will be implemented as a part of its activities.

Traditional and non-traditional environmentally friendly methods concerning sustainability as **water resources management or energy saving installations will be applied in the whole project.**

In the future, various garden areas will be developed, based in the Islamic Culture and its proximity with Spain with scientific, pedagogical and recreational functions.



# A garden from al-Andalus

Designed by **FUNCI** and carried out inside the Jardin d'Essais in Rabat in collaboration with the **Wilaya of Rabat-Salé-Zemmour-Zaer**, the **Hassan II Fund for Social and Economic Development** and the **Moroccan Institute of Agricultural Research (INRA)**. The Jardin d'Essais was developed in the early 20th century by the landscape artist Jean Claude Nicolas Forestier and has recently been rehabilitated.

- Pedagogical Almohad-inspired garden from a landscape and botanic perspective
  - Restoration of an ancient Neo-Mudejar pavilion intended for cultural activities
    - Didactic exhibition: "al-Andalus: a culture of water"

Al-Andalus underwent a green revolution that deeply transformed the territory. The Andalusian Muslims demonstrated a great scientific and technical knowledge in natural resources management.

### Threefold objective of the project:

- **Scientific**, due to the research and conservation works
- **Cultural**, on the basis of the pedagogical and awareness-raising activities
- **Touristic**, within the framework of the historical value of Rabat, recently declared World Heritage by **UNESCO**



# Garden at the al-Quds University in Palestine

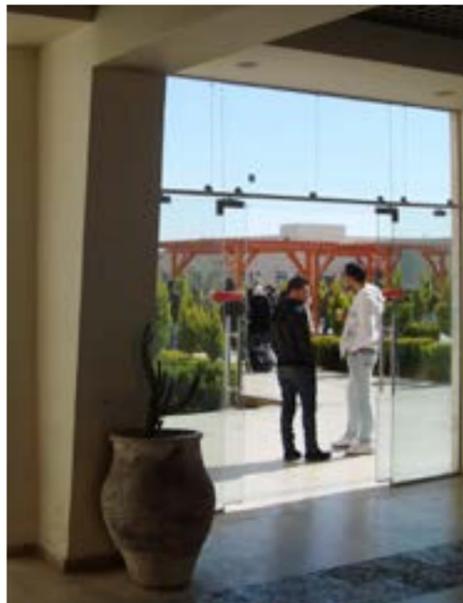
Med-O-Med and the **Palestinian University of al-Quds** have created an Andalusí-inspired garden at the campus of the **University in Abu Dis, West Bank** (two-year implementation period: 2010-2011).

This garden recreates the collections, philosophy, morphologic characteristics and traditional watering systems of al-Andalus, while focusing on preserving **Mediterranean flora** and, specifically, the **Palestinian** one.

This project has provided the high number of registered students on campus with a green space for relaxation, research and **environmental awareness** as well as a supporting tool for the practical classes and laboratories.

The Garden is surrounded by several faculty buildings and it is crossed daily by both, hundreds of students who use it for resting and study, and professors who profit from the gardens for **technical explanations, taxonomy and research**.

The establishment of this Garden is under a strategy which encompasses several courses of action: on the one hand, Al-Quds University aims at increasing the proportion of green areas on campus by means of other gardens and future initiatives such as a seed bank and botanic projects. On the other hand, within a national framework, taking into account the circumstances of the occupation, the **University cooperates with other Palestinian and International bodies** towards the establishment of institutional foundations for the preservation of the country's flora as part of the **Palestinian cultural legacy** and identity and also as an important element in its economy.



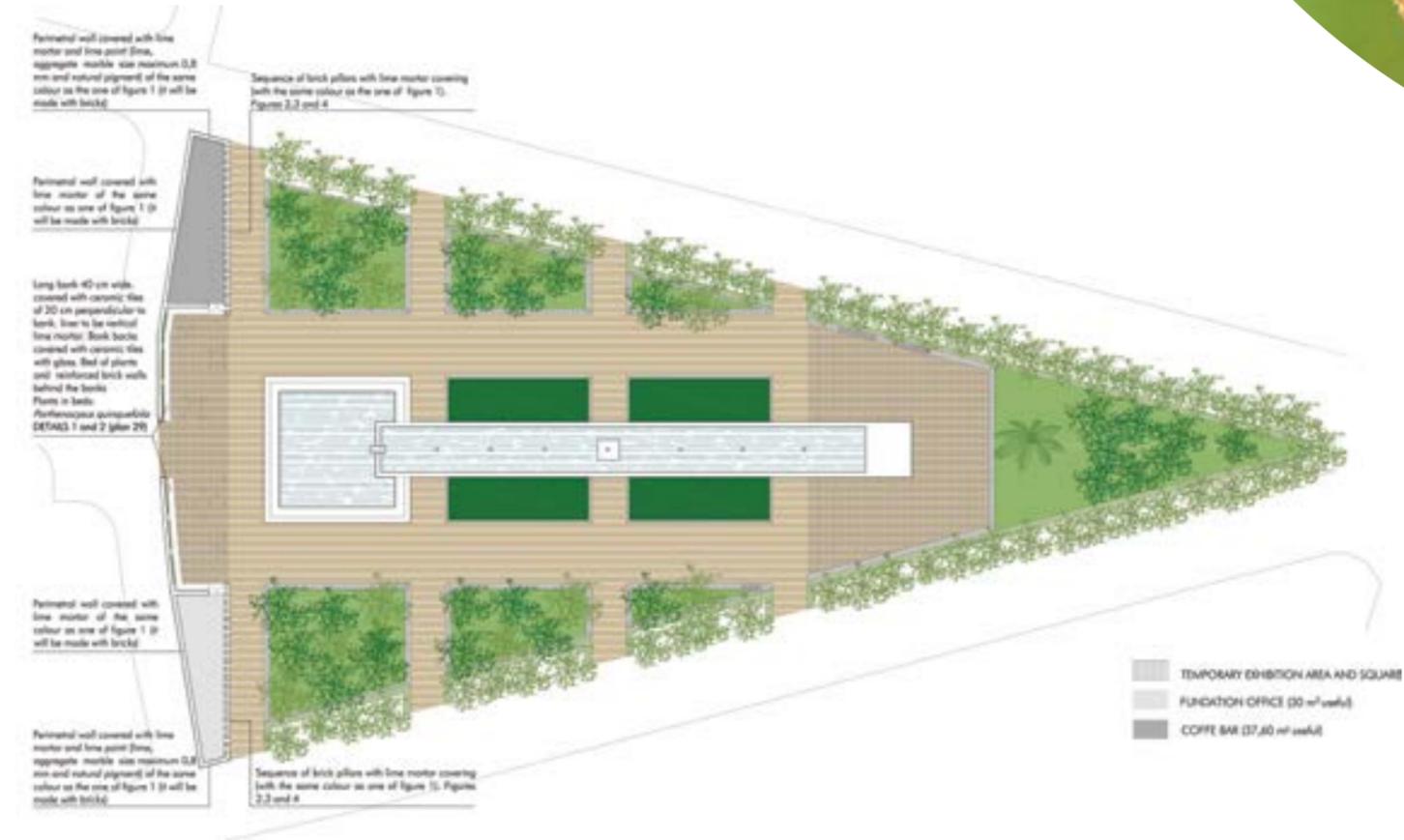
# Andalusi-inspired garden in Aleppo, Syria



Together with the **Syrian Environmental Association and the Agricultural Department of Aleppo University** the ultimate goal of this Med-O-Med project is to create an **Andalusi-inspired** garden in a 2,000 m<sup>2</sup> piece of land that Aleppo's city council handed over to the **Islamic Culture Foundation** in the main public park of the city, a **17 hectare garden** from the time of the French Protectorate.

The garden has been designed by a team of architects and botanists, drawing mainly on landscape and botany that will harmoniously integrate in the existing garden. The garden will not only increase the cultural and touristic offer of the ancient **city of Aleppo**, but also **contribute to the development of environmental awareness** activities and to create cultural ties between **Spain and Syria**, countries that share a common past.

(This projects is currently halted due to the tragic events taking place in Syria since 2011., just when the construction and plantation works were about to commence)





## 2. Education and awarness-building

# Green Doueir, Clever Doueir

Funded by the EU, this project aims at improving the environmental health of Doueir, a town in the **Governorate of Nabatieh in southern Lebanon**. It is divided in two parts: the amelioration of waste management and the awareness on issues related to the protection of the environment.

Doueir's lack of an effective urban waste management plan is being tackled from many angles: **improvement of the human and technical capacities, purchase of adequate machinery, refocus of the agreement with the company responsible for the garbage removal, lectures and training programmes**.

The awareness campaign is especially focused on **young students and women** through specific lectures and workshops on environmental principles, waste sorting and composting, as well as tree plantation and cleaning campaigns or a series of lectures targeting farmers on conservation agriculture. In addition, the project has produced an environmental guide which will be distributed among its citizens and Doueir will host a Med-O-Med exhibition that emphasises traditional gardens from al-Andalus and the Islamic perspective of environmental ethics.

After the implementation period (from December 2011 to June 2013) Med-O-Med and the Municipality of Doueir aspire to share best practice with other Lebanese towns.



# School of Gardening in Rabat



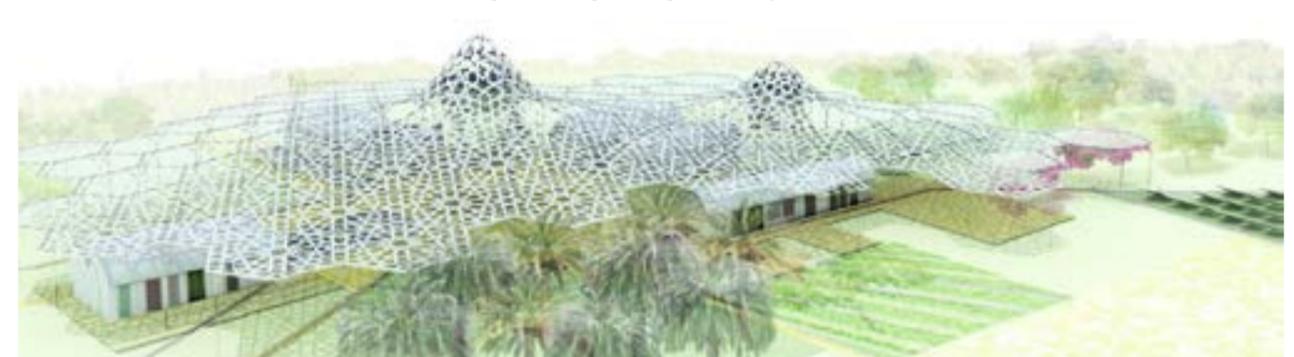
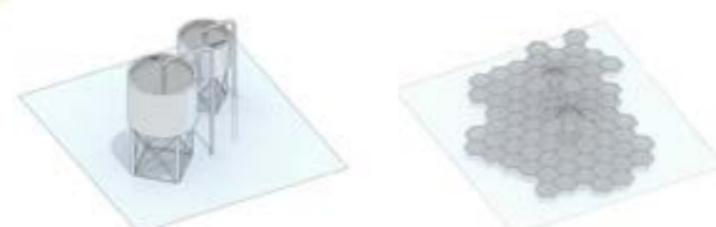
As **increasingly** densely populated cities place a heavy load on urban infrastructure, there is **a growing interest on the part of the Moroccan public bodies in creating urban green spaces**. This project seeks to draw on the emerging environmental awareness to meet a social need in terms of gardening and landscaping while encouraging an Islamic approach on the balance of nature and ecology. **All these elements ensure sustainability from a cultural, economical and environmental point of view.**

Due to the lack of qualified professionals exclusively dedicated to green areas as well as the facilities and required materials, this project is based on setting up three intertwined structures:

- **Development** of an educational programme that provides the theoretical cultural framework and the necessary capacities to create, maintain and manage green urban spaces
- **Establishment** of a nursery of plants, seedlings and seeds to provide the material resources and supplies for green areas and other agricultural and forest uses, which, in addition, gives economical support to the project and traineeship place for the students at the School
- **Start up** of a cooperative of gardening works in order to complete the practical experience and provide job opportunities for the graduates by means of agreements with public and private bodies

## The aims of the project are:

- Cooperation for the economic development of the region
- Meet the demand for qualified professionals that is expected to rise in the near future
- Generate environmental awareness on the basis of the Islamic cultural tradition
- Contribute to the protection of natural heritage through a high-quality service



# Exhibition “Gardens of al-Andalus”

The exhibition “Gardens of al-Andalus” shows the **Hispano-Muslim** garden as a meeting space, a place for contemplation and creativity, and a melting-pot of cultures which consolidated its own style of landscaping, and acclimatised many botanical species that were hitherto unknown.

Typical of al-Andalus was the courtyard with its crossing channels and sunken paths around a central pond or reservoir. Such gardens, of **Koranic** inspiration, are also related to the hortus conclusus of the **Semitic tradition**.

There were also splendid garden areas in country estates, with extensive terraced views, large orchards and acclimatisation gardens for the cultivation of new species brought in from other parts of the world.

This exhibition presents the gardens of al-Andalus from four different perspectives:

- The orchard garden
- The scientific garden
- The mystic garden
- The poetry garden

“Gardens of al-Andalus” has toured several cities in **Morocco** in collaboration with the **Foundation ONA** and different public bodies and **NGOs**. Among the cities are:

- Rabat
- Casablanca
- Tangier
- Tetouan
- Fes
- Marrakesh

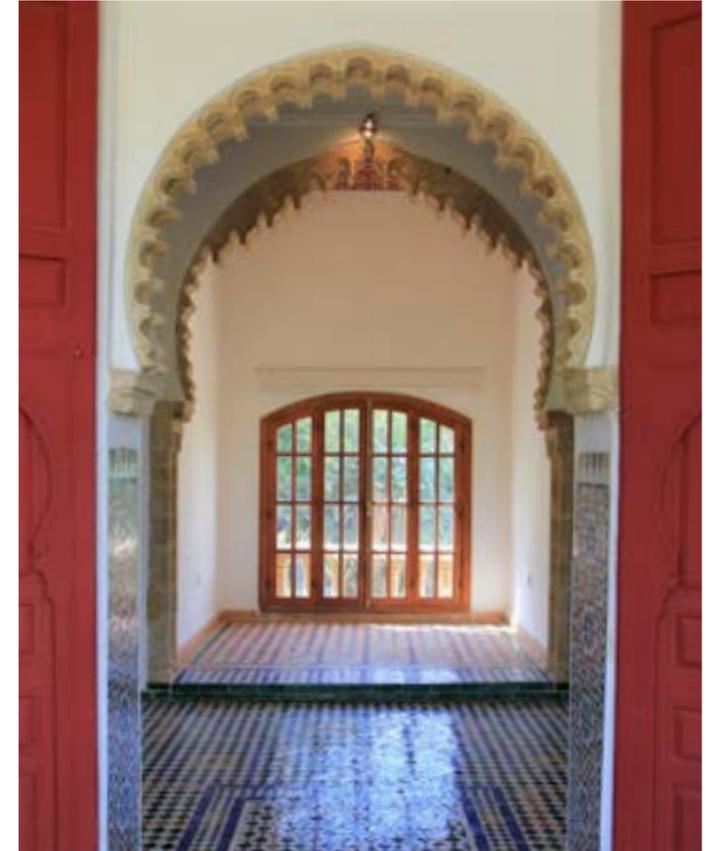


# Al-Andalus, a culture of water

Spain during the al-Andalus period (8th to 15th century) shared with Morocco and the rest of the Maghreb Region an extraordinary culture, which would not have been possible without the wise and efficient use of water. This exhibition, which is hosted at the restored Neo-Mudejar pavilion, reveals the importance of water for Islamic civilisation and specifically in al-Andalus. Water, the most valuable liquid, transformed the landscape, enriched the architecture and became for the first time an essential element of public and social use, improving the community's livelihood.

Among the topics addressed at this exhibition are the following:

- Water and Islam
- Agriculture and landscape
- Hygiene and hammams
- Institutions for water management
- Irrigation systems: dams, water wheels and mills
- Water in the city
- Gardens and architecture
- Water as a scarce resource



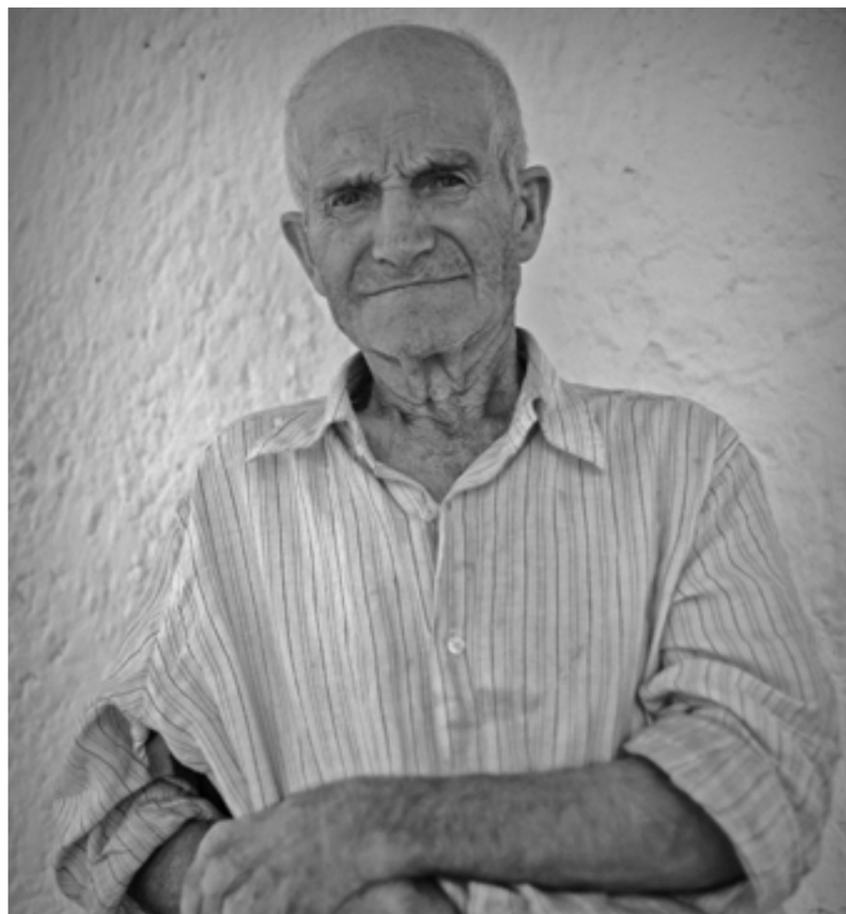
# Wise Voices

The traditional knowledge concerning the land use and management, water irrigation systems, agricultural ecosystems and popular culture is recovered through this project, **providing education and awareness on values, know-how, environmental friendly practices and natural and cultural heritage promotion.**

The first phase, funded by the **Spanish Ministry of Culture**, has been developed in some of the **Islamic regions of Spain**, in which the traditional land management has meant the transformation of the landscape and a unique way of life adapted to the water scarcity.

The traditional farming practices, the channeling systems and the popular knowledge of those regions have been collected with a clear purpose: **to keep this memory alive.**

It is planned to replicate this initiative in other Mediterranean countries (Morocco, Turkey, Egypt, Italy...).



# The voices of water

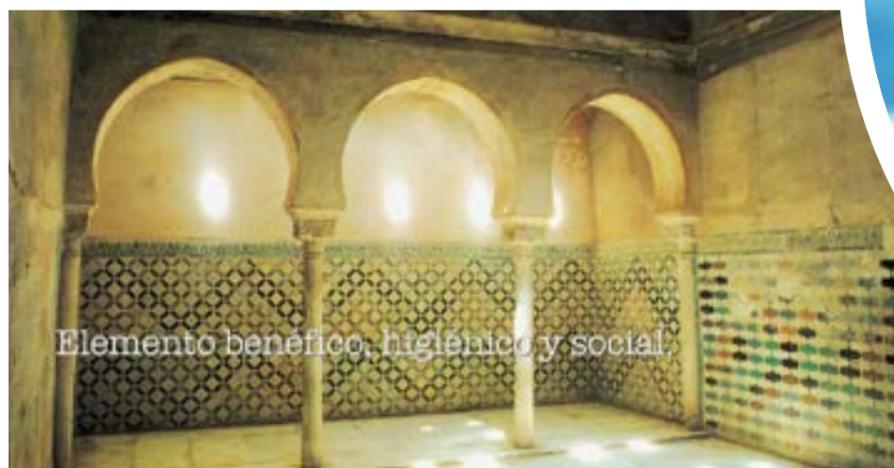
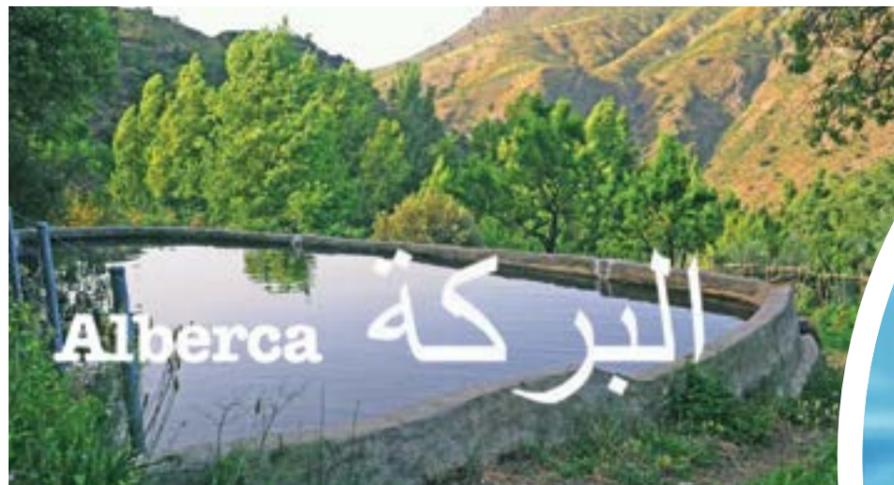
A **short documentary** film based on the “**Wise Voices**” project in which we can appreciate the values and traditions through comprehensive witnesses, preventing us from wastage or speculation.

The testimony of the last farmers in the **Moorish Spain** reflects the rich tradition of Andalusian irrigation. The wise voices still know the secrets of traditional water use. These voices, if they do not find continuity, are threatened with extinction.

The **wisdom must be spread** through the future generations and the reinforcement of the urban and rural; present and past dialogues must be encouraged.

It was originally filmed in Spanish and has been translated into **Arabic and French**.

“Voices of water “has been distinguished in several film festivals.



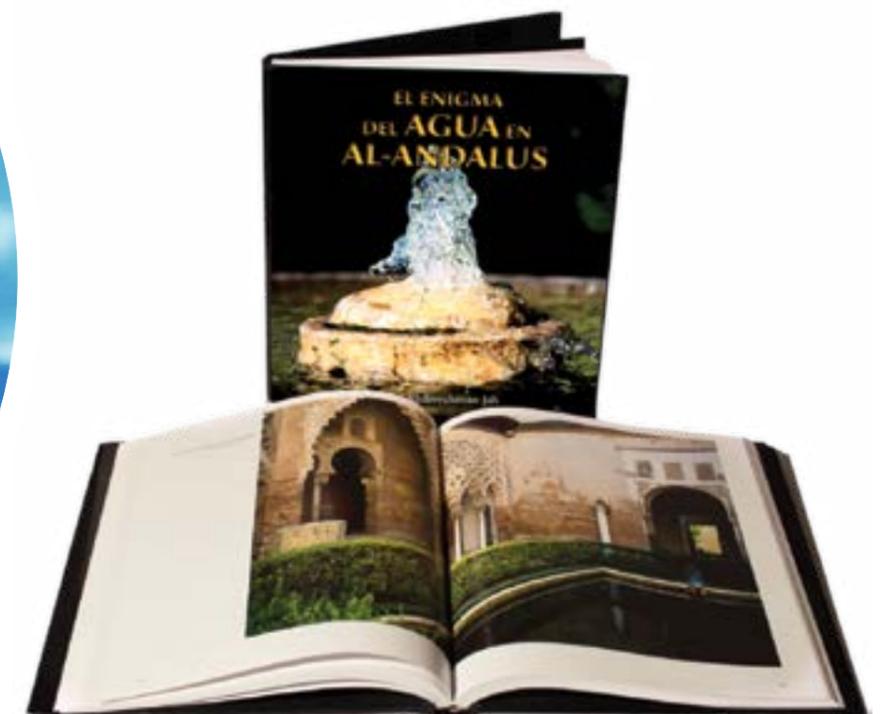
# The enigma of water in al-Andalus

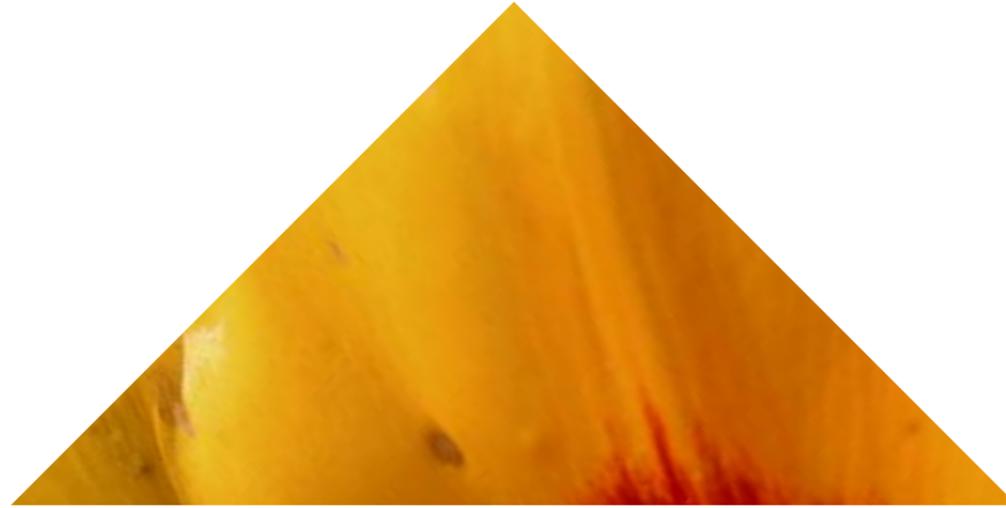
Written by the President of the Islamic Culture Foundation: Cherif Abderrahman Jah.

The book deals with the water in the **Islamic Culture from an historic, philosophic and spiritual point of view**, including the ancient hydraulic infrastructures, agriculture and aesthetic in gardens and architecture.

The book illustrations are an excellent demonstration of the Andalusian landscape wealthiest and singularity and his transformation by the water.

The **book helps us to understand** how the water value remains in place throughout the ages.





# 3. Networking and knowledge transfer



# Botanic Gardens Network

An initiative towards encouraging exchanges and partnerships among the **Botanic Gardens in the Mediterranean and Middle East Regions.**

Med-O-Med understands the botanic gardens as an instrument to enhance the value of the Islam precepts regarding nature conservation and resources management. Some of our work lines are:

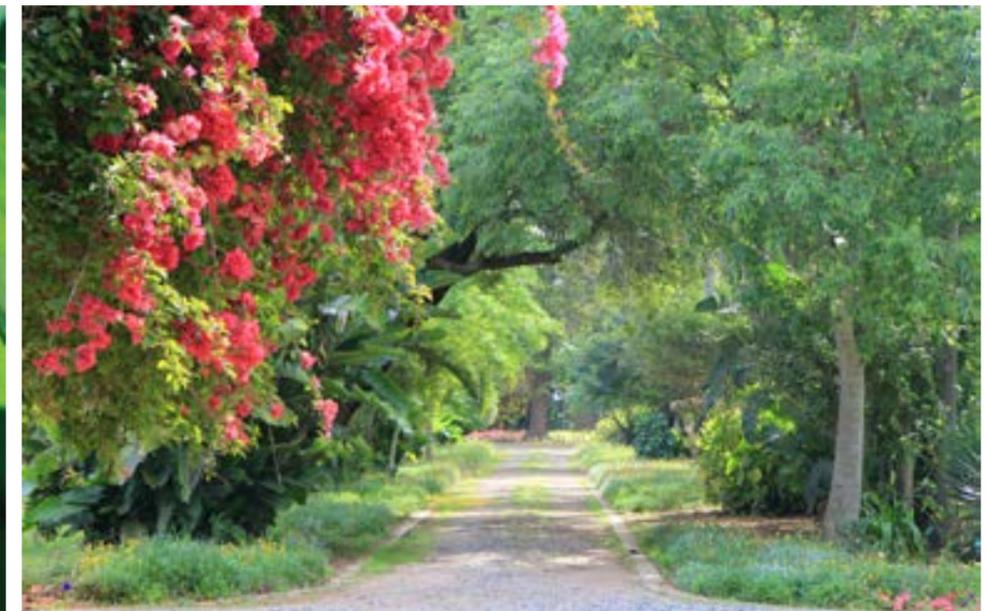
- **Establishment common research lines in several topics.** Different plants varieties of Mediterranean native flora and its presence in different countries are studied in order to bring cultures together:

- The Moorish Myrtle
- The Olive tree

- **Gastronomy.** Traditional uses of plants applied to the gastronomy from the different regions.

- **Education activities as a key tool in botanic gardens.** Botanic gardens are guarantors for the plant diversity all over the world. They have been

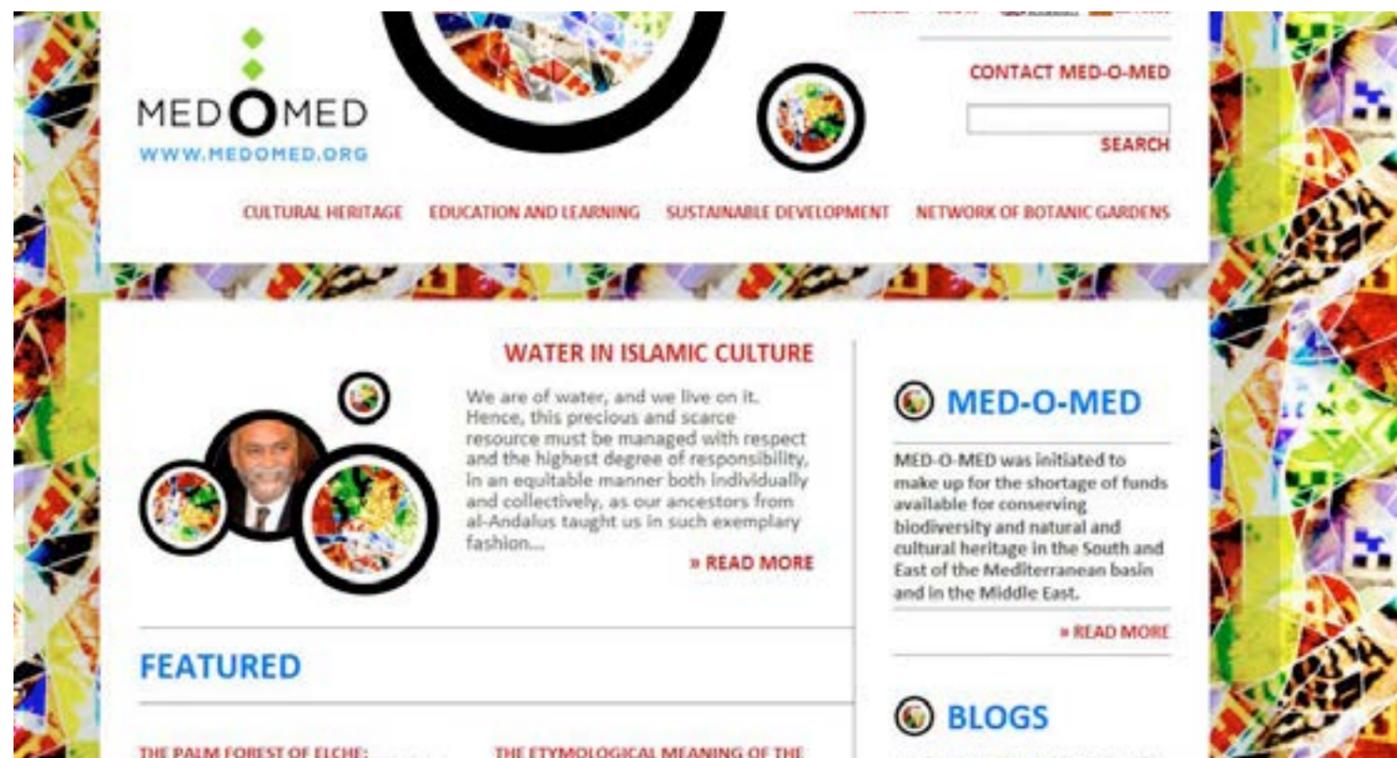
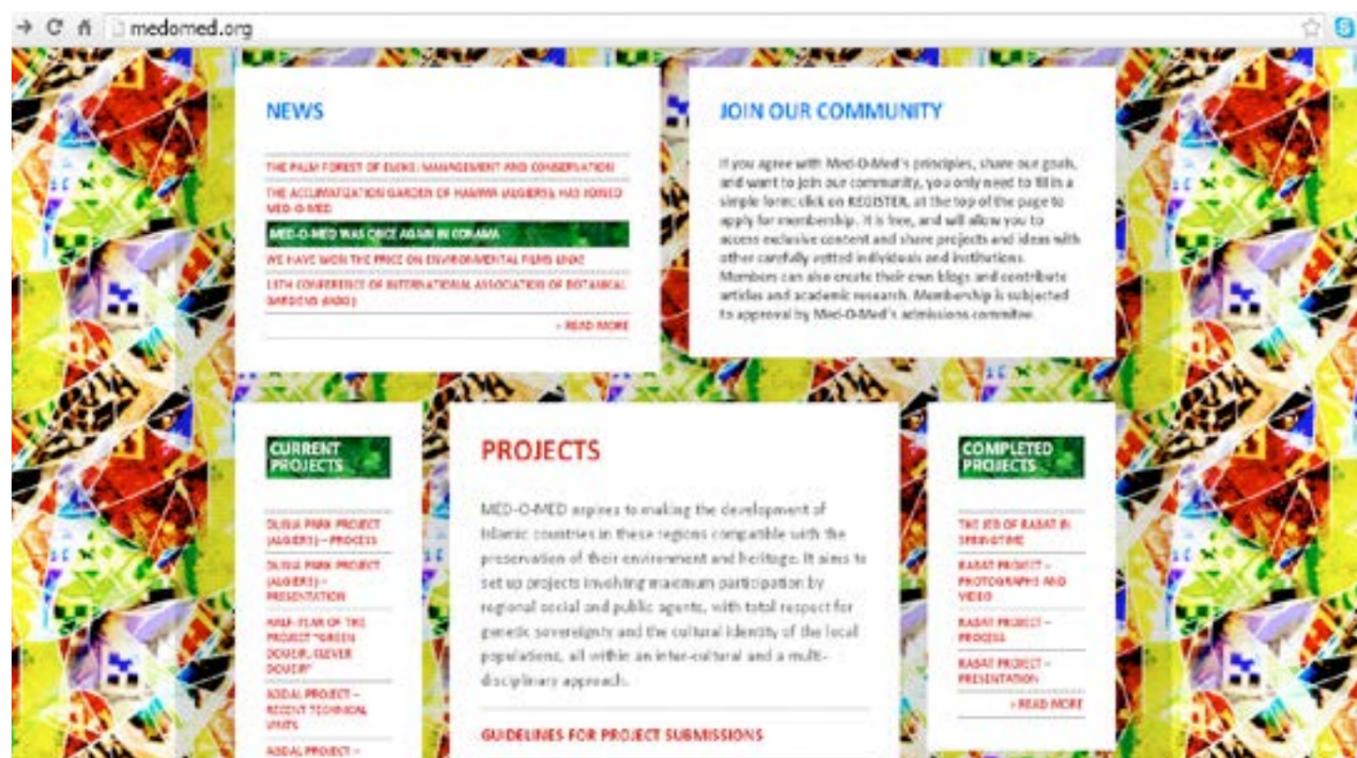
proved as a new challenge for society regarding environmental education, the raise of awareness among youth and the sustainable development, often included in the cities tourist programmes. **Botanic Gardens represent a link between the culture and nature in the Islamic world.**



# A platform for dialogue

Med-O-Med website is a tool to promote networking and disclosure of information

- **Dissemination** of our projects&activities
- **Publication** of news and updates in related topics
- **Periodic** e-mails informing about relevant subjects
- **Encouraging** experiences and work exchanges among collaborators
- **Enhancing** and support new research lines
- **Organization** of seminars and conferences
- **Library specialized in digital resources:** publication of articles from our collaborators and network members





# 4. Research and compilation of inventories

# Inventories and data compilation: centres of plant diversity and cultural landscapes

In order to effectively address Med-O-Med goals, it is necessary to compile detailed information about the state of environmental conservation within our sphere of action, i.e. the southern shore of the **Mediterranean and the Middle East**. A detailed analysis of the current situation and the available resources is essential to assess how the **strategies and actions** implemented by Med-O-Med and other related institutions are successful in pursuing those goals. Until now, two inventories have been made and regularly updated:

- 1) **Centres of plant diversity:** this term refers to all institutions working in matters related to plant diversity in any manner, including research, conservation, education, recreation and the like. All these institutions, such as **botanic gardens**, on the one hand, and research centres, universities, gene banks and some specific public parks, on

the other, may host a botanic garden in the future due to their common priorities and lines of work, although they have different approaches.

- 2) **Cultural landscapes:** in recent decades the concept of cultural landscapes, partly because of **UNESCO's** commitment, has taken root to express a long and intimate relationship between peoples and their natural environment. Cultural landscapes frequently reflect sustainable land-use, biological diversity and a specific relation to nature. This inventory aims to reflect upon the link between humankind and nature in the Med-O-Med countries, in all cases from a position of respect to the traditions and identity of these peoples.

Furthermore, Med-O-Med is preparing a **complementary research** on the date palm and the palm grove as a paradigmatic cultural landscape of the southern Mediterranean and the Middle East. This project will tackle the following aspects: **inventory of palm groves, varieties of traditional crops, growing methods, etc.**



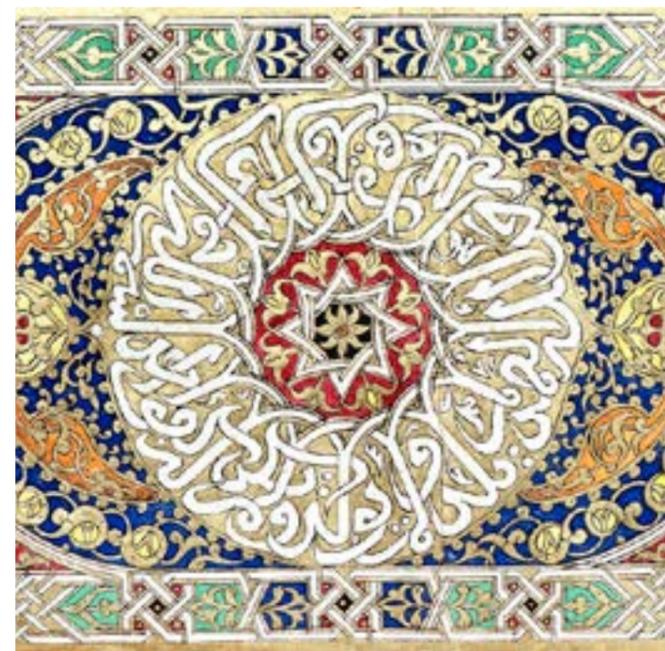
# Landscape Convention of the Mediterranean and the Middle East



The creation of a landscape convention for this geographical area will serve as a **catalyst for economic and social growth** processes while showing respect for **environmental and cultural sustainability**. For this purpose, the inventory of cultural landscapes is a useful tool for knowledge and conservation of landscapes.

## Objectives:

- To **encourage** the protection and conservation of heritage
- To **promote** development and growth through the generation of income sources via conservation and tourism promotion
- To **promote** special awareness of landscapes and the need to protect them
- To **encourage** the adoption of good practices in the management and conservation of sites
- To **link** landscape values with other, socially-esteemed values



At Med-O-Med we are convinced of the importance that the Islamic civilisation had and continues to have in shaping a sustainable future through balanced development and environmental soundness

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