



## **Towards Local Development Through a Sustainable Valorization of Cultural Heritage**

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### **Abstract**

The overarching objective of the research project this special session is based on providing policy suggestions to implement an inclusive and sustainable valorization of cultural heritage, aimed at making the most of cultural heritage for local development, minimizing the associated socio-economic costs. The topic is particularly important within a “post-covid scenario” in which recovery and resilience can well pass through these specific channels. In fact, cultural heritage can generate socio-economic growth through (cultural) tourism, which has long been considered as the main traditional channel through which cultural heritage can be translated into local economic development. However, how can this mechanism be made more efficient and sustainable from a socio-economic perspective? And, in more details, is there a way of valorizing local cultural heritage to favor a model of sustainable local development?

Although cultural heritage has gained substantial institutional and academic attention as a contributor to local economic development, the empirical evidence on this topic is still scant. The impact of cultural heritage on tourism has been studied, but the subsequent link with local development needs some additional and deeper reflections. On this train of thought, potential drawbacks of (excessive) touristic flows have been highlighted from many parts, but they have been mainly focused on social and environmental concerns, basically disregarding the related potentially negative economic effects, that could be there, too. Furthermore, it is important to consider also some intangible and more sophisticated mechanisms through which cultural heritage can be valorized to favor a sustainable local socio-economic development. These are mainly related to territorial context conditions and up to now have been almost neglected within the existing studies. The special session aims at addressing these issues.

## Contributions

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- Silvia Cerisola and Elisa Panzera (Politecnico di Milano)
- Silvia Emili (Università di Bologna)
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