



Strengthening the Research Capacity of Turkey in Innovative
Business Models for the Hospitality Sector

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Cultural tourism: bridging heritage, places and communities

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DIGITAL CULTURE
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Initial elements towards a convincing concept

The potential of cultural tourism

Europe has held the first spot in international tourism arrivals since the advent of mass-market tourism in the early 1950s.

Due to its valuable, diverse, authentic, and well-preserved cultural heritage, **culturally-inspired tourism is one of the main types of visits.**

The potential of Cultural Heritage and Cultural Tourism as a competitive regional advantage and production factor in local wealth creation has been recognized and supported by various EU policies, funding and research programmes.

The digital transformation is changing tourism itself by fostering new commercial, marketing, and organisational models, and is making it easier to shape new tourist experiences in terms of education, promotion of cultural diversity, and accessibility.

The interaction of commercial and cultural dimensions is producing a re-design of tourist destinations.

Access to a variety of online archives as well as the emergence of new social, economic, and environmental challenges is stimulating **new research questions and interpretations.**

Heritage, places and communities

- For people living in a territory, it is normal that the heritage and the places of that area are linked by history, by traditions, by geography, by the narrations of ancestors.
- However, nowadays, these liaisons risk being broken by forms of tourism that are looking at the destinations as mines to be exploited.
- The consequences are, among others, turistification, overtourism, gentrification, negative impacts on the natural landscapes and local communities



Tourism as a tool

- How to counteract the negative impact of tourism?
- We propose to shift from the simplistic attendance account, to a new concept of tourism as tool to complement and diversify the income of the territories
- In this light, tourism can become
 - A way of giving visibility and recognition to rural areas and their inhabitants
 - A means to promote the installation and the generation of services that are beneficial both for local communities and for visitors
 - A valuable contribution to regeneration and respectful development of the areas
 - A process of rediscovery of territorial commons based on shared resources, assets, and spaces typically managed and used collectively by the community



Connecting with previous success stories

**FP7
Research**

**Horizon 2020
Coordination Action**

**Horizon 2020
Innovation Action**



<https://memolaproject.eu/>
*Historical landscapes and
natural resources*



<https://www.reach-culture.eu/>
*Cultural heritage in a changing
worlds*



<https://memolaproject.eu/>
*Re-designing access to cultural
heritage for a wider participation
in preservation, (re-)use and
management of European
culture*



<https://incultum.eu/>
*Visiting the margins:
innovative cultural tourism
in European peripheries*

SECreTOUR project

- SECreTour is a **research and innovation** action funded by the European Union under the Horizon Europe Programme
- The action started on 1/3/2024, lasting 3 years, focusing on cultural tourism in the European peripheries, assessing different local contexts and types of cultural heritage, addressing needs of concerned communities

Ambits of work

- Novel forms of tourism development are tested and experimented in real-life **pilots**
- **Citizen engagement** is assessed as a mean for contributing to touristic-economic planning, community building, management of commons and cultural heritage protection
- **Alternative business models** are investigated
- **Recommendations** for policy makers and **good practices** for professionals in cultural tourism are distilled from the project's results

The SECReTOUR pilots: assessing innovative practices to promote sustainable cultural tourism

Pilot cases: a wide range of European territories, communities and heritage

- The SECReTOUR pilots include:
 - Rural and agrarian landscapes
 - Memory places of local identities
 - Minorities
 - Conflictive dark heritage
- Through these pilots, the project aims:
 - To experiment the adoption of new paradigms in local contexts
 - To facilitate effective communication and cooperation
 - To activate co-creative problem-solving through interdisciplinary and trans-sectoral approaches

Common features of the SECReTour pilots

The SECReTOUR pilots work on three main directions:

1. To foster **bottom-up** local strategies
 - The pilots focus on hidden and under-valued destinations looking for unlocking their potential that is, usually, not considered
2. To promote fair and sustainable business models
 - The new models are based on needs and expectations of **living communities**, reinforcing **local identities** and social ties and avoiding the negative impacts of touristification
3. To generate opportunities of **participation and interaction** with local stakeholders
 - The collaboration between the public and the private sectors is experimented in real-life cases, e.g. by promoting the payment for services agreements

8 cases to experiment innovation in local contexts

- General scope:
 - Testing general ideas and observations in local detail and in specific governance contexts
 - Integrating citizens and their perspectives into the processes of economic and social transformation
- Elements in common:
 - Cross-border vision
 - Participatory approaches and community building
 - Cultural heritage conservation and environmental care
 - Economic diversifications
- Working with a wide range of stakeholders
 - Cultural heritage specialists and managers
 - Farmers and local associations
 - Young people, digital nomads, neo-rural population
 - Minorities
 - Creative and cultural industries

- **Bibracte - Morvan des Sommets, Burgundy, France:**
140 km long cultural route linking villages by making the best use of the existing network of paths dating back to the Celts period



- **Traditional irrigation systems in South-East Spain:**
irrigation system dating mainly from the Middle Ages, during the Islamic period, extending throughout the area, from the high peaks (with systems of artificial aquifer recharge and artificial pastures) to the more fertile lowland areas generating oases in the middle of the desert



- **The heritage of the Vlach minority in the Upper Vjosa valley (Albania):** an ethnolinguistic group distinguished by their language, which is a dialect derived from Latin, and their ways of living, based primarily on pastoral transhumance.



- **Rural Roma heritage in Hungary:** the largest minority group in the Eastern-European countries characterised by varied ethnic and socio-cultural features



- **Historic graves of Ireland and the Irish diaspora** : a community-focused participatory environment sharing grassroots heritage



- **Renaissance of mining-related cultural heritage and heritage communities in central Slovakia** : a rural and remote areas that have a history of mining and are associated with rich cultural heritage



- **Digital nomadism in heritage-rich communities, Idrija (Slovenia) :** a 500-year history started with the discovery of mercury, a rare and valuable liquid metal and its lively mining settle-men



- **San Giorgio, the Threshold of the Sacred Mountain (Switzerland) :** geologically made up of Mesozoic rocks characterized by a high fossil content, preserved in excellent condition, an extensive presence of works of art and religious architecture, testimonies of the living culture linked to the mountain, extremely important evidence of biodiversity



Heritage communities:
re-discovery of territorial commons,
inclusion of minorities,
valuing circular economy

Heritage Communities

- “*Communities of people who share a strong attachment to a piece of heritage, especially the heritage elements that characterise their territory*” (Faro Convention, 2005)
- Heritage Communities represent an essential support for the development of cultural and sustainable tourism initiatives
- However, a shared attachment to heritage does not guarantee the capacity of the members of the community to coordinate spontaneously, to agree on the necessary rules that allow the management of the heritage to which they are attached
- **Operational methods** are needed for integrating the participation of local communities in political decisions, economic exchanges and territorial planning, such as
 - The payment for services for the maintenance of heritage resources
 - The creation of links between different economic sectors, i.e. tourism, agriculture, forestry, craftsmanship, ...



A new paradigm for new business models

Cultural business models



Positive and negative impacts of tourism on local, rural communities

- **Positive:** Economic growth, higher living standards, preservation of cultural heritage, depopulation prevention, nurturing local crafts and skills, environmental protection, etc.
- **Negative:** Damage of ecosystems, commercialisation, invasion of privacy, loss of cultural meaning, commodification, etc.

The challenge is to design strong cultural business models, which promote sustainable tourism without damaging local, cultural heritage:

- **Place-based rather than placeless:** rooted in a specific location (place) which are associated with specific meanings, interpretations, feelings and history
- **Complex by nature:** balance economic and social logics in stakeholder networks, where the governance of the offerings is the responsibility of multiple actors
- **Rooted in history rather than just invented through entrepreneurial design:** consider the value embedded in existing cultural heritage sites, including walking paths, history tours, cultural events, accommodation etc.

Looking forward: the digital transformation

Maximise impact of heritage digitisation

The European Commission highlights that the momentum is now to preserve our culture and cultural heritage and bring it together with tourism to this digital decade.

European Commission published in November 2021 the **Recommendation on a common European data space for cultural heritage** (2021/1970).

This Recommendation encourages Member States to put in place appropriate frameworks to enhance the recovery and transformation of the cultural heritage sector and to support cultural heritage institutions in becoming more empowered and more resilient in the future.

This will lead to higher quality digitisation, reuse and digital preservation across the EU, which can have spillover effects in other key sectors of the European economy, such as education, research, creative sectors and **tourism**.

Cultural tourism could contribute to maximize the impact of the heritage digitization investment, supporting the need for **data sharing**.

Multidisciplinarity, multiple perspectives

- Digital transformation requires acquisition of **mixed competences** and collaboration between disciplines, e.g.:
 - ✓ Capacity building, training and improving awareness
 - ✓ Collaboration between historians and geographers
 - ✓ Collaboration between cultural heritage institutions and creative industries
- From digital twins to **memory twins**: The mix of **analogue and digital sources** provide deeper and more extensive interpretations.
- **New datasets** can be used by scholars of different backgrounds in new research to assess the economic, social, cultural, and environmental impact of tourism.
- **Sharing data**: a pre-requisite for further innovation. This implies interoperability, standards, common platforms of recommendations and guidelines.

Hints for a successful proposal

Relevance, impact and workplan

- Relevance to outcomes expected by the call (**expected outcomes**)
 - **Ambitions** based on demonstrated knowledge of the state of the art
 - Clear **objectives** with associated indicators and target values
 - Concrete **key results** that the project wants to deliver
 - Expected **impacts**, in short- medium- and long-terms, with associated indicators and target values
 - Pathways towards impacts:
 - Which key result (i.e. the main tangible outputs of the work packages) responds to which expected outcome of the call (one result may respond to more than one expected outcome)
 - Who are the target users of the key results
 - Communication and dissemination measures to deliver the expected impacts
 - **Workplan** structure: work packages, deliverables, milestones, critical risks for implementation, roles and responsibilities, congruent and credible timing of the work and associated resources
- + administrative information and budget as foreseen in the call*

Thank you for your attention

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