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Social Platform
for Holistic Heritage
Impact Assessment

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Introduction

Based on the underlying understanding of cultural heritage as a potential contributor and resource for sustainable development and considering the lack of shared standards for the holistic impact assessment, the Horizon 2020 project ‘SoPHIA – Social Platform for Holistic Heritage Impact Assessment’ has sought to open the debate on the holistic assessment of cultural heritage interventions (hereafter CH interventions), build consensus on it, support the European Commission in defining guidelines for the next generation of funds for cultural heritage and support stakeholders in the cultural heritage sector in assessing the impact of their interventions (SoPHIA, 2021e; 2021f; 2021g; 2021h; 2021i). SoPHIA’s research activities, spanning over two years, have identified the gaps and the main issues related to the impact assessment of interventions on cultural heritage (SoPHIA, 2020a; 2020b; 2021a; 2021b) to develop a model for holistic impact assessment of interventions on cultural heritage (hereafter the SoPHIA model) and propose shared quality standards for the impact assessment process (SoPHIA, 2021c; 2021d).

In this document, EU programmes fostering research on cultural heritage are presented to provide grounds for advocating the holistic impact assessment of CH interventions as a priority in the European research agenda. The existing programmes specifically related to research (Horizon Europe) as well as those fostering other types of funding opportunities are put forward, the latter ones because they also provide opportunities for research actions. The described programmes and their priorities are directly related to the SoPHIA model to show complementarities.

Finally, future research needs are detected in the form of different topics related to the SoPHIA model as further needed advancement.

EU programmes fostering research on cultural heritage. The interplay with the SoPHIA model

The issue of impact assessment of CH interventions is a complex one. This chapter aims to provide an overview of EU programmes fostering research on cultural heritage. Even though the EU 2021-2027 framework has been already set, analysing the EU programmes fostering cultural heritage research may provide ground for advocating the holistic impact assessment of CH interventions as a research priority in the mid-term review perspective.

Substantial funding for cultural heritage is secured within the EU 2021-2027 framework. While HORIZON Europe remains the only fund dedicated to research actions, there are also other sources relevant for cultural heritage research funding. The opportunities are briefly described, and their connection with the impact assessment of CH interventions is made.

Opportunities for heritage research funding within HORIZON Europe

HORIZON Europe, the main EU programme ensuring research-related funds, has allocated a total of € 95.5 to specific topic areas for the period 2021-2027. Strategic research orientation will be focused on:

- digital transitions;
- green transition for restoring Europe's ecosystems and biodiversity while ensuring the sustainability of natural resources;
- circular, climate-neutral, and sustainable economy;
- resilient, inclusive, and democratic European society.

First investments, therefore, should contribute to sustainable recovery from the pandemic and to EU resilience against future crises. The programme operates in six clusters:

- Cluster 1, 'Health'
- Cluster 2, 'Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society'
- Cluster 3, 'Civil security for Society'
- Cluster 4, 'Digital, Industry and Space'
- Cluster 5, 'Climate, Energy and Mobility'
- Cluster 6, 'Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment'

Cluster 2 'Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Societies' will foster heritage-related research; for the first time, a dedicated envelope for culture is included in the Horizon programme. Nevertheless, references to cultural heritage are also made in the other Clusters, as will be discussed below.

Cluster 2 has different groups of priorities:

- democratic governance,
- cultural heritage and the creative economy,
- social and economic transformations through culture.

In particular, the aims of the research funded under Cluster 2 are to:

- provide evidence and policy recommendations on enhancing democracy and good governance;
- elucidate the societal effects of technological advancements and the impact of drivers of change (such as globalisation, ageing etc.) on jobs, skills, education, productivity, income, welfare and inequalities;
- put forward responses for **inclusive growth** and advance socio-economic convergence while supporting the **EU's economic, social, and financial resilience**;
- evidence innovation capacity of cultural and creative industries;
- develop and test innovative approaches to **social challenges**;
- support the implementation of internationally agreed agendas (**SDGs**, decent work agenda, etc.) and the promotion of EU core values;
- provide support strategies for mobility, migration, and the integration of migrants in European societies;
- promote the value, monitoring, protection, access to and **sustainable use of European cultural heritage and its contribution to the cultural and creative sectors** (European Commission, 2019).

While not in focus, heritage is also addressed by Cluster 3: Civil Security for Society within the priority disaster-resilient societies as heritage sites are in direct danger of material and immaterial damage both from environmental and man-made disasters. This primarily regards fires, droughts, floods, heatwaves, and storms (climate-related risks), volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and tsunamis (geology-related risks), man-made (e.g., over-tourism, explosions) and pandemic and infectious diseases-related risks. **Therefore, quality standards for heritage sites should be researched alongside innovative solutions for the challenges encountered.**

Although Cluster 4: Digital, Industry and Space seems not to provide funds for heritage, some space is allowed in the key research orientation Advanced Materials, where protection of cultural heritage artefacts is expected. **Thus, future research will be needed in studying advanced materials in that respect.**

Cultural heritage-related research may also benefit from the funding available under Cluster 5: Climate, Energy and Mobility since high energy-efficient and decarbonised buildings are highly prioritised.

Finally, Clusters 1, 'Health' and 6, 'Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment' do not mention heritage at all, but the links are possible.

The role of cultural heritage in providing health and well-being has been in the focus of the recent research (e.g., Jelinčić & Matečić, 2021; Power & Smith, 2016; Taçon & Baker, 2019; Ujević, Matečić & Jelinčić, 2021) as an important factor in providing health and well-being to local but also international communities. Along the same line, traditional skills, and knowledge heritage related to agriculture, food and natural resources are already put forward in the latest research. Thus, concepts such as green heritage, relating to traditions connected to plants and plant environments, have already been addressed in the research (e.g., Persson, Olsson, Bengtsson & Thelander, 2018; Poljak Istenič & Fakin Bajec, 2021). **As these topics have been tackled in academia only recently, impending research is expected to provide new knowledge on the connections between health, well-being, and heritage and the use of traditional skills and knowledge related to nature (green heritage).**

Relevant sources for cultural heritage will also be available through Horizon Europe ReactEU and InvestEU. REACT-EU (Recovery Assistance for Cohesion and the Territories of Europe) will be one of the most extensive programmes (under Next Generation EU), amounting to € 50.6 billion. At the same time, the InvestEU Programme (more than €372 billion) is uniquely suited to provide long-term funding to companies and support Union policies in recovery from a deep economic and social crisis.

Opportunities for heritage research funding within other EU programmes

Besides HORIZON Europe, there are other EU programmes offering funds for heritage-related research. Within the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021–2027, the **Digital Europe Programme (2021)** will make available € 7.6 billion for projects in the following areas: supercomputing, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, advanced digital skills, and ensuring the wide use of digital technologies across the economy and society. The programme's primary goal is to fill the gap between the research of digital technologies and their use. Further on, research results should be applicable, thus benefiting citizens and businesses (especially SMEs). Again, the main topics put forward are a green transition and digital transformation (European Commission, n.d.). One of the aims of the Digital Europe Programme is the facilitation of digital access to cultural heritage in order to promote cultural diversity, social cohesion, and European citizenship. The opportunities offered under this Programme are aimed at higher education and research institutions, larger companies and SMEs, as well as other stakeholders from the innovation sector.

Although not focusing on research actions, several other funding sources will offer opportunities for heritage projects. Alongside the already mentioned **Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021–2027**, **Next Generation EU** is considered the most relevant recovery instrument. They both make part of the European Recovery Plan, and the earmarked budget is € 1835 billion (European Commission 2020a; 2020b).

Further on, the **Creative Europe 2021–2027** programme is dedicated to culture and opening doors for cultural heritage projects, as it is the **Erasmus+ programme** within the education policy.

The **EU Cohesion Policy 2021–2027**, with its five policy objectives (1. a more competitive and smarter Europe; 2. a greener Europe; 3. a more connected Europe; 4. a more social and inclusive Europe; 5. Europe closer to citizens by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of all types of territories), welcomes heritage projects as the link between the policy objectives and heritage is more than evident. The funding will be available under the **European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)** (all policy objectives, but 1 and 2 in focus), the **European Social Fund+** (prioritised policy objective 4), the **Cohesion Fund** (policy objectives 2 and 3), the **Just Transition Fund** (dedicated specific objectives), the **Interreg** programmes (2 additional policy objectives: “A better cooperation governance” and “A safer and more secure Europe”).

Other initiatives also deserve to be mentioned: the **‘Rights and Values programme’** and the **Work Plan for Culture 2019–2022**. The first one promotes values of substantial importance for heritage projects as a foundation of European values. The second one stresses the social and economic significance of European culture and heritage (Tišma, Mileusnić Škrtić, Maleković & Jelinčić, 2021).

The interplay with the SoPHIA model

Impact research opportunities

EU fosters research on cultural heritage that highly impacts the advancement of society and societal issues. The SoPHIA model can contribute to the advance of research impact by providing a tool to perform a holistic assessment that can support the quality of research in two ways:

- a) in designing the research projects, the SoPHIA model can assist policymakers in setting the research agenda, as well as researchers in defining the expected impact in terms of themes and indicators; and
- b) in assessing their results, both in the mid-term review and in the final assessment. The SoPHIA model can provide a framework to encompass a holistic assessment of the research results.

By fostering a holistic framework, the SoPHIA model can be used as a planning and monitoring tool to provide evidence regarding impact research on the main themes addressed by the programs.

Refinement opportunities

Future research funded under EU programmes could provide opportunities for further refinement of the SoPHIA model. Among the additional themes that may be deeply embedded in the SoPHIA model, we highlight the importance of additional knowledge on impact assessment of CH interventions concerning gender equality; innovative business models and technological advances; new forms of cultural and artistic expression and intercultural cooperation; illicit trafficking in cultural goods as well as protection of endangered cultural heritage; and cultural landscapes. The SoPHIA model has not specifically focused on those topics, although touching on some of them.

Future research needs and research agenda on heritage impact assessment

Following the results of the SoPHIA project and the analysis of emergent topics related to the EU funding environment for heritage projects, recommendations on the future research needs are divided into two streams. The first one lists general heritage-related topics that need to be advanced as they potentially also have relations with impact assessment. In contrast, the second one focuses on the research regarding the SoPHIA model.

Recommendations for the future research on general heritage-related topics to be advanced

Each of the initially studied domains presented its challenges; therefore, future research topics are to be found within the domains and on their cross-section.

Social domain

- Enhancement of heritage communities' knowledge on their local/regional environments, methods and mechanisms for bridging the gap between professional knowledge and heritage community knowledge and for bringing different perspectives together;
- Historical information on individual heritage assets and their link with a local sense of belonging;
- Harmonisation of multilevel frameworks in the governance of local CH intervention;
- Effective guidelines for fostering public administration capacity building regarding heritage governance and participatory approach to heritage governance;
- Effective and efficient frameworks for cross-sectoral cooperation on the level of heritage projects and integrated governance at the policy level.

Cultural domain

- Mitigation of outstanding universal value promoted by UNESCO with local culture values for reconciliation of different standpoints;
- Effective strategies (ex-ante, interim and ex-post) to resolve issues arising from dissonant/contested heritage) thus promoting the concept of conciliatory heritage based on confidence-building measures, participatory approach for a common vision, digital heritage strategies, etc.;
- Effective methods for heritage awareness-raising and modalities of its protection (e.g., heritage as a source of growth and employment);
- Authenticity and standards for modernisation and acceptability of standardisation of heritage.

Economic domain

- Methodologies for measuring cultural heritage values in monetary terms;
- Methodologies for effective balancing of positive and negative impacts on heritage interventions as well as balancing qualitative and quantitative indicators used in the assessment;
- Calculation of long-term effects of heritage interventions methods;
- New financial instruments for ensuring heritage sustainability.

Environmental domain

- The holistic approach to CH protection with a clear set of quality criteria for cultural heritage interventions. CH and the environment need to be treated as elements of a single ecosystem, leading to more efficient, cost-saving, and long-lasting policies meaningful in both sectors, taking into account the EU approach to Environment and Climate Change issues;
- Transparency enhancement of the scope of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA);
- Enhancement of balances between economic and environmental benefits;
- Effective transition of heritage assets to the green and circular economy:
 - clean energy transition,
 - cost-effective renovation towards zero-energy performance,
 - digital tools for optimisation of energy performance,
 - health, well-being, and comfort heritage buildings,
 - cost-effective integration of renewables (e.g., EV charging) in buildings,
 - socio-economic aspects of green innovation (e.g., business models, financial efficiency, accessibility, safety, user needs, affordability, etc.),
 - traditional skills and knowledge related to plants (green heritage).

Recommendations for future research regarding the SoPHIA model

Recommendations for future research which are directly or implicitly related to the SoPHIA model are summarised as follows:

A) Research on the applicability of the SoPHIA model through extensive testing and experimentation at different levels of impact assessment (i.e., **policy, programme, project and institutional/organisational level**):

In further detail:

- 1) testing the application of the SoPHIA model to the funding of the different programme CH interventions (i.e., ECOC programme; or Creative Europe for public funding and private foundations programme for funding CH interventions), so that:
 - a) the identification of the expected impacts of investments can guide policymakers in planning the funding policies;
 - b) the monitoring of the ongoing impacts support the assessment of the funding programs;
 - c) the detection of the final impacts can inform future CH policies and actions;

- 2) testing the SoPHIA model application within the **New EU Bauhaus Initiative**;
 - 3) fostering collaboration with international bodies interested in the impact assessment of CH interventions. As an example, referring to the ICOMOS quality principles (ICOMOS, 2019, 2020), the SoPHIA model could be tested in relation to the different phases of development of a given CH intervention/**project** to guarantee the quality of impact assessment of the interventions;
 - 4) further testing the SoPHIA model through pilot projects to **evaluate the management of different cultural organisations** differentiated by size, location, areas of specialisation, institutional purposes and governance characteristics. (From this point of view, for illustrative purposes only, an interesting perspective, already explored in some case studies of the SoPHIA project, concerns the possibility of using our model to prepare the sustainability report of cultural organisations to evaluate the management of the impacts).
 - 5) carrying out the trial of applying the SoPHIA model to **Impact Investing activities**, i.e., exploring the potential of the SoPHIA model for the generation and assessment of investments with a positive measurable cultural, social, and environmental impact alongside a **financial return**.
- B) Research on the introduction of new sub-themes that can be included in the open grid of the SoPHIA model, emerging as relevant both in light of the opportunities of European funds for the cultural sector and the debate between experts, scholars, and practitioners.
- 1) Additional knowledge on heritage impact assessment deepening subthemes and crosscutting issues gaining momentum for policymakers, public administrators, investors, managers, and communities, such as **innovative business models and technological advances, new forms of cultural and artistic expression and intercultural cooperation, gender equality, illicit trafficking in cultural goods as well as protection of endangered cultural heritage**, cultural landscapes and others, as above mentioned;
 - 2) New subthemes related to specific requirements of the impact assessment of investments in the cultural heritage sector regarding funds **deriving from the Next Generation EU plan** to measure whether the goals are reached, and the projects are eligible for payment;
 - 3) Possible enhancement of the model addressing specific relevant subthemes related to **cultural heritage interventions sustainability** (e.g., innovative financing of heritage interventions, contested heritage-related solutions, poor maintenance, etc.);
- C) Research on the Development of the SoPHIA model to support the evaluation of **SDGs impacts** alongside effective and efficient ways of their implementation in public policies and

heritage interventions. Indeed, putting it into relation to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, even though they recognise the importance of heritage, they fail in providing respective indicators. Future research in that respect, therefore, should consider the **investigation of concrete indicators for measuring the implementation of SDGs**.

D) Other Research

- 1) Research on CH Social Platforms and on how to share and develop knowledge on the SoPHIA model;
- 2) Research on how to educate potential users of the SoPHIA model.
- 3) Research on gathering data on EU-funded heritage projects useful for the implementation of the SoPHIA model;

The proposed topics regarding the future research related to the SoPHIA model may well be studied in the framework of another HORIZON Europe project.

Finally, **suppose mandatory heritage impact assessment is successfully introduced in EU policies/programmes. In that case, the European research agenda will likely recognise some of the above-mentioned research topics as priorities** and include them in the EU research funding framework.

Deepening the topic of existing research on heritage sustainability

The sustainability of heritage is at the core of the SoPHIA model. If the model will serve as a planning and/or monitoring tool, it should have a primary impact on the quality of interventions. Ensuring the quality further impacts the sustainability of heritage. Although research-wise, the SoPHIA project has not dealt specifically with the topic of heritage sustainability, it needs to be introduced as it is directly linked to the topic of heritage impact assessment and faces similar research gaps. Therefore, setting the agenda for future research related to the heritage impact assessment may also benefit future research on heritage sustainability and vice versa.

Unlike impact assessment, the topic of sustainability has been present in academic research for a relatively long time. However, the sustainable development framework had started to stress the importance of culture only in 2009 when it was introduced in Agenda 21 for Culture by the United Cities and Local Government (UCLG). Heritage sustainability is considered part of cultural sustainability, but they are both given **much more consideration for their instrumental than intrinsic values**. Therefore, their role in contributing to the overall sustainable development is preferred in research, while sustainability of heritage itself is somewhat less studied. For example, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development only marginally mentions the need for cultural heritage protection, but it fails to refer to its valorisation or regeneration (Vecco & Srakar, 2018).

Even though several academic papers deal with heritage sustainability, their number is still increasing due to the inability to find a one-fits-all tool for ensuring it. Heritage sustainability is very complex; it consists of a number of domains and subsequent areas that impact

sustainability that often overlap and are often difficult to measure and eventually ensure. Like heritage impact assessment, heritage sustainability is also studied from the cultural, social, environmental, and economic points of view, whereas a number of sub-areas are noted. This is why the research on heritage sustainability also requires a holistic approach. The key challenges for ensuring sustainability in the cultural policy realm relate to a **limited ability to assess the impact of heritage on development**, the **sustainability of heritage effects in the long run**, and **difficulties proving the existence of these effects**. This is why researchers seek **new methodological steps in assessing and managing cultural heritage** (Azevedo, 2016). The greatest gap is seen in **providing a holistic and integrative assessment of cultural heritage sustainability** as rating individual sustainability aspects (e.g., environmental vs economic) is too difficult since the sustainability of cultural heritage is a not stand-alone concept but often involves a negotiation process among its various aspects (Jelinčić & Glivetić, 2020).

Research gaps related to specific domains in ensuring heritage sustainability may be summarised as follows:

- in the economic domain, further research is always needed in the ever-lasting challenge of the lack of funding. Research on **novel financial instruments** (e.g., “alternative” methods such as fin-tech and crowd-funding, public-private partnerships and procurement models, hybrid instruments consisting of a combination of grant, debt, and equity capital, etc.) are required;
- in the social and cultural domain, research on issues related to **modernisation** and **standardisation** of heritage is needed as well as on **political pressures** (usually resulting in contested or dissonant heritage). This also entails a **clearer definition of heritage values**, which impacts other aspects to be subjected to new research such as **poor maintenance, over-exploitation for tourism purposes, use of false or incorrect historical data or unauthentic heritage, disputes over the uniqueness of registered heritage assets to the loss of local community connection to cultural heritage** (Jelinčić & Glivetić, 2020).
- in the environmental domain, **climate change**-related research is needed focusing on the topics of the **green economy** and **natural risks** while trying to find solutions.

Research relating to all the domains is further needed regarding **heritage management** which “entails all management phases: planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation” (Jelinčić & Tišma, 2020).

Different indicators are required to measure success in achieving heritage sustainability. However, the existing literature fails to provide **universal heritage sustainability indicators**, although not due to the lack of literature on this topic (e.g., Nocca, 2018; Vecco & Srakar, 2018; Jelinčić & Tišma, 2020).

What is further lacking in the research related to heritage sustainability is the **differentiation between levels of impact measurement, i.e., policy, programme, or project level**. This also involves the **institutional level**. What has been detected as specifically missing are **comprehensive indicator sets for the site-specific heritage attractions** (Ren & Han, 2018).

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Project identity

Project title: `SoPHIA – Social Platform for Holistic Heritage Impact Assessment`

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The Horizon 2020 project `SoPHIA – Social Platform for Holistic Heritage Impact Assessment` (2020-2021) is a research and innovation project that sought to open the debate on the holistic assessment of CH interventions, to build consensus on it, to support the European Commission in the definition of guidelines for the next generations of funds for CH and to support stakeholders in CH in assessing the impact of their interventions, in view of the sustainability and resilience of CH. During the two years of its activities, the consortium partners, together with a diverse community of stakeholders interested in interventions in CH sites in Europe, have worked together towards the definition of an effective holistic impact assessment model for CH interventions, quality standards and guidelines for future policies and programmes. The SoPHIA deliverables corresponding to these tasks are available at the project website, as well as on the H2020 portal.

