Empowering Local Communities for Smart and Sustainable Cultural Heritage
Bridging Expertise, Digital Change, and Partnerships

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Empowering Local Communities for Smart and Sustainable Cultural Heritage

Bridging Expertise, Digital Change, and Partnerships

Moderator:

Alexander Colvine
(Interpret Europe, Project Manager)

LDnet
webinar series
2025

SPEAKERS

ROSALBA LA GROTTERIA *(LDNET AND CODEX, SENIOR EXPERT FOR HANGAR PIEMONTE)*

GIUSEPPE PACE *(LDNET AND CNR-IRISS, SENIOR RESEARCHER)*

ANTONY CASSAR *(HERITAGE MALTA, DIRECTOR DIGITALISATION UNIT)*

HARIS MARTINOS (LDNET AND FRIEND OF PAROS ASSOCIATION)

ROBERTA DE BONIS PATRIGNANI (LINKS FOUNDATION)

The Digital culture and digital change for the Culture
Rosalba La Grotteria (LDnet and Codex, senior expert for Hangar Piemonte)

WE WANT TO EXPLORE THE CONCEPT THAT REVOLVES AROUND EMPOWERING LOCAL COMMUNITIES TO MANAGE AND PROMOTE THEIR CULTURAL HERITAGE IN A WAY THAT INCORPORATES SMART TECHNOLOGIES, SUSTAINABILITY, AND STRONG PARTNERSHIPS

IT IS A FASCINATING TOPIC THAT BLENDS CULTURAL PRESERVATION WITH THE BENEFITS OF DIGITAL INNOVATION.

Empowering Local Communities

Education and Capacity Building

Community-Led Initiatives
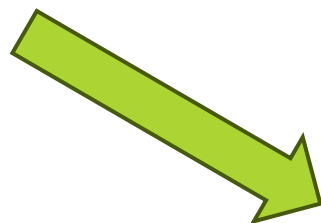
DIGITAL PRESERVATION

SMART CITIES INTEGRATION

DIGITIZATION PROJECTS

Smart Technologies for Cultural Heritage
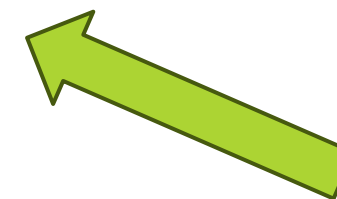
"Digital Culture" and "Digital for the Culture"

Cultural challenge

Spatial development

Digital transition

Social challenge

Credit: Norma Nardi Hangar

Sustainability in Heritage Management

ECO-FRIENDLY PRACTICES

CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY

Building strong Partnerships

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

COMMUNITY ACTIVATION

1. What is local communities' role?

Key Aspects of Community Involvement:

1. Collaborative Governance and Policy Influence
2. Community-Led Conservation Efforts
3. Economic and Cultural Regeneration
4. Heritage as a Catalyst for Inclusion
5. Active Participation in Heritage Interpretation
6. Education and Awareness Building

Community

both custodians and interpreters of cultural and historical assets

Critical role to ensure that heritage is not only preserved but also remains meaningful, accessible, and sustainable for future generations

How can communities benefit from digital technologies' evolution?

Digital Advantages in Heritage:

A. Democratising Access to Heritage
B. Remote Participation & Virtual Collaboration
C. Digital Documentation & Preservation
D. Economic Empowerment and Digital Heritage Tourism
E. Heritage Education & Community Engagement
F. Augmented Reality (AR) & Virtual Reality (VR) for Interpretation
G. Disaster Prevention & Resilience Building

Digital revolution

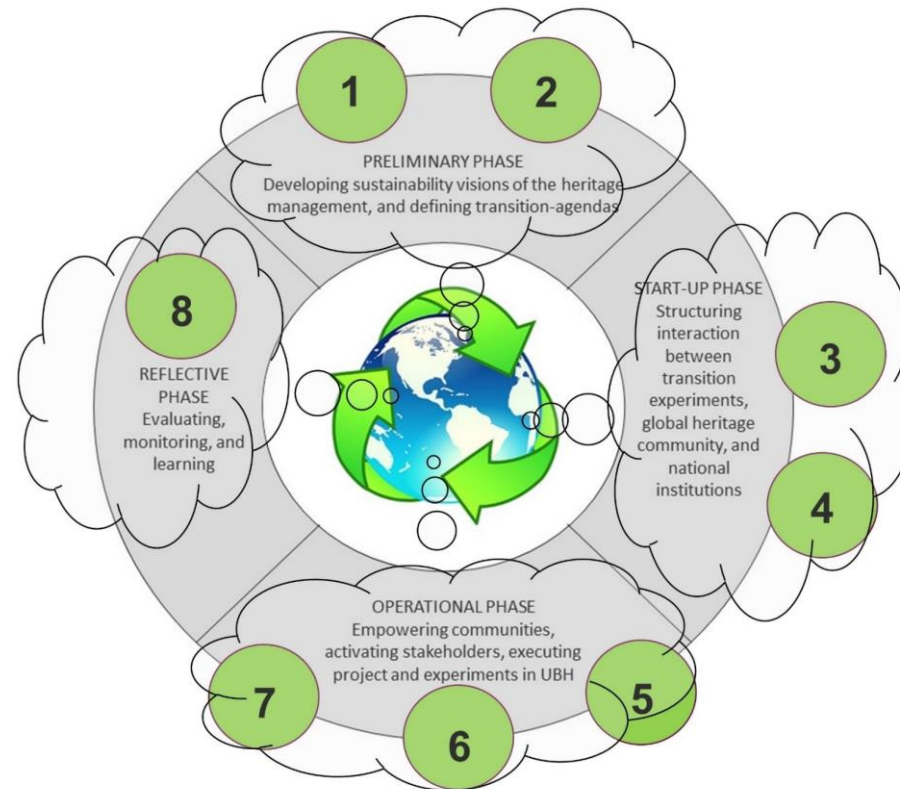Game-changer for local communities in heritage protection and valorisation

By leveraging digital tools, communities can **overcome geographical barriers**, amplify their cultural narratives, and engage in **sustainable preservation efforts**

Activating Communities through Strategic Transition Practice

- STP is a flexible and adaptable multi-level approach with a **Step-by-step methodology**
- Based on a circular governance, it guides **local promoters to:**
  - Establish **vision**, mission, and agenda
  - **Facilitate** the **dialogue** among stakeholders
  - Deepen the **knowledge**
  - Develop **transition experiments**
  - Build **new collective meanings** and values

Preliminary phase
1. Searchlight
2. Stakeholder Mapping and Engagement

Start-up phase
3. Living Lab Establishment and organization
4. Deepening the knowledge

Operational phase
5. Structuring the options
6. Choices and construction of meaning
7. Experimentation

Reflective phase
8. Storytelling, evaluation, and monitoring

1. Collaborative Governance and Policy Influence

- **Empowering local communities** to participate in decision-making processes ensures that **heritage policies reflect their needs and aspirations.**

- Participatory governance models foster **co-responsibility,** leading to more effective and sustainable heritage management

DIGITAL RESOURCES

Remote Participation & Virtual Collaboration

Online workshops, webinars, and crowdsourcing platforms allow locals to actively participate in heritage management decisions

Digital technologies enable communities to remotely connect with heritage professionals, academics, and policymakers without the need for physical presence.

2. Community-Led Conservation Efforts

▶ Locals involved in heritage management become **active stewards** rather than passive observers

▶ Traditional knowledge, local craftsmanship, and community-driven initiatives contribute to **sustainable and context-sensitive preservation**

DIGITAL RESOURCES

Digital Documentation & Preservation

3D scanning, photogrammetry, and drone technology allow isolated communities to digitally document their heritage, even in areas prone to environmental risks or decay.

Digital archives prevent the loss of oral traditions, craftsmanship techniques, and historical records, ensuring that heritage remains accessible despite physical deterioration.

Disaster Prevention & Resilience Building

Crowdsourced data collection allows locals to report damages and engage in real-time heritage protection efforts

Digital mapping and AI-driven monitoring systems help communities track environmental threats to heritage sites (e.g., erosion, climate change, or urban expansion).

3. Economic and Cultural Regeneration

▶ **Heritage-based activities** (community tourism, local crafts, and cultural festivals) provide **economic opportunities** while reinforcing **cultural pride**.

▶ By **integrating heritage into local development** strategies, communities benefit from **sustainable tourism models** that respect their cultural and environmental resources.

DIGITAL RESOURCES

Economic Empowerment and Digital Heritage Tourism

E-commerce solutions enable local artisans to sell traditional crafts online, generating sustainable income while preserving cultural skills.

Small and isolated local communities can use digital platforms to promote virtual tourism experiences, attracting visitors without the need for large-scale infrastructure.

4. Heritage as a Catalyst for Social Inclusion

▶ **Engage and empower diverse community groups**, including marginalized populations

▶ Heritage initiatives **promote social cohesion**, political dialogue, intergenerational exchange, and **cultural identity reinforcement**

▶ **Inclusive heritage projects** empower communities to reclaim and reinterpret their heritage, making it relevant to contemporary social needs

DIGITAL RESOURCES

Democratising Access to Heritage

Digital platforms allow communities to share their heritage with a global audience

Open-access databases help locals document and preserve their traditions, making them available to future generations
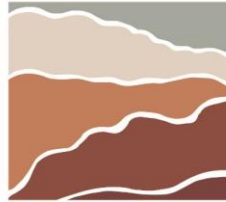
Heritage Education & Community Engagement

Digital tools empower locals, especially younger generations, to learn about their heritage in interactive ways (e.g., gamification, digital storytelling, online courses)

5. Active Participation in Heritage Interpretation

- Local communities possess **intimate knowledge of their cultural heritage**

- **Contextualised and lived narratives** go beyond academic perspectives

- **Bottom-up approaches** foster authentic and diverse storytelling, enriching heritage interpretation

HUMAN RESOURCES

An ERASMUS+ project:
EMpowering landscapes with Participatory Approaches to Heritage interpretation Skills

EMPATHS

Co-funded by the European Union

DIGITAL RESOURCES

Augmented Reality (AR) & Virtual Reality (VR) for Interpretation

recreate lost or endangered heritage, allowing visitors to experience sites and traditions even if they are difficult to access

Enhance local storytelling: help communities present their heritage in engaging and immersive ways

6. Education and Awareness Building

▶ Schools, local associations, and grassroots organisations play a crucial role in **educating citizens about their heritage.**

▶ By **incorporating heritage education into local curricula** and **promoting community workshops**, a sense of ownership and responsibility is instilled in future generations.
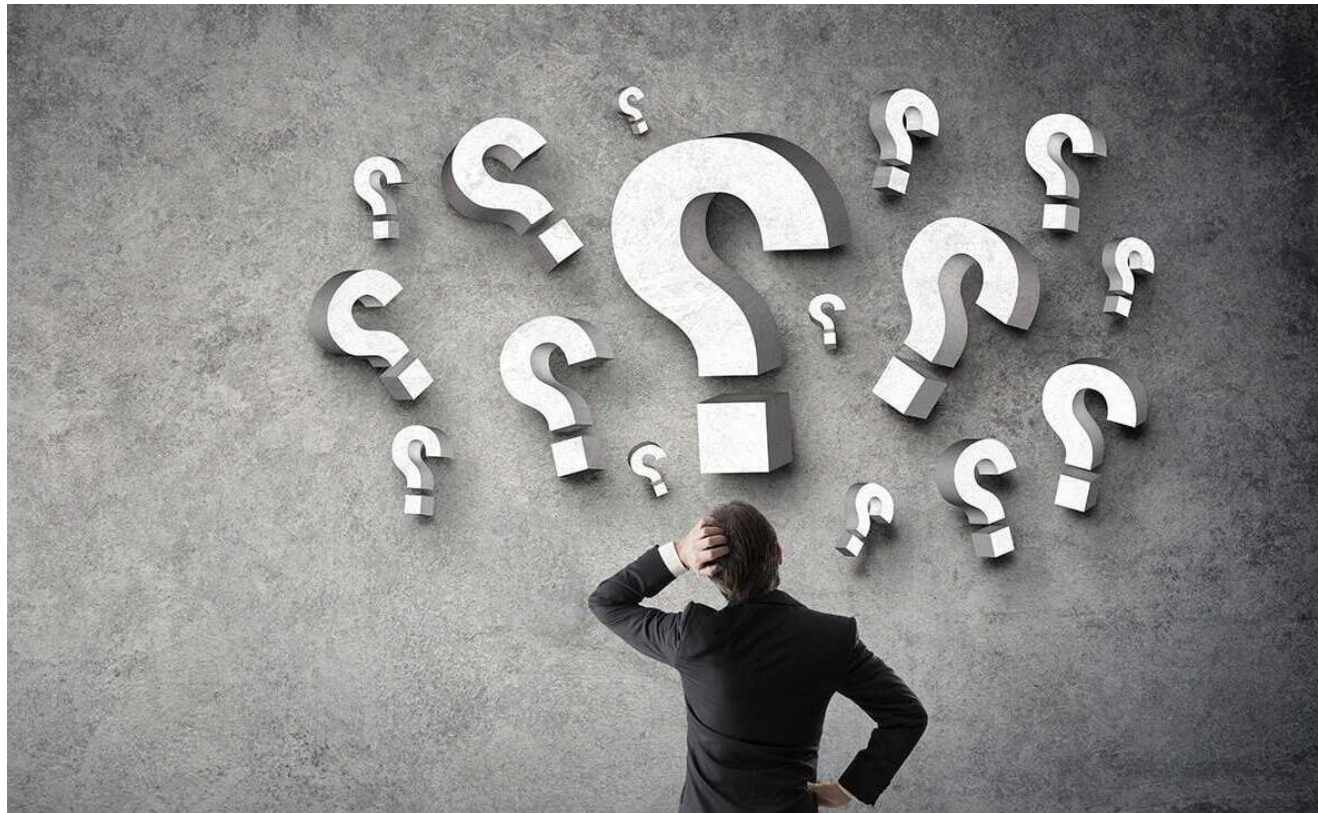
DIGITAL RESOURCES

Heritage Education & Community Engagement

Social media platforms help create online heritage communities, where people can exchange knowledge, share experiences, and promote local initiatives

Digital tools empower locals, especially younger generations, to learn about their heritage in interactive ways

Q&A

Thanks

QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION