



BOOK REVIEW:

**BOOK REVIEW: CULTURAL HERITAGE AS A TRIGGER FOR
CIVIC WEALTH CREATION AND SUSTAINABLE URBAN
DEVELOPMENT, BY SELENA AURELI, MARA DEL BALDO, PAOLA
DEMARTINI, MARTIN PIBER, ROMA TRE E-PRESS, ROME, 2023**

Maria Antonietta Cipriano

mariaantonietta.cipriano@uniroma3.it

Roma Tre University

Article info

Date of receipt: 09/05/2025

Acceptance date: 23/05/2025

Keywords: Cultural Heritage;
Civic Wealth Creation; Sustainable
Development; Impact Assessment;
Participatory Governance

doi: 10.14596/pisb.5031

Abstract

This review explores the volume Cultural Heritage as a Trigger for Civic Wealth Creation and Sustainable Urban Development, edited by Aureli, Del Baldo, Demartini, and Piber. As part of the Corporate Governance and Business Sector Scenarios series, the book examines how cultural heritage can become a strategic resource for civic wealth and local sustainable development. Structured around three themes—governance, stakeholder engagement, and impact reporting—it presents qualitative case studies of cultural entrepreneurial initiatives: La Paranza cooperative in Naples, the Container Garden in Turin, and the Terre degli Uffizi initiative in Tuscany. The final section focuses on tailored methodologies for evaluating cultural impacts. Emphasizing inclusive governance, local alliances, and social value, the volume offers timely insights for researchers and practitioners interested in cultural management, and community-based development.

Review

The volume I am recommending to the readers of the Journal *Piccola Impresa/Small Business* written by Selena Aureli (University of Bologna), Mara Del Baldo (University of Urbino), Paola Demartini (Roma Tre University), and Martin Piber (Universität Innsbruck) in the series *Corporate Governance and Business Sector Scenarios. Emerging Issues*, published by Roma Tre Press. This series explores emerging themes in corporate governance, with a specific focus on the Italian context from a comparative perspective, including governance in cultural and creative enterprises aiming at valorising Italian Cultural Heritage. The volume is the first publication linked to the CHANGES project (*Cultural Heritage Active Innovation for Next-Gen Sustainable Society*), funded by the NextGenerationEU initiative. The central focus of the book is to explore the role of Cultural Heritage as a driver for *Civic Wealth Creation* (CWC) and for sustainable urban and rural development. The editors and authors intend to advance the discussion from a managerial perspective by investigating how CH can become more accessible, better managed, and preserved, while analysing governance systems for CWC, dialogue among public officers, citizens and communities, and cultural organizations.

The book is structured around three interconnected research themes:

1. Governance of cultural heritage as a driver for CWC;
2. Sustainable urban and rural development through stakeholder engagement, collaboration, and alliances;
3. Reporting and measurement of expected and achieved impacts of cultural initiatives and interventions.

The first theme explores how innovative and inclusive governance models can transform cultural heritage into a catalyst for civic wealth and community regeneration. The key case study is that of the social cooperative *La Paranza* in the Sanità district of Naples, authored by Raffaele Fiorentino, Loris Landriani, Alessandra Lardo, and Stefano Marciano. Using a qualitative approach based on interviews, corporate reports, and secondary sources, the authors analyse an initiative led by a group of local youth—supported by a local priest, professionals, and a funding entity (*Fondazione con il Sud*)—that led to the enhancement of the *Catacombs of San Gennaro*. The novelty of this study lies in treating cultural assets not merely as objects of restoration but as a *new category of commons* capable of triggering the regeneration of places and, more importantly, of people, thus generating civic wealth. The research emphasizes the importance of an inclusive and democratic governance model, initially characterized by a bottom-up approach. However, external leadership and financial support (from actors such as L'Altra Napoli Onlus) were crucial. L'Altra Napoli Onlus played

an incubator role by providing legal and economic expertise and facilitating access to funding. The centrality of *human resources*—people—as a core output of regeneration and civic value creation processes is highlighted. This study addresses the research questions concerning how governance models of CH can foster CWC and enhance access and management. This case is highly relevant as it showcases a successful initiative born from a group of youth in a disadvantaged area, exemplifying local social entrepreneurship and cooperative development. The cooperative has provided stable employment for residents (approximately 40 employees, 80% from the area), showing how CH can be leveraged for micro and community-level socio-economic development. The emphasis on participatory governance offers valuable insights into hybrid organizational forms common in the sector. While the limitations of a single-case study are acknowledged, the insights into community-led regeneration dynamics are profound and valuable. Building on this, the contribution by Aureli, Del Baldo, and Demartini, titled “The role of the municipality in a UNESCO site”, explores how a local government can boost civic wealth creation. The municipality acted as an orchestrator, fostering stakeholder participation, collaborative innovation, and resource mobilization. This extends Lumpkin and Bacq’s (2019) framework on CWC by showing how CH governance can support the creation of common goods through coordinated public action.

The second theme focuses on the role of stakeholder collaboration, local alliances, and participatory practices in fostering sustainable development in both urban and rural settings. Two relevant case studies are presented.

The first, by Laura Corazza, Daniel Torchia, Chiara Certomà, Dario Cotafava, Federico Cuomo, Luca Battisti, and Jacopo Fresta, analyses “*L’orto della SME*”, a container garden, which operates as a self-governed space (Fournier, 2002) and a collaborative hub involving students, academics, seniors, and gardeners. Among the studies related to the *New European Bauhaus*, this autoethnographic and exploratory qualitative research shows how low-cost green spaces can foster social cohesion, sustainable production, intergenerational knowledge transfer and bottom-up community engagement.

The second study, by Elena Borin and Fabio Donato, explores urban-rural cultural heritage alliances for regional sustainable development. Using a qualitative case study with data triangulation, they examine “*Terre degli Uffizi*”, a project promoted by the Uffizi Galleries and the CR Firenze Foundation with support from the Tuscany Region. The initiative intends to bring attention to minor museums making cultural heritage more accessible to diverse audiences. The success of this initiative is attributed to its flexibility and delegation of key roles to local actors, supporting the creation of a distributed cultural ecosystem. The project aims to increase lo-

cal identity and participation alongside cultural tourism. The Uffizi case shows how top-down strategies can effectively engage local communities and small cultural organizations, creating positive synergies. The flexible top-down models interacting with bottom-up empowerment are essential for understanding the dynamics of local entrepreneurship and development. All these cases demonstrate how small-scale, participatory initiatives—even within large institutions—can generate significant social inclusion and cohesion.

The third theme addresses the challenges and opportunities of evaluating and reporting the social, cultural, and economic impacts of cultural heritage initiatives. The first contribution, by Michael Habersam and Martin Piber, analyzes participation in the European Capitals of Culture (ECoC), specifically *Valletta 2018* and *Matera 2019*. Through qualitative case studies based on interviews and documents, the authors find that participation models are shaped by political and organizational contexts. While measurable impacts like tourism growth are evident, intangible effects—identity, civic pride, skills development—are harder to quantify but closely tied to high-quality active participation.

The second contribution, by Mauro Baioni, Alessandro Bollo, Annalisa Cicerchia, Paola Demartini, Lucia Marchegiani, Flavia Marucci, and Michela Marchiori, presents the *SoPHIA* model (*Social Platform for Holistic Heritage Impact Assessment*, H2020 project). The model is based on multidimensional impact domains (e.g., social capital/governance, quality of life, work and prosperity, education/innovation and protection), stakeholder engagement, and longitudinal perspectives. A pilot application to *Polo del '900* in Turin demonstrates the *SoPHIA*'s potential to map cultural impacts and support dialogic accounting. Impact measurement and reporting are crucial for small cultural and social initiatives with multi-dimensional goals and the *SoPHIA* model provides a structured framework for assessing civic and social value, going beyond financial performance.

The volume *Cultural Heritage as a Trigger for Civic Wealth Creation and Sustainable Urban Development* offers a comprehensive and multi-perspective analysis of how CH can be used as a strategic lever for sustainable development and CWC. Through qualitative case studies, it presents a wide range of practical examples and insights into governance, participation, collaboration, and impact measurement in urban and rural cultural contexts. Its focus on grassroots initiatives (*La Paranza*, *L'orto della SME*), stakeholder engagement, participatory governance challenges (ECoCs, Urbino), and new accountability tools (*SoPHIA*) makes it highly relevant for researchers and practitioners interested in small enterprises, social entre-

preneurship, and territorially embedded organizations. The book conceptualizes cultural heritage not merely as an object of preservation, but as a strategic resource for socio-economic regeneration—particularly relevant for historic urban centres and rural areas confronting depopulation, economic decline, and social fragmentation.

In conclusion, this volume makes a significant contribution to academic discourse at the intersection of management, CH enhancement and local development. It offers practical insights and analytical models of great value to those working—or studying—in contexts defined by small scale, strong local roots, and goals extending beyond profit. It is, therefore, a highly recommended read for the *Piccola Impresa/Small Business* scholarly community.

References

Fournier, V. (2002). Utopianism and the cultivation of possibilities: *Grassroots movements of hope*. *Sociological Review*, 50(3), 189–214. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.2002.tb03585.x>

Lumpkin, G. T., & Bacq, S. (2019). Civic wealth creation: A new view of stakeholder engagement. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 33(4), 383–404. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amp.2017.0060>