



**RICHERS**  
RENEWAL, INNOVATION AND CHANGE:  
HERITAGE AND EUROPEAN SOCIETY



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## ECONOMICS OF CULTURE



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European cultural heritage is of exceptional economic importance and has the power to support economic growth and regional development. The potential of Europe's cultural heritage became even greater with the onset of digital technology which has revolutionised societies and transformed the way in which cultural heritage is produced, accessed, communicated, participated in and disseminated. Engaging with digital technologies and adopting collaborative working practices can result in many new forms of access, interpretation, social inclusion and enhanced visitor experience. This has many benefits for the creative economy such as the potential to increase consumption, attract new audiences and to improve revenue.

Within the RICHERS project we investigate fiscal and economic aspects of cultural consumption in the European Union. One of the available and yet underappreciated tools in cultural policy at the national level is the reduction of VAT rates for cultural goods and services. We explore the potential of fiscal incentives by introducing a theoretical model, which is then tested using data for all EU countries in the period of the last two decades.

Heritage institutions house cultural and research content, which is the key source to fuel innovation. Despite the potential of heritage collections, it is mostly inaccessible via the digital market of information. The project will provide **recommendations on why and how heritage institutions can improve the fostering of innovation and digitize their collection more efficiently**. These prescriptions will be provided based on the identification of corresponding determinants and by utilizing unique data covering 1,300 institutions in Europe.

We illuminate how publication of heritage in a digital medium transforms patterns of consumption. Using a rigorous quantitative analysis we document how online publication may increase access to collections, broadening object mobility and visibility, becoming so an important complement to onsite exhibitions.

In an era of financial crisis and funding cuts, innovation and experimentation in digital technology for the cultural heritage sector is of paramount importance in keeping pace with these changes, to compete with other industries and to maintain the potential for economic growth. We therefore explore how innovation and experimentation in digital technology can be a source of economic value as well as cultural value. In particular, **we exhibit how innovation and experimentation in digital technology use can benefit CH institutions through collaboration with external agencies such as academic research institutions**.



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Digital technology has also an important role to play in the promotion of cultural locations and in providing a consumer gateway to territorial cultural identity. Using case studies of the application of digital technology to the interpretation of some of Europe's most important historic sites, our research examines how digital technologies are used to valorize territorial cultural identities. We explore how such technologies are **re-shaping human interactions with our built heritage environment** and hence we engage with ongoing debates over whether the digital commodification of place image and identity leads to a 'Disneyfication' effect.

#### PROJECT PARTNERS



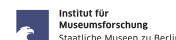
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