

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND DIGITAL INNOVATION: PAST – A DEVICE FOR THE REVITALISATION OF MARGINAL COMMUNITIES

TURISMO SOSTENIBILE E INNOVAZIONE DIGITALE: PAST – UN DISPOSITIVO PER LA RIVITALIZZAZIONE DELLE COMUNITÀ MARGINALI



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ABSTRACT

Tourism can be an opportunity for sustainable development in marginalized communities if it ensures their active involvement, fair distribution of benefits, and training opportunities. This requires inclusive strategies that involve local communities in co-creating heritage-based experiences to support their reactivation. This paper illustrates how to implement educational interventions inspired by this approach. We will present the Participatory Invented Archive "La Cultura del Tabacco," a device that, by effectively integrating physical and digital components, collects and makes accessible testimonies and documentary resources of various formats and types. This serves to promote intergenerational knowledge and the dissemination of oral heritage. Furthermore, it stimulates and supports local shared narration initiatives aimed at engaging diverse audiences in the exploration of places, interaction with community witnesses, and producing new cultural content.

Le comunità marginali possono trovare nel turismo sostenibile un'opportunità di valorizzazione etica del patrimonio culturale, equilibrando tutela ambientale, culturale e sociale con benefici economici equi. Ciò richiede l'adozione di strategie inclusive e partecipative che coinvolgano attivamente le comunità locali nella co-creazione di esperienze di valorizzazione del proprio patrimonio, che possano supportare la riattivazione comunitaria. Le tecnologie digitali svolgono un ruolo chiave. Esse supportano sia la realizzazione di azioni di facilitazione inerenti alla progettazione di esperienze innovative di turismo sostenibile da parte della comunità, sia forme di sensibilizzazione dei visitatori a un'esplorazione consapevole ed etica del territorio, evitando il depauperamento delle ricchezze offerte da questi luoghi. Qui viene presentato il progetto di ricerca già avviato dal gruppo di ricerca Place, il quale si è dedicato alla realizzazione dell'Archivio Inventato del tabacco del Salento sud-orientale, che raccoglie differenti testimonianze, che costituiscono una prima massa critica per la successiva progettazione e sperimentazione di attività di empowerment comunitario, incentrate sulla valorizzazione del patrimonio locale. Queste azioni si inseriranno all'interno di un progetto più ampio, che prevederà la modellizzazione di un dispositivo di intervento di partecipazione comunitaria che conetterà la comunità all'interno di un circuito virtuoso e in cui le dimensioni fisiche e digitali dialogheranno in uno spazio *phygital*.

KEYWORDS

Sustainable tourism, participatory archive, community empowerment, storytelling, cultural heritage.

Turismo sostenibile, archivio inventato, empowerment comunitario, ambienti partecipativi, patrimonio culturale

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Introduction

Currently, cultural heritage enhancement is undergoing a radical transformation, driven by digital technologies that specifically address the needs of small local communities. These technologies are capable of breaking down physical and temporal barriers, making cultural heritage more accessible and usable not only for local communities but also for visitors (Giaccone & Bonacini, 2019). This process takes on a crucial significance in marginal areas, which, are often excluded from tourist flows and prevailing economic dynamics despite housing invaluable natural and cultural heritage.

The digital realm gives rise to what Castells defines as “spaces of flows” (2001, p. 155), networked environments that transcend physical and temporal boundaries, facilitating new modes of interaction, cooperation, and cultural production (Galloway et al., 2011). These spaces impact community resilience and self-determination processes, enabling new forms of territorial agency and shared memory. The institutions responsible for heritage conservation, such as archives, are called upon to rethink their role in light of the relational and participatory dynamics typical of the digital era. An archive is no longer just a static repository of documents but becomes a dynamic cultural space where social practices, plural narratives, and processes of collective identity building are intertwined (Beel et al., 2017). Specifically, the participatory digital archive represents a convergence point between past and present, offering new modes of interaction with the territory that respond to the needs of an increasingly interconnected and relational context (Gilliland & McKemmish, 2014).

The concept of territory is also evolving, now understood as an integrated system of material, immaterial, and digital dimensions, simultaneously assuming the role of the object of narration and an epistemic and relational infrastructure. It becomes a space of distributed learning, in which experiences are generated through the interaction of memory, identity, and participation, also mediated by digital technologies.

In this context, the phygital dimension — the fusion of the physical environment with digital content — is strategic for enriching the experience of places, making the territory more accessible and readable. However, it is also essential to consider the limitations and challenges associated with the adoption of digital technologies, which can give rise to new forms of exclusion—for instance, unequal access to digital infrastructure, technical skills, or financial resources (Parry, 2007).

Moreover, the excessive mediation of heritage risks simplifying or sensationalizing cultural content, undermining interpretative depth and the plurality of narratives (Giaccardi, 2012).

Digital technology does not replace the real world, but accompanies it, amplifying its narrative and multiplying its levels of enjoyment, fostering forms of participatory and relational knowledge. Augmented Reality (AR) allows digital information to be superimposed onto the real world, transforming cultural consumption into an immersive and interactive experience. Digital storytelling (Carlino, 2023) enables the creation of democratic participation through processes of communication and reinvention of tradition.

We will present the case of the "La Cultura del Tabacco" Digital Archive and some operational proposals for animating the Archive to promote heritage education and participation (Manfreda, 2020).

1. The "La Cultura del Tabacco" Archive: Goals, Objectives, Methodologies

The "La Cultura del Tabacco" digital archive, freely accessible at the link <https://www.archivifabbricarearmonie.it/cultura-tabacco/>, is the result of the eponymous project led by the OdV 'Fabbricare Armonie' of Spongano (Lecce, Puglia). Under the scientific responsibility of Salvatore Colazzo, the project received funding from the European Union's NextGeneration funds and the Ministry of Culture's PNRR TOCC (Digital Transition of Cultural and Creative Organisations¹). It is an extensive project focusing on community pedagogy and enhancing territories and their heritage. Our P.L.A.C.E.² research group, of which Salvatore Colazzo is a member, is collaborating on it.

¹ <https://www.invitalia.it/cosa-facciamo/rafforziamo-le-imprese/transizione-digitale-organismi-culturali-e-creativi> (last access 29-04-2025).

² P.L.A.C.E. (Participatory Local Action for Community Empowerment) is a Research Laboratory for Social Innovation and Community Development established through a collaboration between Pegaso Online University and the SME Espéro, to which the authors of this contribution are affiliated. It operates in the field of community studies to help define solutions and intervention models, also through the integration of digital technologies, for the regeneration of places, the strengthening of the sense of

The Archive represents a valuable resource for exploring the history and culture associated with tobacco cultivation and processing in Salento. It documents how this phenomenon profoundly impacted the economy, society, and landscape of the region. The origins of this activity date back to the 18th century, with a snuff tobacco factory in Lecce for the Kingdom of Naples. A significant role in the development of tobacco farming was played by the New Regulation of 1901, which introduced “special concessions”. These allowed large landowners (with at least 10 hectares) not only to cultivate tobacco but also to carry out the first processing in private factories (referred to locally as “fabbriche”) before delivering it to state-owned factories. Special concessions proved highly profitable for landowners, due to state-guaranteed purchases at fixed prices and the low wages paid to farmers and tobacco workers. These conditions generated substantial profits, which were often reinvested in government bonds rather than in productive ventures or improvements in agriculture (Colazzo, 2024). During the Fascist era, this economic activity expanded further, reaching its peak in the 1960s. However, by the end of those years, the tobacco sector began to decline, with a rapid fall in production, a contraction in jobs, and the dismantling of factories. In Salento, the dissolution of the supply chain caused a traumatic break within communities and a form of collective repression of the significance tobacco had once held (Colazzo, 2024): lands cultivated almost exclusively with tobacco were abandoned, many farm workers emigrated, and numerous factories scattered throughout the territory were closed and fell into ruin. The Archive project was created to respond to this rupture, to the abandonment and material heritage degradation (factories, warehouses, machinery), and the dispersion of immaterial heritage (memories, knowledge, songs, life stories of tobacco workers and farmers). It also addresses the fact that many young people have no direct knowledge of this part of local history in Salento. All work began in 2023, and the general aims of the project are:

- Recovery of memory: to counter oblivion and recover the historical and social memory related to tobacco culture in Salento.
- Cultural awareness: to promote a conscious reclamation of this cultural heritage by local communities, especially younger generations.

community, the promotion of the agency of local actors, and the enhancement of local cultural heritage for sustainable development.

- Critical reflection: to stimulate reflection on economic processes (e.g., the dangers of monoculture), the role of local and national politics, and social dynamics (labour, migration, struggles) that characterised the tobacco era.
- Integrated valorisation: to enhance material heritage (industrial architecture, places, landscapes) and immaterial heritage (knowledge, stories, music) related to the phenomenon.
- Community empowerment: to "empower" local communities, making them protagonists in the management and narration of their history and heritage (Colazzo-Manfreda, 2019; Colazzo-Del Gobbo, 2022; Manfreda, 2022).

To achieve these aims, the project has been structured into a series of actions. They combine digital environments and tools with field interventions:

- *Document organisation*: to collect, organise, conserve, and make available the initial collection of documents (from the "Pietro Sassu" Archive and other material from 'Fabbricare Armonie', derived from previous research and projects) related to tobacco culture (audio/video interviews, photographs, songs, publications, research materials).
- *Development of an online platform (the digital archive) and implementation*: to create a new web space designed to host and catalogue resources of various types and formats related to the Archive's theme. The platform will also implement all the resources within the digital infrastructure.
- *Expansion of the Archive*: to enlarge the collection by encouraging the deposit of new testimonies, documents, and memories from private citizens, organisations, and institutions, as well as by seeking external sources to connect to the Archive.
- *Awareness-raising*: to inform and sensitise local communities, scholars, and visitors (tourists) about the content of the Archive and the historical, social, and economic significance of tobacco cultivation and culture in Salento.
- *Protection of material heritage*: to encourage initiatives for the knowledge, selection, restoration, and repurposing of significant tobacco-related industrial buildings.

- *Creation of paths*: to define and promote research and cultural enjoyment itineraries in the territory, linking them to the places and stories preserved in the archive.
- *Sustainable development*: to integrate the valorisation of this heritage into a broader reflection on local development models and sustainable tourism, both socially and environmentally.

The “La Cultura del Tabacco” Archive is not conceived as a simple passive container but as a dynamic process that produces documents, stimulates cooperation, and fosters new forms of consultation and communication (Colazzo, 2024). It adopts methodologies of public history and public pedagogy, actively involving the community (citizens, schools, associations) in the construction and enjoyment of the archive. The project allows anyone to submit resources related to the Archive’s themes to be integrated and made accessible. Additionally, the project includes the organisation of cultural events, seminars, and performances to spread the Archive’s contents and stimulate participation. It is within this framework that PAST (Participatory Archive for Sustainable Territories) fits, a structure where, over time, we will develop various activities and initiatives, such as those described in the following sections.

2. Reading and Analysis of the Archive Data

The “Cultura Tabacco” Archive collects various types of resources organised by themes, supporting a multidisciplinary exploration of its subject matter. At the time of writing, the archive contains 123 resources, diverse in format and content:

- *Historical and technical documents*: Agronomic manuals, industry regulations, and corporate reports documenting agricultural and industrial practices related to tobacco.
- *Historical and contemporary photographs*: Portraits of female workers (tobacco workers and cigar makers), images of factories, drying houses, and agricultural landscapes illustrating the sector’s evolution over time.
- *Interviews and oral testimonies*: Collections of voices from former workers, entrepreneurs, and members of local communities offering personal perspectives on the cultivation and processing of tobacco.

- *Audiovisual materials*: Documentaries, historical footage, and audio recordings exploring the cultural, social, and economic aspects of the sector.
- *Academic studies and research articles*: Sociological, economic, and anthropological analyses on topics such as female labour, union dynamics, and the environmental impact of tobacco cultivation.
- *Artistic and cultural materials*: Theatre performances, art installations, and cultural projects inspired by the collective memory of the tobacco industry.

The archive offers to explore these resources through filters by keyword, author, publisher/producer, witness, and location. The resources already present are a significant achievement, considering that the platform was launched and made accessible about six months ago, after a preliminary work to design the platform, the bibliographic card model, and develop and create the online space.

By analysing the content to understand the current shape of the archive, we identified six broad semantic categories into which the resources can be divided (some of these resources belong to multiple categories, as they often cover several dimensions of the phenomenon). Here are the summary results:

1. *The Agricultural Cycle* (represents 35.29% of resources)
This category includes resources dedicated to tobacco cultivation, from sowing and harvesting techniques to the varieties grown. Historical documents, agronomic manuals, and direct testimonies about traditional and modern cultivation methods can be found. Kentucky tobacco is among the most documented varieties, and there are studies on the impact of climate change on crop yields.
2. *Processing* (represents 34.45% of resources)
This category covers the stages following tobacco harvest, including drying, leaf selection, and the role of factories. Resources include technical analyses on processing methods, historical factory photo archives, and testimonies from cigar makers. The shift from artisanal to industrial techniques and the decline of many factories are documented.
3. *Labour* (represents 46.22% of resources)
The most represented aspect in the archive, focusing on the often harsh working conditions, the central role of female tobacco workers, as well as union struggles, including the phenomenon of migrant labourers from

Salento moving to other Italian regions where tobacco was cultivated. Resources include interviews, research articles, and documentaries on female labour and the seasonal precariousness of work in the sector.

4. *Economic Impact* (represents 25.21% of resources)
This section highlights tobacco as a source of income for many families and communities. Available resources include economic studies, testimonies from growers and entrepreneurs, and analyses of sector crises. The resources illustrate how the decline in tobacco cultivation has affected local economies and the labour market.
5. *Social and Cultural Dimensions* (represents 37.82% of resources)
This category examines the role of tobacco in rural communities, including social forms, traditions, and the specific language linked to tobacco processing. There are documentaries, photographs, and anthropological studies that tell the story of life around the factories and plantations, as well as artistic performances and cultural initiatives inspired by the memory of the tobacco industry.
6. *The Landscape* (represents 21.01% of resources)
This category gathers resources on the transformation of the land caused by tobacco monoculture. There are studies on industrial archaeology concerning drying houses, historical photographs of agricultural landscapes, and research on the environmental impact of tobacco cultivation.

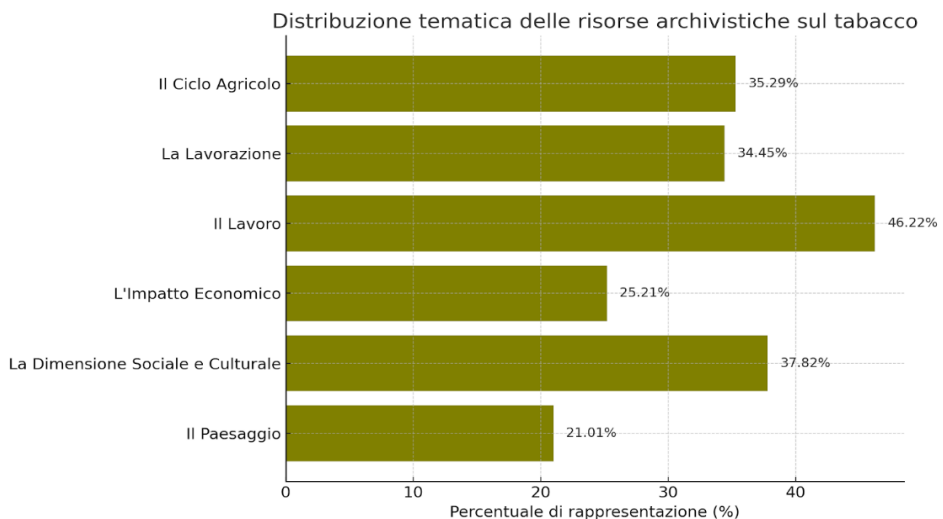


Figure 1. Thematic Distribution of Tobacco Archival Resources

It will be interesting to monitor the increase in bibliographic entries and the types of users who submit them. It will also be interesting to see what new content is produced and added to the archive as a result of the research group's animation activities.

The archive's potential and that of the underlying pedagogical project are vast. Over the coming months, the research group will work within the PAST framework to foster a sense of belonging, ensuring the community perceives the archive as shared heritage that communicates values and culture.

3. The PAST Framework

The idea of animating the “La Cultura del Tabacco” Archive, making it alive and participatory, led us to develop initial educational proposals that we have grouped under the term: Participatory Archive for Sustainable Territories (PAST). This acronym aims to invoke the concept of “the past” as collective memory, projecting it towards the future as a lever for intervention, community activation, education, and enhancement, particularly in marginal areas. We hope that PAST can stimulate on-the-ground actions to disseminate the Archive's contents while also promoting a better understanding of the territory, producing new resources through the designed activities. This will enrich the Archive itself.

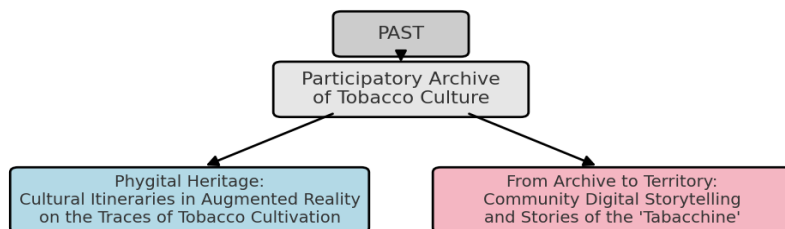


Figure 2. PAST Project Flowchart

The PAST Project includes the implementation of two operational proposals: a Community Digital Storytelling Workshop and phygitel experiential itineraries. The proposal “*Phygitel Heritage: Cultural Itineraries in Augmented Reality Tracing the Tobacco Cultivation*” aims to create experiential routes that can connect the documentary resources of the “La Cultura del Tabacco” Archive with the physical locations they refer to, using Augmented Reality. The proposal “*From Archive to Territory: Community Digital Storytelling and Stories of the Tabacchine*” focuses on

enhancing the stories of women workers involved in tobacco cultivation and processing, targeting a young audience through digital storytelling to develop transgenerational narratives and sustainable, inclusive tourist pathways.

4. From the Archive to the Territory: Community Digital Storytelling and Stories of the Tabacchine

The project proposal is structured across three dimensions that are in harmony with one another:

- *Documentary*: Developed through a critical re-reading of different sources, employing a gender-oriented approach that identifies the key role of tobacco workers in the tobacco-growing tradition. The re-reading of sources will be carried out both by drawing on resources from the “Culture of Tobacco” Archive and by encouraging participants to gather additional resources to engage in dialogue with those from the Archive.
- *Educational-Formative*: The active involvement of secondary school students paves the way for the deconstruction of the territory's historical marginalisation, the establishment of transgenerational connections with local female entrepreneurs, and the experimentation with digital strategies for reworking archival sources and co-curation.
- *Tourism-Cultural*: Based on the co-design of experiential pathways that enhance local narratives from a women-centered perspective, implementing digital technologies for shared reconstruction and widespread enjoyment.

In this project, participatory practices of digital storytelling aim to give voice to historically silenced subjects, regenerate intangible heritage through youthful perspectives, and develop sustainable models of story-based tourism. The project's objective is to establish an unparalleled parallelism between the historical and contemporary female condition, thereby placing two interconnected experiences in dialogue. On one side, the project will examine the testimonies of women exploited in tobacco factories, who were protagonists of the tobacco workers' uprisings for the improvement of working and living conditions. On the other, it will document the current experiences actively collected by students, who will be conducting research on entrepreneurial initiatives promoted by women in small local contexts.

This project action aims to increase youth empowerment through the discovery of both contemporary and historical female models, reflecting on the link between the past, present, and future of the local territory.

The following outlines the operational protocol for the Community Digital Storytelling Workshop, which will engage a group of 15 to 20 secondary school students aged 14 to 16. The initial participants will be drawn from technical and scientific-technological high schools in Maglie, as well as the arts high school in Poggiardo.

This choice stems from the compatibility of these educational paths with the use and application of digital and creative tools, which are essential for the activities planned in the workshop and their proximity to the physical location of the “Culture of Tobacco” Archive.

4.1 Project Phases

The design is structured into three sequential modules, each with specific objectives, methodologies, and outputs. They are designed to ensure the effectiveness of the intervention and its replicability. The students will take on the roles of archivists, interviewers, and designers of digital pathways aimed at creating sustainable tourism forms for the Salento area. In addition, the participants will be divided into subgroups, with each subgroup responsible for producing specific outputs, culminating in a shared final product to be presented to a wider audience. The 3 modules will include (Figure 3): a critical analysis of archive sources; a creative transformation of stories into digital products (podcasts, videos, interactive maps) through technical workshops and practical exercises; and the ideation and prototyping of physical/digital experiential pathways based on the narratives that emerge, with a focus on sustainability and participation.

Module	Title	Brief Description	Estimated Duration	Main Outputs
1	Documentary Investigation on Salentine Tobacco Workers	Critical analysis of archival sources (songs, interviews, images) and collection of new testimonies to build a gender-sensitive narrative corpus.	12 hours	- Thematic report - New interviews recorded to be added to the archive
2	Voices Turned Digital: Rewriting the Story of Tobacco Workers Using Today's Tools	Creative transformation of stories into digital products (podcast, video, interactive map) through technical workshops and practical exercises. (Transmedia storytelling)	12 hours	- Multimedia kit (3 formats) - Content for social media
3	From Stories to Routes: Transforming the Memories of Tobacco Workers into Touristic Experiences	Design and prototyping of physical/digital experiential routes based on emerging narratives, with a focus on sustainability and participation.	12 hours	- Illustrative route model - Maps - Audio demo

Figure 3 – Design of the Community Digital Storytelling Workshop

During the first module, the work will begin with the sources, initiating a process of becoming “archivists.” The topic of tobacco culture will be introduced by experts, who will show the students the “Culture of Tobacco” Archive, its organisation, and how it can be accessed and updated. Subsequently, the students will explore the Archive, gathering and cataloguing all materials related to the figure of the tobacco workers, while also identifying key themes such as the hardships of night work, solidarity among women, and forms of silent protest.

The Archive holds numerous resources related to this subject. Students will be able to read and analyse some texts, such as Annibale Elia’s 2012 volume *Racconti della*

Lampara, which contains the story "Tabacchine"³, focused on the story of Rocco and his wife Assunta, a tobacco sorter. The woman recounts her childhood, recalling the races through the rows of tobacco plants and the stories told while threading tobacco leaves, as well as the mistreatment suffered by some tobacco workers at the hands of the masters, to whom they were forced to submit in order not to lose their jobs. This is a poignant story that can be used as a starting point to gather phrases and images, which could then be linked to moments from more contemporary local interviews, for example, with grandmothers who worked in tobacco factories and modern female agricultural entrepreneurs. Meetings could also be arranged with the authors of the selected sources to facilitate discussion⁴. These resources will contribute to reflecting and generating ideas for the subsequent modules' development.

The second module will focus on transforming the sources explored and the testimonies collected into a digital language, employing the methodology of transdigital storytelling. During this phase, students will be called upon to choose the most suitable expressive modes for conveying the collected stories, through the creation of podcasts that intertwine the voices of tobacco workers with contemporary sounds, documentary-style videos that overlay historical images with current locations, and the co-design of interactive maps containing the produced materials⁵. During the workshops, discussions will take place on how to authentically represent the female figures at the heart of the narratives, avoiding stereotypes and maintaining respect for the sources, even through digital tools such as TikTok or Instagram. For example, short videos in Reel format could be

³ <https://www.archivifabbricarearmonie.it/cultura-tabacco/tutti/tabacchine-1860/> (last access 29-04-2025).

⁴ A participatory discussion could be initiated on the figure of Lucia Malinconico, who fought for the recognition of women's labor rights: <https://www.archivifabbricarearmonie.it/cultura-tabacco/tutti/lucia-malinconico-delegata-della-lega-delle-tabacchine-si-e-battuta-per-il-riconoscimento-dei-diritti-del-lavoro-femminile-1811/> (last accessed 29-04-2025), and of Cristina Conchiglia, involved in the emancipation of female workers: <https://www.archivifabbricarearmonie.it/cultura-tabacco/tutti/cristina-conchiglia-una-delle-piu-prestigiose-combattenti-per-lemancipazione-operaia-femminile-1804/> (last accessed 29-04-2025).

⁵ In this activity, the Archive offers a repository of resources such as the piece Sentiti tabacchine, <https://www.archivifabbricarearmonie.it/cultura-tabacco/tutti/sentiti-tabacchine-1829/> (last accessed 29-04-2025).

made, contrasting the experiences of a tobacco worker from the 1950s with those of a contemporary local entrepreneur. At the end of the process, each group will present its own “narrative package,” designed for a broad and accessible audience.

The third module will be dedicated to the presentation of the narratives created through a participatory co-design process of itineraries. The students involved in the project will lead this phase, aiming to engage a wider audience: the local community and particularly their peers who did not participate in the initial activities. In this way, other young people will contribute to the narrative packages already developed.

Each module will last approximately three months, with the final phase of experimentation and public presentation scheduled at the end of an overall cycle of 9-12 months, depending on the scale and complexity of the activities.

5. Phygital Heritage: Cultural Itineraries in Augmented Reality Tracing the Tobacco Cultivation

The second educational proposal focuses on the design of phygital itineraries for the exploration of the territory. The itineraries are conceived as opportunities to enhance the territory, its knowledge, and its enjoyment under a different light one that highlights the lived experiences and stories related to tobacco cultivation. They will promote reflection and participation regarding the fate of these places, with particular attention to disused buildings, which represent significant nodes in the collective memory and local cultural landscape. An important outcome of this initiative is also to prompt a critical reflection on the future of abandoned spaces, their recovery, and repurposing.

The project plans to create two thematic itineraries: The Tobacco Factories: History and Tobacco Industry in Salento and A Journey Through Folk Traditions; Tobacco and the Culture of Salento, based on a georeferenced documentary selection, following criteria of:

- historical relevance, to ensure the connection with the memory of the places and the socio-economic transformations of the area;
- cultural and symbolic significance, capable of triggering emotional and identity-based connections;
- accessibility and narrative potential, to enable effective augmented and participatory engagement.

Itinerary 1 — The Tobacco Factories: History and Tobacco Industry in Salento

This itinerary is dedicated to rediscovering the main historical factories and manufacturing sites associated with tobacco processing, a key aspect of Salento's economic and cultural history. It follows a route through places that preserve and narrate the region's industrial memory. Resources used include: La Fabbrica Gentile di Campi Salentina⁶, La Casa del Tabacco a Vitigliano⁷, L'archeologia industriale delle fabbriche in Puglia⁸, Le fabbriche del tabacco in Italia⁹.

Itinerary 2: A Journey Through Folk Traditions - Tobacco and the Culture of Salento

This itinerary unfolds through emblematic sites that reveal the anthropological dimensions of tobacco culture in Salento, emphasizing the deep connections between the landscape, agricultural practices, and collective memory. Along the route, participants will encounter stories of everyday life, traditional knowledge, and forms of labor and solidarity that have shaped the region's history. Key sources include Reliquie di un tempo di fatiche¹⁰, Sta Terra di Erminio Giulio Caputo¹¹, Il

⁶ <https://www.archivifabbricarearmonie.it/cultura-tabacco/tutti/la-fabbrica-gentile-la-fabbrica-museo-delle-tabacchine-1328/> (last accessed 29-04-2025).

⁷ <https://www.archivifabbricarearmonie.it/cultura-tabacco/tutti/salento-la-casa-del-tabacco-a-vitigliano-1080/> (last accessed 29-04-2025).

⁸ <https://www.archivifabbricarearmonie.it/cultura-tabacco/tutti/larcheologia-industriale-e-le-fabbriche-del-tabacco-in-puglia-1885/> (last accessed 29-04-2025).

⁹ <https://www.archivifabbricarearmonie.it/cultura-tabacco/tutti/larcheologia-industriale-e-le-fabbriche-del-tabacco-in-puglia-1885/> (last accessed 29-04-2025).

¹⁰ https://www.archivifabbricarearmonie.it/cultura-tabacco/?s=chiarello+&et_pb_searchform_submit=et_search_proccess&et_pb_include_posts=yes&et_pb_include_pages=yes (last accessed 29-04-2025)

¹¹ <https://www.archivifabbricarearmonie.it/cultura-tabacco/tutti/sta-terra-1865/> (last accessed 29-04-2025).

Consorzio agrario del Capo di Leuca¹², Installazione “Fumeremo Popolari¹³”, Tabacco e migrazioni contadine nel Salento¹⁴, Le Tabacchine di Tricase¹⁵, Visioni del Sud¹⁶, Otała Ttorna-Pippina Guida¹⁷.

The project is structured around three operational axes:

- Documentary and interpretive – focusing on critical and creative analysis of archival sources, from a narrative and participatory perspective.
- Educational and formative – developed through intergenerational workshops designed to transmit memory and foster the construction of shared meanings.
- Design and territorial enhancement – aimed at creating physical itineraries enriched with AR content, mapped through QR codes and RFID tags.

The selected locations include historical buildings, former manufacturing sites, productive landscapes, and collective spaces, chosen for their emblematic value and transformative potential.

The target groups for the project are individuals over 60, young people, educators, cultural and social operators, staff from schools, libraries, associations, territorial agencies, and visitors. Participation will be facilitated through:

¹² <https://www.archivifabbricarearmonie.it/cultura-tabacco/tutti/fumeremo-popolari-il-consorzio-agrario-cooperativo-del-capo-di-leuca-1902-1938-2-1830/> (last accessed 29-04-2025).

¹³ <https://www.archivifabbricarearmonie.it/cultura-tabacco/tutti/installazione-fumeremo-popolari-foto-1596> (last accessed 29-04-2025).

¹⁴ <https://www.archivifabbricarearmonie.it/cultura-tabacco/tutti/tabacco-e-migrazioni-contadine-nel-salento-497/> (last accessed 29-04-2025).

¹⁵ <https://www.archivifabbricarearmonie.it/cultura-tabacco/tutti/storie-dal-salento-le-tabacchine-di-tricase-1534/> (last accessed 29-04-2025).

¹⁶ <https://www.archivifabbricarearmonie.it/cultura-tabacco/tutti/storie-dal-salento-le-tabacchine-di-tricase-1534/> (last accessed 29-04-2025).

¹⁷ <https://www.archivifabbricarearmonie.it/cultura-tabacco/tutti/otala-ttorna-pippina-pippi> (last accessed 29-04-2025).

- Collaboration with educational institutions, public libraries, senior centres, associations, and cultural hubs.
- Public events and integrated communication campaigns (both online and offline) to promote the initiative.

The workshops will predominantly take place at the Fabbricare Armonie association's headquarters, but will also be held at other significant locations within the territory.

Based on these educational and didactic criteria, two thematic itineraries have been defined.

Both itineraries will be made accessible in a phygital format, thanks to an interactive map developed specifically for the area. Visitors will be able to explore the paths through mobile devices, accessing multimedia content that can be activated on-site via QR codes and RFID technology. Each stop on the route will feature a QR code granting access to digital materials—such as audio, video, texts, and images—designed to enrich the sensory, narrative, and interpretive experience of the local cultural heritage. Additionally, RFID technology will be used at specific strategic points to activate further content or personalised interactions, offering a more dynamic and immersive experience.

5.1 Project Phases

The project is structured into three sequential operational modules, designed to promote an approach that fosters collaboration and ensures a high degree of replicability.

Module 1 – Exploration of the Archive and Retrieval of Local Memories

In this initial phase, participants are guided through a critical and creative analysis of the selected contents of the "La Cultura del Tabacco" Archive, through workshop activities that stimulate active and critical exploration of the sources. Each participant explores the materials individually, responding to guiding questions to reflect on the meanings and emotions evoked by the contents, noting them down. Subsequently, each participant develops an experiential logbook, a digital collection documenting their journey and personal reflections, integrating texts, images, archival materials, and multimedia content. At the end of this individual phase, participants gather in small groups to discuss the observations made, sharing reflections and identifying recurring themes. This phase is supported by the

use of the Padlet platform. It is a collaborative digital tool that allows participants to organise and visualise ideas in real time, ultimately leading to the creation of a thematic interactive map, shared with the key thematic areas to be developed.

Module 2 – Design of Narrative and Digital Pathways

In this module, participants, starting from the map created in the first module, are divided into two working groups, each tasked with designing the site-specific narrative pathway related to the assigned thematic route. The first step is the selection of locations: each group reflects on which points of interest, among those proposed, have evoked significant emotions or reflections. Each chosen location becomes a "narrative node," a key element that guides the visitor towards discovering a broader story. Once the locations have been selected, the group constructs the narrative for the route. Next, they work on the design and creation of digital contents, such as video interviews, podcasts, and interactive maps, to enrich the narrative with multisensory experiences. These contents will be made accessible via QR codes and RFID tags. Finally, participants create a storyboard that integrates all the digital content, defining the narrative flow and methods of interaction with the digital materials. The entire project will be presented on an interactive map that will guide the development of the itinerary. The map will also be available online, thanks to the geolocation of the places and associated digital materials, enabling virtual-only experiences.

Module 3 – Experimentation, Validation, and Dissemination

The third module is dedicated to field experimentation of the two developed itineraries to verify their narrative coherence, communicative effectiveness, and the quality of the user experience. This phase represents a crucial moment to test the project in real contexts and gather useful insights for its refinement. The module concludes with a public dissemination event, during which the pathways, narrative map, and results from the experimentation are presented. This final moment serves a dual purpose: involving the local community in a public act of sharing and recognising the work carried out, and sparking new collective reflections on the issues addressed.

6. Evaluation of the Interventions and Expected Impacts

The implementation of the project proposals will provide a valuable opportunity to gather data and feedback from participants to improve the proposals themselves

and devise new actions within the “PAST” framework. This also leads us to consider what is significant to evaluate in this type of experience, so that the idea of PAST, as a device that animates and brings to life a cultural resource archive, can be modelled and made transferable and scalable.

Among the various perspectives to study, for the project *“From the Archive to the Territory: Community Digital Storytelling and the Stories of the Tabacchine”*, for example, from a training perspective, reference will be made to the *European Commission’s Key Competences for Lifelong Learning* (2018) model, evaluating digital literacy, entrepreneurial competence, and cultural awareness through semi-structured pre/post workshop questionnaires to assess changes in the acquisition of these skills. At the same time, at the community level, an experiential logbook tool may be adopted to analyse the students’ engagement in connection with involving their peers in the construction and enjoyment of sustainable narrative pathways. This tool, conceived as a self-reflective opportunity, will serve to record lived experiences, reflections, emotions, learnings, and perceptions of students throughout the different phases of the workshop, and as a source of data for the participatory evaluation of the project. The reflection will be guided by open-ended questions and narrative grids on key dimensions: personal involvement, peer collaboration, construction of the narrative pathway, and active engagement in terms of territorial sustainability (e.g., “How can my work have a positive impact on my territory?”).

For the project *Phygital Heritage: Augmented Reality Cultural Itineraries on the Traces of Tobacco Cultivation*, an integrated evaluation system has been designed, both qualitative and quantitative, aimed at monitoring and analysing the formative, participatory, and cultural processes:

- The logbook plays a fundamental role, documenting the individual journey and allowing for the collection of materials and narrative content.
- The observation grids are specifically designed to monitor the level of participation and the quality of collaborative dynamics.
- Focus groups to analyse the symbolic and emotional aspects of the participants regarding dimensions such as memory, sense of belonging, and intergenerational dialogue.
- Pre and post-intervention questionnaires to assess changes in digital and civic competences. These tools are in line with the principles of the Digital Competence Framework for Citizens (DigComp 2.1).

Finally, the interactive territorial map of the itineraries, integrable into the “La Cultura del Tabacco” Archive, will allow for the collection of objective data on visits, visit duration, and points of interest, thus enabling the evaluation of the

effectiveness and the level of engagement of the audience. This information will be useful for improving the Archive and for designing new PAST interventions. The expected impacts of the PAST actions are at multiple levels (Figure 4).

Impact Area	Phyigital Heritage: Cultural Itineraries in Augmented Reality on the trace of Tobacco Cultivation	From Archive to Territory: Community Digital Storytelling and Stories of the "Tabacchina"
Environmental Impact	Through the adoption of digital solutions, the proposal promotes low-impact tourism and conscious use of the territory, reducing anthropogenic pressure and encouraging slower, more environmentally respectful visitation modes.	Promotion of low-impact cultural practices through the use of digital technologies (QR codes, interactive maps, podcasts) that reduce physical materials and encourage sustainable forms of visitation.
Social and Cultural Impact	The proposal aims to strengthen the sense of belonging and social cohesion within local communities by promoting intergenerational dialogue and collaboration among students, residents and visitors. The participatory approach fosters shared reflection on the value of local cultural heritage, encouraging a deep connection to the territory.	Restoring agency to the figure of the 'tabacchina' and to women workers past and present: building transgenerational connections and dismantling gender stereotypes through shared storytelling.
Educational Impact	The initiative aims to develop transversal and digital skills in upper secondary school students, with a specific focus on digital literacy, participatory design, and heritage communication. The activities encourage active learning through student involvement in every stage of the process.	Development of skills in digital literacy, participatory design, oral history and communication; potential recognition as part of a Work-Based Learning Pathway (PCTO).
Touristic and Economic Impact	Phyigital AR itineraries enrich the local tourist offer with innovative methods of heritage engagement, attracting a diverse and sustainability-conscious audience. The use of immersive technologies revitalises interest in marginal territories, stimulating new forms of cultural economy.	Creation of story-based tourism routes with a women-centred approach: use of digital technologies to enable an accessible and sustainable tourist offer.

Figure 4. Impact of the two operations proposals

Socially and culturally, the initiative is expected to strengthen community cohesion, enhance collective memories, and promote youth and gender inclusion. From an environmental perspective, the initiative supports forms of sustainable tourism that reduce human impact and enhance local resources, as it adopts practices of slow and mindful engagement with the territory – such as exploration on foot or by bicycle – which avoid infrastructural interventions and safeguard the landscape balance. The integration of digital content helps enrich the visitors' experience without further consumption of physical resources: they use low-impact technological solutions (QR codes, podcasts, interactive maps) that replace traditional paper-based materials, reducing physical resource consumption and

promoting an accessible, contextualised, and updatable experience without additional environmental costs.

Finally, the integration of the two interventions feeds the "La Cultura del Tabacco" Archive with contemporary cultural and narrative resources, creating a bridge between the past and the present.

Conclusions

Based on the two proposals outlined and the results that will be gathered over time, PAST could establish a framework for educational initiatives that integrate the physical environment (the territory) with the digital realm. Through ongoing experimentation, this could lead to the development of original tools and solutions. If the project *Phygital Heritage: Augmented Reality Cultural Itineraries on the Traces of Tobacco Cultivation* yields positively evaluated outcomes, a potential next step could be the recognition of these itineraries within the European Cultural Routes network. Such recognition would represent an opportunity for the Salento area, promoting its inclusion in European cultural and tourist circuits and increasing its international visibility.

The success of the proposal "*From the Archive to the Territory: Community Digital Storytelling and the Stories of the Tabacchine*" would open the possibility of validating it as a Path for Transversal Competences and Career Guidance, as it focuses on developing competencies necessary for the formation of active and responsible citizens, capable of using information and communication technologies with awareness, collaborating with others, respecting shared rules, and transforming ideas into actions creatively, in an inclusive and participatory manner. The goal is to promote a reinterpretation of the territory, providing communities with a cultural tool that strengthens the sense of belonging, stimulates critical reflection, and generates new opportunities for project positioning within local development processes (Colazzo & Manfreda, 2019). In this way, cultural heritage becomes not only an object of preservation but also of social co-design.

Finally, from a scientific research perspective, the pilot proposal's experimentation will be essential for studying, developing, and validating a tool for assessing local identity, which involves the active collaboration of the community, built through a participatory methodology. The goal is not only to measure the existence or perception of territorial identity but to understand how it is constructed, transformed, and strengthened through shared cultural practices, such as digital

storytelling, archive care, and the co-design of sustainable tourism itineraries. For this tool to be effective, it must involve the active collaboration of the community, not merely as a recipient, but as a co-producer of meaning.

Author contributions

Despite the authors have shared the whole construction of the paper, Ada Manfreda has written paragraphs 1 and 2, Ilaria Fiore has written paragraphs 4, 6, and Conclusions, Caterina De Marzo has written the paragraphs Introduction, 3, and 5.

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