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Abstract of a doctoral dissertation

Zdzisława Elżbieta Niemczewska

**Adaptive reuse of historic buildings to commercial functions in the  
implementation of the sustainable development concept**

Supervisor: Agnieszka Niezgoda, PhD prof. UEP

Auxiliary supervisor: Justyna Majewska, PhD prof. UEP

Institute of International Economy

Poznań University of Economics

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## **Introduction**

The adaptive reuse of cultural heritage, including immovable ones in the form of historic buildings, for contemporary utility functions, seems to be necessary if they are to survive for future generations. The use of these resources for contemporary purposes when they lose their original function should contribute to the implementation of the concept of sustainable development on a local and regional scale. These facilities constitute an endogenous resource that, if used properly, has a chance to contribute to socio-economic development. At the same time, this use should also ensure the survival of historic buildings for future generations. It should be remembered that in the case of cultural heritage and the role it plays not only from the conservation point of view but also from the point of view of sustainable development (Afflet, 2014, p. 19), it is very important that the interference into the original substance is the smallest as possible to ensure that future generations receive those values that are shared by the present generation. Moreover, such activities should ensure the cultural sustainability of cultural heritage resources for a very long time, so that they have a chance to fulfil their role resulting from their conservation and historical importance.

## **Justification for the choice of the dissertation topic**

The choice of the topic of the dissertation included four basic elements resulting from the author's own observations and the critical analysis of the literature on the adaptation of immovable cultural heritage resources to contemporary utility functions:

1. Intensification of the adaptive reuse processes of historic buildings to contemporary purposes (Szmygin, 2011; Rouba BJ, 2014; p. 113; Liżewska, 2014, p. 83; Gawlicki, 2014, p. 130), particularly for commercial functions (hotels) for the multidimensional effects of such reuse from the perspective of various stakeholders and social groups. (Rouba R. 2010, Murzyn-Kupisz, 2010a, 2010b).
2. Challenges related to adaptive reuse of immovable cultural heritage objects in such a way as to bring about multi-dimensional benefits in accordance with the principles of sustainable development (Międzynarodowe Centrum Kultury, 2015; Throsby 2016).
3. Problems related to the adaptive reuse of immovable cultural heritage objects in such a way that these adaptations ensure the cultural sustainability of these objects (Szmygin, 2011, Gawlicki, 2016, s. 130; Rouba B.J., 2014; Throsby, 2005).



4. The need to apply a holistic approach to the assessment of reused historic assets and their impact on sustainable development, which is a research gap in world literature (Międzynarodowe Centrum Kultury, 2015; Bański, 2016, s. 9).

### Research problem and research gaps

A review of previous research carried out by the author of the dissertation showed that cultural heritage resources are studied mainly in terms of socio-economic aspects. They mainly indicate such effects as employment growth, the multiplier effect, the inflow of tourists or an increase in the incomes of the population, and these studies concern urban areas (Pilotti, 2011; Throsby, 2016, s. 81-86; Labadi, 2011; Murzyn-Kupisz, 2010 a, 2010b, 2012 ; Licciardi i Amirtahmasebi, 2012; Fiń, Jagodzińska i Sanetra-Szeliga, 2016; Mkadem, Zakriti i Nieuwenhuysen, 2017, s. 2-16; Gabrielli i Farinelli, 2017, s. 407-429; Kee, 2019).

The above observation is confirmed by the report of an international team associating a number of organizations and research institutions in Europe dealing with cultural heritage (Międzynarodowe Centrum Kultury, 2015, p. 29). The report stated that “despite the noticeable increase in the amount of research conducted in this field, there are still gaps in the spectrum of topics studied and the comprehensiveness of the analyses. It was also found that the positive impact of cultural heritage on various aspects of sustainable development is still too often taken as something obvious, which leads to a situation where even very basic data on a given investment is not collected ”(MCK, 2015, p. 290). The report also stressed that “a holistic, integrated approach to considering cultural heritage in research conducted so far has been rarely used. Rather, most of them focused on single-disciplinary research and looked at the impact of cultural heritage on economic development. **Therefore, it seems necessary to conduct holistic research that would measure the impact of cultural heritage in all areas of sustainable development** (MCK, 2015, s. 24). As emphasized by the authors of the above-mentioned report, based on such research, various stakeholders (property owners, managers, and local authorities) could assess whether the intended goals have been successfully achieved by investing in cultural heritage. This would allow for better use of funds allocated to cultural heritage and strengthen its role in strategic planning for a given area (MCK, 2015, s. 28-29). As emphasized by Bański (2016, p. 9), the conducted research also lacks studies on specific types of cultural heritage resources, their importance and the manner and level of their use.



The literature research conducted by the author of the dissertation shows that, in addition to the gaps indicated above, the research conducted so far also lacks a distinction between the commercial function assigned to historic objects and the non-commercial function - i.e., not focused on generating profits, which may be important when assessing the socio-cultural impact on local communities and maintaining the cultural sustainability of these facilities.

Therefore, the dissertation allows to fill in the **research gaps** in the areas of:

1. The impact of reused cultural heritage resources on sustainable local development using a holistic approach to the issue.
2. The impact of reused cultural heritage resources on sustainable local development in rural areas that do not have this type of resource in the form of larger clusters, such as in bigger towns or cities.
3. Perception of cultural value and at the same time the impact of cultural heritage on the socio-cultural development of society, distinguishing between users using the commercial, contemporary utility function of the facility and the local community in which the facility is located.
4. Factors inhibiting the impact of adaptive reuse of cultural heritage resources on sustainable local development of rural areas.

The considerations in the dissertation refer to one group of objects in terms of both historical and contemporary functions, i.e., a specific group of resources. These are **residential buildings** (palaces and manors) in the rural areas of the Greater Poland Voivodeship, **adapted to the hotel function**. This may be a contribution to the undertaking of further research on other groups of cultural heritage resources fulfilling contemporary utility functions.

### **Goals of the dissertation**

The main (exploratory) aim of the dissertation is to assess the impact of adaptive reuse of residential historic buildings to commercial utility function (hotels) on the implementation of the concept of sustainable local development in a holistic approach in the rural areas of the Greater Poland Voivodeship.



The holistic approach to the problem covers the following spheres: economic, social, environmental, cultural, as well as the possibility of ensuring cultural sustainability of the historic resource itself, which is distinguished from other resources by having a cultural value (Throsby, 2005). In research an author's tool called the "Matrix of Holistic Impact of Commercially Reused Cultural Heritage on Local Sustainable Development" (Niemczewska, 2021) was used. The **methodological** goal of the dissertation was to develop and verify this tool in the conducted research. As a background for the considerations in this work, the conclusions of the above-mentioned report (MCK, 2015) and elements of Throsby's concept (1997, 2005) concerning cultural heritage as cultural capital and a non-renewable resource were used. Throsby translated the concept of sustainable development from natural resources into cultural heritage resources.

### The hypotheses set out in the dissertation

The hypotheses set out in the dissertation are presented in Table 1.:

<b>Hypotheses</b>		
<b>Hypothesis 1</b>	<b>Hypothesis 2</b>	<b>Hypothesis 3</b>
<b>Preserving the cultural sustainability</b> of historic buildings adapted to the commercial utility function – hotels, determines the implementation of the concept of sustainable development in a holistic approach.	In the adaptive reuse of historic buildings to the commercial utility function - hotels, there are factors of an <b>exogenous</b> nature that inhibit the implementation of the concept of sustainable development in a holistic approach.	In the adaptive reuse of historic buildings to the commercial utility function - hotels, there are factors of an <b>endogenous</b> nature that inhibit the implementation of the concept of sustainable development in a holistic approach.
	<b>Supporting hypotheses for H2</b> <b>Hypothesis 2A:</b> In the socio-economic pillar there are exogenous inhibiting factors in the form of formal and legal regulations. <b>Hypothesis 2B:</b> In the environmentally-economic pillar there are exogenous inhibiting factors in the form of formal and legal regulations. <b>Hypothesis 2C:</b> In the environmentally-social pillar there are exogenous inhibiting factors in the form of formal and legal regulations.	<b>Supporting hypotheses for H3</b> <b>Hypothesis 3A:</b> In the socio-economic pillar there are endogenous inhibitory factors in the form of local conditions. <b>Hypothesis 3B:</b> In the environmentally-economic pillar there are endogenous inhibitory factors in the form of local conditions. <b>Hypothesis 3C:</b> In the environmentally-economic pillar there are endogenous inhibitory factors in the form of internal conditions of objects. <b>Hypothesis 3D:</b> In the environmentally-social pillar there are endogenous inhibitory factors in the form of local conditions.



		<p><b>Hypothesis 3E:</b> In the environmentally-social pillar there are endogenous inhibitory factors in the form of internal conditions of the objects.</p> <p><b>Hypothesis 3F:</b> There are endogenous inhibitory factors in the socio-cultural pillar in the form of the lack of additional functions that create cultural income.</p> <p><b>Hypothesis 3G:</b> In the socio-cultural pillar there are endogenous inhibiting factors in the form of the lack of involvement of local authorities in creating the cultural function of objects.</p> <p><b>Hypothesis 3H:</b> Preserving the cultural sustainability of objects is inhibited by the endogenous factor in the form of the inability to cover the costs related to conservation recommendations from the net profits in the previous period of the object operation.</p>
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Table 1. List of hypotheses formulated in the dissertation. Source: own study.

To achieve the research goals and confirm or reject the hypotheses, the following research tasks were defined:

1. Identification of the influence areas of the investigated commercial function of cultural heritage assets on local sustainable development by distinguishing the pillars of sustainable development and aspects of the impact in individual pillars based on literature research.
2. Development and validation of an author's measurement tool: "Matrix of Holistic Impact of Commercially Reused Cultural Heritage on Local Sustainable Development" allowing to determine how and to what extent the adaptation of a given object of immovable cultural heritage contributes to sustainable local development in a holistic approach.
3. Collecting qualitative data on the implementation of individual aspects of sustainable local development in a holistic approach.
4. Impact assessment of the studied historic buildings adapted for hotel purposes on sustainable local development and preservation of their cultural sustainability based on the data obtained on the basis of the research (using the proprietary measurement tool: "Matrix of Holistic Impact of Commercially Reused Cultural Heritage on Local Sustainable Development").
5. Identification of factors inhibiting the impact of the studied function on sustainable local development in a holistic approach in individual pillars of this development.



## 6. Verification of hypotheses and development of epistemological and application conclusions.

### **Research methods and tools applied**

The study includes research with the use of secondary and primary sources. Primary research was diagnostic. In secondary research, as a research method, a critical analysis of the literature in the field of sustainable development (considered as the modern paradigm of socio-economic development) was used, as well as immovable cultural heritage as a factor influencing various aspects of sustainable local development. The information obtained as a result of the secondary research allowed the author of the dissertation to distinguish the pillars of sustainable development and the aspects of impact in each of these pillars, which are influenced by the studied cultural heritage. Moreover, they allowed showing the gaps in the research carried out so far in the field of the holistic impact of cultural heritage on sustainable local development. In primary diagnostic research, both qualitative and quantitative (mixed) research methods were used.

The research tools used by the author were questionnaires of in-depth interviews and survey questionnaires. In-depth interview questionnaires were used in the case of researching the owners of historic buildings and representatives of local governments, and the survey questionnaires were used in the case of researching the socio-cultural impact of representatives of local communities and representatives of direct users (purchasing services in studied facilities). The data obtained with the use of the research tools were exploited by the author to determine the impact of the studied contemporary function of cultural heritage objects on sustainable local development in a holistic approach. To investigate the impact of the studied cultural heritage resources adapted to contemporary commercial functions - hotels on sustainable local development in a holistic approach and to achieve the methodological goal of the dissertation, the author's tool entitled "Matrix of Holistic Impact of Commercially Reused Cultural Heritage on Local Sustainable Development" was used (Niemczewska, 2021). This tool takes into account the study of the impact of a given heritage resource on the pillars of sustainable development and the sustainable use of the heritage resource itself, i.e., testing the level of ensuring its cultural sustainability.

## The results of the research

The primary research carried out by the author of this dissertation allowed for filling in the existing research gaps in the studied area. The exploratory results (realization of the main goal of the work) of the primary research conducted by the author on a sample of sixteen historic buildings adapted to the hotel function, located in the Wielkopolskie voivodeship, among the owners of the facilities, local government entities, representatives of local communities and guests using the services offered there are multidimensional.

First of all, the hypotheses put forward in the study were confirmed. Hypothesis 1 that the preservation of the cultural stability of historic buildings adapted to the commercial utility function - the hotel industry, determines the implementation of the concept of sustainable development in a holistic approach has been confirmed. In a half of the studied objects, the impact in the holistic approach did not occur and in all these cases the reason was the lack of preservation of the cultural sustainability of the objects. In all these cases, the lack of cultural sustainability was due to the inability to cover the costs of conservation recommendations with the profits of the previous period. There was no lack of socio-cultural impact on the local community, although this impact was in all cases smaller than on direct users. Details of the research are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The impact of the studied objects on the pillars of sustainable development.

Object	Impact on the socio-economic pillar	Impact on the environmentally economic pillar	Impact on the socio-environmental pillar	Impact on the socio-cultural pillar	Preservation of the cultural sustainability of the object	Sustainable development in holistic approach (5 elements $\neq$ 0)	Inhibitory factor SD in a holistic approach
Antonin	Strong (82%)	Significant (63%)	Moderate (50%)	Significant (74%)	Does not occur (PV=0)	Doesn't occur	Financial factor
Będlewo	Moderate (55%)	Significant (63%)	Moderate (58%)	Moderate (51%)	Moderate (71%)	Occurs	-
Biedrusko	Moderate (55%)	Significant (63%)	Moderate (58%)	Significant (74%)	Does not occur (PV=0)	Does not occur	Financial factor
Brodnica	Moderate (45%)	Significant (63%)	Moderate (58%)	Significant (67%)	Does not occur (PV=0)	Does not occur	Financial factor
Bugaj	Moderate (55%)	Moderate (73%)	Moderate (50%)	Weak (40%)	Does not occur (PV=0)	Does not occur	Financial factor
Dębogóra	Significant (54%)	Strong (81%)	Significant (67%)	Significant (61%)	Moderate (76%)	Occurs	-
Drzeczkowo	Significant (64%)	Strong (94%)	Strong (83%)	Weak (28%)	Moderate (64%)	Occurs	-
Iwno	Significant (64%)	Moderate (50%)	Moderate (42%)	Significant (74%)	Does not occur	Does not occur	Financial factor
Jeziorki	Moderate (55%)	Significant (75%)	Significant (67%)	Moderate (41%)	Moderate (66%)	Occurs	-
Kobylniki	Moderate (55%)	Significant (69%)	Moderate (50%)	Weak (37%)	Moderate (62%)	Occurs	-





Object	Impact on the socio-economic pillar	Impact on the environmentally economic pillar	Impact on the socio-environmental pillar	Impact on the socio-cultural pillar	Preservation of the cultural sustainability of the object	Sustainable development in holistic approach (5 elements $\neq$ 0)	Inhibitory factor SD in a holistic approach
Obrzycko	Significant (73%)	Significant (63%)	Moderate (58%)	Moderate (57%)	Does not occur (PV <sup>e</sup> =0)	Does not occur	Financial factor
Podstolice	Weak (36%)	Weak (31%)	Weak (25%)	Weak (35%)	Does not occur (PV <sup>e</sup> =0)	Does not occur	Financial factor
Rzęszkowo	Moderate (55%)	Significant (73%)	Moderate (58%)	Weak (34%)	Moderate (57%)	Occurs	-
Tarce	Moderate (55%)	Significant (75%)	Significant (67%)	Significant (65%)	Moderate (77%)	Occurs	-
Wąsowo	Significant (73%)	Significant (73%)	Moderate (50%)	Moderate (50%)	Doesn't occur (PV <sup>e</sup> =0)	Does not occur	Financial factor
Witaszyce	Moderate (45%)	Significant (63%)	Moderate (58%)	Moderate (43%)	Moderate (68%)	Occurs	-

Source: own study based on the conducted research.

Hypotheses 2 and 3 indicating that in the adaptive reuse of historic buildings to the commercial utility function (hotels), there are factors that inhibit the implementation of the concept of sustainable development in a holistic approach: exogenous (in the form of formal and legal regulations) and endogenous (in the form of local conditions and resulting from the internal conditions of the objects) were also confirmed, which is the result of confirmation of partial hypotheses no 2A, 2B, 2C, 3A, 3B, 3C,3D,3E,3D, 3E, 3F, 3G, 3H.

Graphical presentation of factors inhibiting the impact of the studied objects on sustainable local development in a holistic approach is shown in Figure 1.

## Factors inhibiting the impact of the studied objects on sustainable local development in a holistic approach

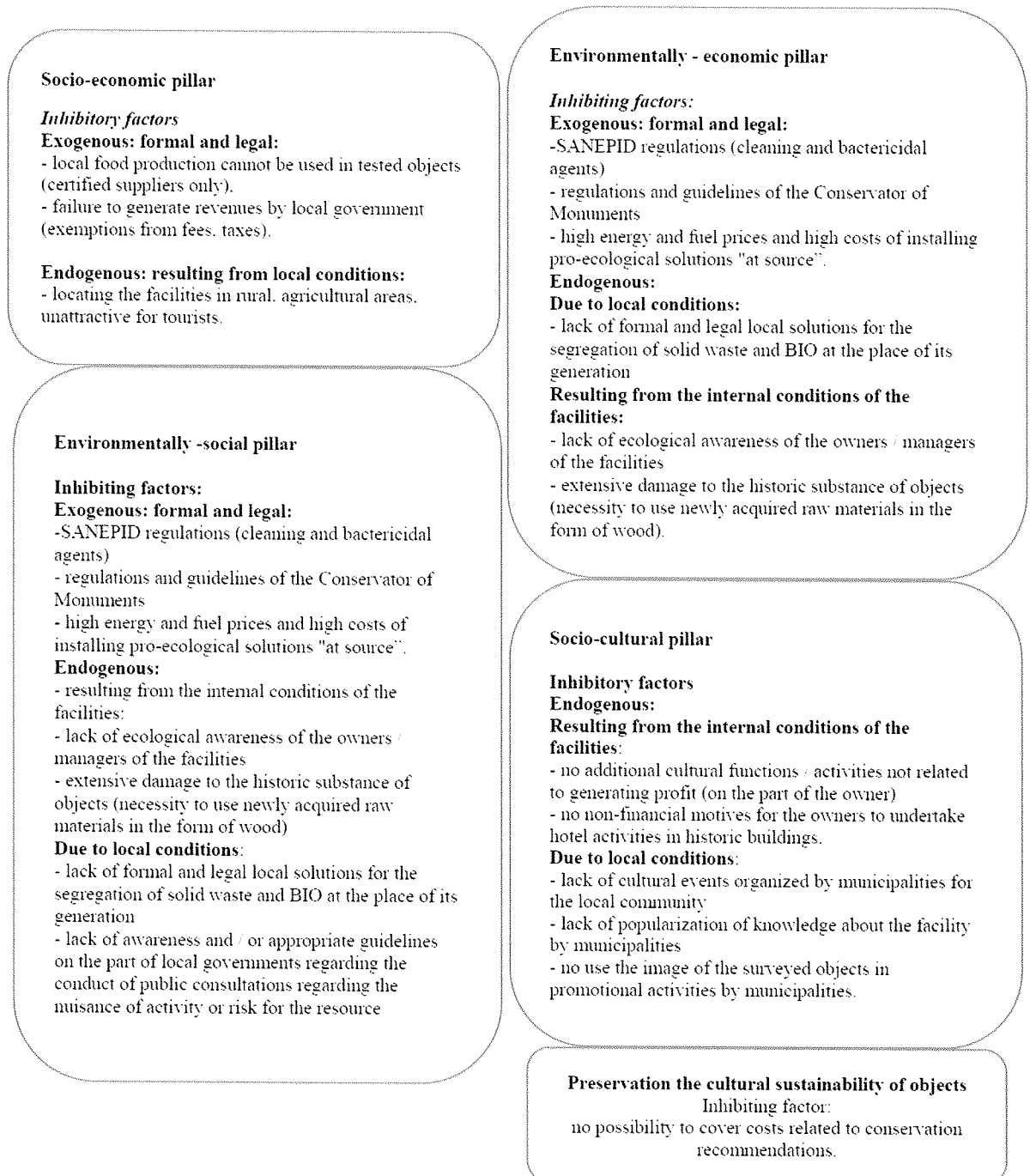


Figure 1. Factors inhibiting the impact of the studied objects on sustainable local development in a holistic approach.

Source: own study based on the conducted research.



The conducted research also showed that the commercial function (hotels) of the examined monuments generates **differences in the socio-cultural impact on direct users and local communities** that do not use the monument or use it in a limited way. This also has a direct impact on the preservation and level of cultural sustainability of the object, because the greater the socio-cultural impact in both studied groups, the higher the cultural sustainability of the historic assets. In addition, the author demonstrated that it is possible to determine the level of impact of the historic resources adapted to commercial utility functions on individual pillars of sustainable development in a holistic approach. The above-mentioned exploratory results are elements that fulfil the gaps in the research conducted so far.

The methodology applied by the author of the research with the use of the proprietary tool allowed to achieve the main goal of the work, i.e., the assessment of the impact of the adaptation of residential historic buildings to the commercial utility (hotels) in rural areas of the Greater Poland Voivodeship on the implementation of the concept of sustainable development in a holistic approach, which is also an achievement of a **methodological purpose** of the work. The applied methodology represents not only an original approach to the assessment of the impact of immovable cultural heritage assets on sustainable local development in a holistic way, but also a solution useful for practical application, which is **an application contribution** of the work.

Considering the current scientific discourse on the impact of cultural heritage on sustainable local development, as well as the issues of adapting cultural heritage for contemporary commercial utility functions while ensuring cultural heritage values, the results of the research carried out by the author allow for the conclusion that the contribution of cultural heritage in this development is possible and can be increased when the inhibitory factors are eliminated. Moreover, the author drew attention to the fact that maintaining the cultural sustainability of historic resources adapted to commercial utility functions should be the fifth element in the assessment of their holistic impact on local sustainable development. Until now, the impact of heritage on sustainable local development and sustainable use of heritage has been studied separately.

### **The practical and theoretical importance of the doctoral dissertation**

The tool proposed by the author can be used by local government authorities, owners of historic resources and, above all, by institutions responsible for heritage management or financing



projects related to its contemporary use. This tool and the analysis of the information obtained from the stakeholders make it possible to identify the reasons why the contribution level of the adaptation of historic objects to the individual pillars of sustainable local development is low or only moderate. This allows for taking appropriate steps to be taken to increase this impact, and hence to ensure the cultural sustainability of these historic assets. Studying the cultural impact in two different groups: direct users and the local community (which is innovative in the perception of cultural value creation by heritage used for commercial purposes and socio-cultural development), could contribute to a different way of measuring the impact of cultural heritage and its contribution in socio-cultural development. According to the author of the dissertation, these differences should also be considered in research on ensuring the cultural sustainability of immovable heritage, which is used for commercial purposes. The research results obtained by the author in this area fill the gap in the research conducted so far and constitute the basis for practical application.

### **Research limitations**

In the holistic approach proposed by the author and using the author's "Matrix of Holistic Impact of Commercially Reused Cultural Heritage on Local Sustainable Development", it is not possible to include very detailed quantitative data due to the need to simplify the research.

### **Possibilities of developing research.**

The research conducted by the author is the basis for further analyses of the impact of adaptive reuse of cultural heritage on local sustainable development in a holistic approach. Research should also cover other contemporary functions assigned to historic buildings, such as nursing homes, schools, orphanages, or facilities transformed into offices or company headquarters. Such research would also reveal a broader spectrum of aspects of sustainable development that are affected by cultural heritage, as each different function can create a different impact on different aspects. For example, a historic building adapted to the function of a nursing home for the elderly will have a different impact on socio-cultural aspects, because such houses must ensure the safety of residents and access to them for local communities and visitors becomes practically impossible. In the long run, this may result in a lower or no socio-cultural impact on communities. Therefore, in-depth research would make it possible to indicate which functions have the best impact on local



sustainable development in a holistic perspective and determine which factors inhibit or strengthen this impact. For each function given, these factors will be different.

The research on the holistic impact of adaptive reuse of immovable cultural heritage objects on sustainable local development should be preceded by more detailed research in some aspects of sustainable development, for example, creating the interest of tourists other than direct users in the case of objects adapted to commercial functions. This would make it possible to precisely determine not only whether a given aspect is achieved, but also to what extent. Analyses of the holistic impact of adaptive reuse of immobile cultural heritage resources could then be more precise.



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