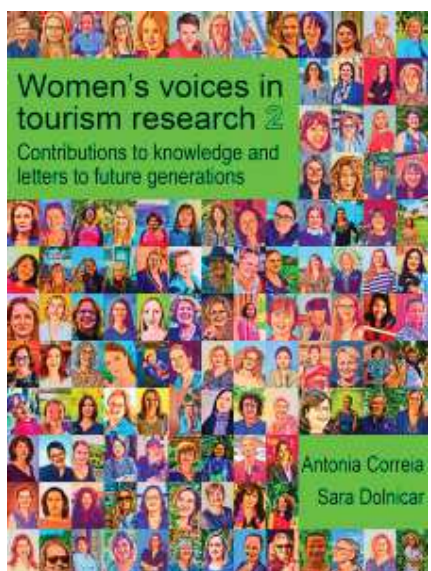


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The University of Queensland, St Lucia QLD, Australia

29. GIVING PLACES NEW LIFE BLENDING CULTURE, CREATIVITY AND TOURISM - Contributions by Maria Della Lucia

[*My letter to future generations of women academics in tourism*](#) describes the key points on my research journey. The mountain village where I grew up – its natural environments, industrious communities, cultural heritage, and history of emigration – has influenced my life, and my research, profoundly. Today, the valley is part of the Dolomites UNESCO WHS, with an economy which combines the area's tradition of artisanal ice cream with nature-based and sports tourism, and includes a company producing both components and finished products in the luxury eyewear sector. The valley's cultural heritage retains clear traces of its primary industries: forestry, zootechnics, mountain agriculture and mining. Under the Venetian Republic, and until the end of the 19th century, the steel industry dominated its economy, with blast and smelting furnaces and fusinèle that produced countless tons of tools and nails. In the mid-19th century, people started to leave the valley, first to the cities of Italy, where they worked as street vendors, and then, between the world wars, to Europe (Austria and Germany in particular) to produce and sell artisanal ice cream. The community still sees these seasonal emigration flows that resulted in the valley and nearby areas becoming places of origin not only of artisanal ice cream making professionals, but also areas where businesses specialized in their supply-chain agglomerate.

Because of this imprinting, my interest in and commitment to local development have informed my research since my BA thesis and my PhD in Economics and Management. The primary focus has been the study of the evolving drivers and models of local development from a disciplinary perspective inspired by the cross-fertilization of (apparently) separate research fields that, address new challenges and scenarios – including responsibility, sustainability, value co-creation and humanism on the real-virtual continuum. My aim has been to understand and detect the *new in the old* and the forces at play in our social and economic lives and landscape. Along the way, my research path widened in scope and grew increasingly deeper, leading to the uncovering of what “I don't know” and the reasons why I don't. Today, I can detect in my contribution to the field in different periods of my research the evolution of my “I don't know” and the associated reasons why within my understanding and seeing of the new in the old.

Community-type tourism destinations through the lenses of local development and industrial district

My early research extended the well-established constructs and methodologies used in local development (Pyke et al., 1991; Saxenian, 2002) and industrial district research (Becattini, 1989) to community-type tourism destinations (Flagestad & Hope 2001). The *new in the old* has been my interpretation of community-type destinations as a form of local development where local systems specialize in services instead of manufacturing goods. In such development, it is the territory that shapes not only the local organization of production (concentration and specialization) but also the ecosystem's coordination mechanisms. The latter emerge out of soft factors, including cultural identity, social capital, and tacit knowledge (Della Lucia, 2006). My research confirmed that the community-type destinations in the Dolomites that may be assimilated to industrial districts correspond to territories that are, historically, Ladino, and have a strong ethnic, cultural, and linguistic identity. This largely explains the presence of both industrial and tourist districts in these areas, including the valleys (like mine!) that specialized in ice cream making (and its supply chain). It has

also inspired me to endeavour to better understand the relationships between different drivers of local development (Della Lucia & Franch, 2017).

From tourism development to culture-led development

I use a wide-ranging interpretation of culture to reconcile the different drivers of local development. Indeed, the cultural and creative industries (KEA, 2006) encompass an array of sectors producing both cultural (heritage and cultural industries) and non-cultural goods (creative industries and ICTs). These sectors are constantly evolving, are country and place-specific, and develop extensive positive externalities across the economy, particularly with tourism (Della Lucia, 2015), the evolution of which they shape (Della Lucia et al., 2016). Here, my *new in the old* has been the interpretation of local development as a continuum between culture, creativity, and tourism and interrelated input-output chains (and social interactions) whose manifestations at the local level result from the combining of heritage and traditions of production with innovation. Intersectoriality in cultural, creative and tourism industry agglomerations in Italy (Della Lucia & Segre, 2017) reveals both traditional monocultures and signs of innovation. The specialized sectors of Italian industrial districts (the so-called material culture that corresponds to *made-in-Italy*), and the (cultural) tourist monoculture of many areas have been, and still are, the biggest generators of value, exploiting Italy's rich cultural heritage and variety of local products. On the other hand, the agglomeration of cultural heritage, content (movies, television, publishing) and the information industry (ICTs) is an important sign of diversification in local development; drivers of change can leverage their complementarities to foster cultural and social innovation.

From culture-led development to regeneration

Researching place regeneration through culture-led development gave me the opportunity to investigate why and how place-remaking occurs. In the – often prolonged – transitional stage between placemaking and remaking, places become *spaces of indecision* – stuck in marginalization, dependent on outdated development models that are either still in crisis or about to be so (industrial cities or rural areas). Reconciling *the old* (tradition/conservation) with *the new* (recovery/adaptive reuse/reinvention) is a manifestation of the *new in the old*, exemplified by some successful culture-led regeneration processes (Della Lucia & Trunfio, 2018). On the one hand, this interface is enabled by *diversity and social inclusion* in decision-making on the part of agents of change who build up, activate, and hybridize social capital, and by implementing governance models that incorporate] (or unlock) this participatory approach. On the other, *cultural and social innovation* enables this interface by attracting or educating people, stimulating creative thinking and creating playgrounds for creativity – physical, social and virtual spaces where they can encounter and interact. For this to happen, path dependence must end, and new ways of living, working, and experiencing can then begin to be experimented with. Many of these processes have been bottom-up, enabled by actors/communities who have taken responsibility and acted, thereby contributing extensively to the project of “Imagining and building a better future and a more desirable place to live in”.

Inspired by this individual and social responsibility, I ended up re-framing *the new in the old* in local development and regeneration through the lens of *Humanistic Management* (to be continued).

Written by Maria Della Lucia, University of Trento, Italy

[Read Maria's letter to future generations of tourism researchers](#)

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