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Design of a wellbeing-based framework for territorial appraisal and circular cultural economies

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Design of a wellbeing-based framework for territorial appraisal and circular cultural economies

This paper explores how the field of place-based appraisal and land economics is shifting from focusing mainly on market-based values of places with high human and activity densities to a broader and multi-faceted approach that explicitly considers human and territorial wellbeing. Traditional welfare assessment measures like GDP reflect economic growth, but neglect important environmental, cultural, and social factors that shape the quality of places. We propose a new framework for territorial appraisal that addresses spatial value in a more holistic way by breaking it down into economic, environmental, cultural, and social components, and then reconnecting them through an integrated recomposition approach. The paper uses new concepts, in particular circular cultural economies and 'detouristification', as regenerative strategies that rebalance sustainable growth, tourism, culture, and land use, showing how places can create new value by reimagining culture and using land in different ways, while strengthening transparent and participatory governance. Digital tools like geospatial models, digital twins, and visual dashboards support this process by improving transparency, participation, and learning across scales and over time. In this framework, wellbeing is not only a human goal, but also a condition for sustainable territorial development. The approach helps policymakers, planners, and appraisers move beyond the yardstick of GDP and support places where economy, culture, and society flourish sustainably, with appraisal guiding both evaluation and renewal.

1. Setting the Scene

In recent decades, the discipline of appraisal and land economics has developed far beyond its traditional focus on financial return and property valuation. Land is no longer understood only as a commodity, but as a multifunctional system that supports environmental integrity, social inclusion, and cultural identity (Fusco Girard et al., 2023; Neyret et al., 2023). This broader understanding has challenged conventional economic metrics, such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which capture economic activity, but not necessarily human and territorial wellbeing. As noted by the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission, GDP fails to measure environmental sustainability, social justice, and quality of life (Stiglitz et al., 2009). The growing recognition that prosperity cannot be measured solely through production and consumption has given rise to a new generation of evaluative models - models that link economic performance with wellbeing, social cohesion, and sustainability (OECD, 2020; UNDP, 2020; Saunders and Luukkanen et al., 2022; Custodio et al., 2023; Jansen et al., 2024), placing wellbeing at the core of territorial value creation rather than treating it as a secondary outcome. This holds for both visitors and residents.

At the same time, the relationship among tourism, local culture, and land use has become a central topic of interest for both scholars and policymakers. Tourism contributes substantially to local and national economies, yet it often creates tensions between visitors, residents, and ecosystems due to congestion, seasonality, and pressure on local resources (Oklevik et al., 2019). The challenge lies in finding a balance where tourism strengthens rather than reduces local

wellbeing, heritage, and the natural environment. This balance is particularly essential in regions characterized by cultural landscapes, historical assets, and fragile ecosystems - where the pressure of mass visitation must be met with strategic deconcentration, adaptive reuse, and sustainable mobility (Bramwell and Lane, 2011; Romão and Neuts, 2017). In this context, emerging ideas such as circular cultural economies and detouristification show how tourism and culture can be reorganized to revitalize places rather than harm them.

Meanwhile, emerging research has also emphasized the importance of digital and spatial intelligence in territorial management. Technologies such as digital twins, geovisualization, and participatory data platforms enable planners and communities to explore future development scenarios, monitor impacts, and evaluate spatial – urban and regional – decisions in real time. These technologies promote transparency, stakeholder participation, and data-driven governance (Batty, 2018; Brodny and Tutak, 2025; Bugaj et al., 2022; Kourtit, 2019; Kourtit et al., 2012). Such tools can integrate quantitative indicators (e.g., economic growth, land efficiency) with qualitative dimensions (e.g., sense of place, social equity, cultural attachment), moving toward evidence-based yet human-centered territorial appraisal, supporting circular, participatory, and wellbeing-oriented decision making for spatial attractiveness.

These shifts call for a new methodological and conceptual synthesis. The key question is not only how much value scarce land generates in market terms, but also how land contributes to the wellbeing of people and places – economically, socially, culturally, and ecologically. Appraisal today must therefore be reinterpreted as a multidimensional, integrative, and adaptive process that connects spatial planning, land use evaluation, and wellbeing assessment in line with recent wellbeing economy transitions (Barton et al., 2021; Costanza et al., 2014), while explicitly recognizing the regenerative potential of culture, heritage, and tourism in authentic places.

This paper aims to develop a novel conceptual and methodological framework for sustainable territorial appraisal that reconciles economic valuation with human wellbeing. It explores how economic appraisal, cultural value creation, and digital innovation can converge into a coherent approach for the governance of land, cultural and tourism systems. The challenging question is: How can appraisal and land economics adapt toward models that balance economic growth, cultural identity, and human wellbeing within sustainable territorial systems? Within this question, new concepts like circular cultural economies and detouristification policies may provide a framework for understanding how territorial value can be redistributed, renewed, and made more equitable. By addressing this question, the paper seeks to contribute to the broader debate on the transformation of economic and territorial evaluation - one that moves beyond GDP and toward a wellbeing-based economy of place. To understand how such a balance can be conceptually and methodologically achieved, the following section reviews the evolution of approaches that integrate local sustainability, culture, and wellbeing within the field of land and tourism appraisal.

This study is organized as follows. After an exposition on new wellbeing concepts (Section 2), the core idea of decomposition analysis is explained in Section 3. Next, Section 4 zooms in on circular cultural places and spatial detouristification, while Section 5 offers an outlook.

2. From Economic Value to Complex Wellbeing

The study of appraisal and land economics has long been anchored in the tradition of monetary valuation, emphasizing the measurable market value of land, property, and investment. This perspective, while essential for financial and fiscal analysis, captures only a partial view of the wealth of territories. Over time, scholars have increasingly recognized that economic performance indicators - particularly GDP - fail to reflect the full spectrum of values that determine the quality and resilience of places (Nijkamp, 1980; Stiglitz et al., 2009). These include social cohesion, environmental quality, cultural vitality, and overall wellbeing, all of which shape the long-term sustainability of urban and rural systems, suggesting that territorial value must be interpreted as multidimensional and relational rather than purely financial.

2.1 From Classical Appraisal to Multidimensional Value

Traditional land appraisal methods rest upon neoclassical economic assumptions: value arises from scarcity, productivity, and utility. Meanwhile, as landscapes and cultural assets became entangled with social and environmental concerns, the discipline began to shift from an economic efficiency model toward a multidimensional value framework. This transition aligns with the rise of ecosystem services thinking in land valuation (Coscieme et al., 2024). This transition was driven by the growing understanding that land performs not only economic, but also ecological and social functions – providing ecosystem services, sustaining communities, and preserving identity. Approaches such as Cost–Benefit Analysis (CBA) and Hedonic Pricing Models (HPM) were extended to incorporate non-market values, including environmental amenities, heritage significance, and accessibility (Montero and Fernández-Avilés, 2014; OECD, 2018). Yet, these quantitative tools still faced the challenge of integrating intangible dimensions of human experience. This led to a broader evaluative logic

emerged, positioning wellbeing as the unifying metric of sustainable territorial value (Delahais et al., 2021; Frey and Stutzer, 2010), and opening the door to appraisal models that explicitly connect economic functioning with cultural meaning and social justice.

2.2 The Emergence of Wellbeing Economics

The concept of wellbeing, understood as the capability of individuals and societies to prosper, represents a major reorientation in economic thought inspired by Amartya Sen's Capability Approach (Sen, 1999). Rather than focusing only on material wealth, wellbeing economics emphasizes subjective satisfaction, social relationships, and quality of life as essential indicators of performance (Connolly and Lindh, 2025; Diener and Ryan, 2009; Frey and Stutzer, 2002; Hoogerbrugge and Burger, 2018; Skevington and Böhnke, 2018; Veenhoven and Vergunst, 2014). The OECD and various national statistical agencies have incorporated wellbeing frameworks that complement GDP with measures such as health, education, environmental quality, and civic engagement. Within the context of land and tourism appraisal, wellbeing economics translates into evaluating how spatial policies, land-use transformations, and tourism development enhance or constrain human flourishing. This perspective links territorial capital with human capital, emphasizing the importance of inclusion, accessibility, and cultural continuity (Florida, 2014; Huggins and Thompson, 2017; Tóth, 2024; Tuan, 1977; Wolfram et al., 2016). The emerging notion of 'wellbeing of place' extends the economic focus beyond individual welfare to the collective conditions that sustain communities and ecosystems, creating a normative orientation for appraisal practice in both urban and natural areas.

2.3 Circular Economy and Complex Value Systems

The rise of the circular economy concept has provided a systemic foundation for integrating economic, social, and environmental values as promoted by the European Union's Circular Economy Action Plan (European Commission, 2015). Instead of linear growth models, circularity promotes resource efficiency, regenerative use, and intergenerational equity (Bayram and Greiff, 2023; Calisto Fryant, 2022; Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2015; Velenturf and Purnell, 2021). In this framework, value creation is not limited to financial gain, but includes complex, relational, and regenerative value flows. Recent work in cultural and urban economics (e.g., Alves et al., 2016; Bal et al., 2023; Corsaro, 2019; Smedlund et al., 2018; Stefanidou et al., 2024; Wulfert et al., 2024) has articulated the notion of 'complex value' – a composite of economic, ecological, social, and cultural components. This multidimensional conception positions culture as the foundation of sustainable development, shaping how people perceive, use, and conserve their surroundings (Fusco Girard and Gravagnuolo, 2025; Swanson and DeVereaux, 2017; Throsby, 2017). Cultural heritage and landscape are thus not static assets, but dynamic systems that develop alongside human creativity and collective wellbeing. Appraisal methodologies are beginning to reflect this complexity. Multicriteria Decision Analysis (MCDA), Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA), and Integrated Assessment Models (IAMs) enable the inclusion of both quantitative and qualitative indicators (Aigner and Chu, 1968; Charnes et al., 1978; Hollnaicher, 2025; Nijkamp and Suzuki, 2009; Suzuki et al., 2010). These techniques allow analysts to account for synergies and trade-offs among dimensions of value, creating a bridge between technical efficiency and human wellbeing and offering methodological support for circular cultural economies.

2.4 From Sustainable Tourism to Territorial Wellbeing

The attractiveness of culture-rich urban areas has created a large influx of visitors. Intensive tourism, however, may erode the wellbeing of residents. Tourism, traditionally assessed through visitor numbers and revenue, has become a testing field for wellbeing-oriented appraisal models. The literature on sustainable and cultural tourism highlights how the pursuit of economic benefit can conflict with residents' quality of life, environmental health, and the integrity of heritage sites (Brooks et al., 2023; Fusco Girard and Gravagnuolo, 2025; Kourtit et al., 2024; Luekveerawattana et al., 2025; UNWTO, 2023). Scholars such as Bramwell, Gössling, and Hall have demonstrated that stakeholder collaboration and governance are critical for balancing these competing objectives (see e.g., Bramwell and Lane, 2011; Gössling, 2002; Hall, 2011). In this context, the emerging concept of 'detouristification' proposes a spatial redistribution of tourism flows to mitigate overconcentration and strengthen local wellbeing (Back et al., 2025; Cocola-Gant, 2023; Kourtit et al., 2024; Lee et al., 2025; Lim et al., 2022; Sibrijns and Vanneste, 2021; Tomassini and Lamond, 2023). It emphasizes the need to evaluate tourism not only as an economic sector, but as a social-ecological system embedded in the territorial fabric. By doing so, it becomes possible to view tourism as an instrument of inclusive prosperity – one that supports cultural vitality and social

resilience rather than undermining them, and that reinforces the broader transition toward circular and regenerative territorial logics. Spatial re-distribution of tourist flows may then become a logical and necessary step (Lim et al., 2022).

2.5 Knowledge Gaps and Emerging Directions

Despite significant progress, existing appraisal frameworks still struggle to integrate human-centered wellbeing indicators into land and tourism economics systematically. Most studies remain discipline-specific, focusing on environmental efficiency, market valuation, or cultural impact in isolation. There is a growing need for integrated, data-informed, and participatory approaches capable of capturing the interdependence between people, places, and prosperity (Raymond et al., 2017). Recent advances in digital technologies – including spatial data infrastructures, digital twins, and visualization tools – offer unprecedented opportunities for such integration (Batty, 2018; Florido-Benítez, 2024; Kitchin, 2021; Liu et al., 2024; Rahmadian et al., 2023). They enable real-time monitoring, multi-scalar analysis, and co-design processes that democratize knowledge and enhance governance. The convergence of digital intelligence, cultural capital, and wellbeing economics thus marks a new frontier for territorial appraisal, laying the foundation for decomposition-based models that organize these diverse forms of value into coherent analytical layers. Building on these theoretical findings, the next section introduces a methodological framework that decomposes and reconnects the multiple layers of territorial value - economic, spatial, digital, and social - to operationalize wellbeing-oriented appraisal in practice.

3. The Decomposition Approach to Integrated Territorial Appraisal

3.1 The Decomposition Principle

Appraising land and territorial systems in the contemporary context require moving from static, single-criterion valuation toward dynamic, multi-layered evaluation. The decomposition approach provides a methodological foundation for this transition. The decomposition principle in complex decision-making was introduced by Herbert Simon (1962). By means of hierarchical logical subdivisions of a big complex system an analytical order can be created. This approach has turned out to be very practical in management, planning and design problems. It assumes that territorial systems are complex entities whose total value cannot be understood as a single outcome, but rather as the result of interactions among interdependent layers - economic, ecological, cultural, social, and technological. This perspective follows systems thinking and complex adaptive systems theory in spatial economics (Batty, 2013; Sikk and Carus, 2024). This approach allows analysts and planners to identify how different forms of value are created, exchanged, and restored within a territory, and how these flows collectively contribute to human and environmental wellbeing. The decomposition model thus becomes both an analytical tool and a governance framework, linking technical assessment with strategic, wellbeing-oriented decision making, and it helps show hidden interconnections between market performance, land use efficiency, stakeholder collaboration, and quality of life (Fusco Girard et al., 2005; Kourtit, 2021).

The decomposition principle has, in recent years, clearly shown its merits in spatial planning. A broad empirical illustration can be found in a study by Kourtit and Nijkamp (2018) on sustainable re-development of the complex Stockholm county, in which ecology, mobility, neighbourhood quality and participatory citizenship are simultaneously considered in a systematically decomposed model depicting the relevant urban area. Another application can be found in an interactive evaluation study on the re-vitalization of an old port area in Amsterdam (NDSM), in which old ship building industry, economic regeneration, cultural events and modern housing were managed from a systematic multidimensional policy perspective based on the decomposition principle (see Kourtit and Nijkamp, 2013). The operationalization of the decomposition approach calls for a logic regarding the complexity of the spatial system at hand, in which hierarchical and horizontal design have to be combined in one architecture.

The conceptual and operational logic of the decomposition model in spatial planning can be synthesized in the following framework in Figure 1, which illustrates how multiple layers of territorial value interact within an integrated, wellbeing-oriented appraisal system. As mentioned, this model has been tested in various places. It will now be explained in a series of stages in Subsections 3.2–3.7.

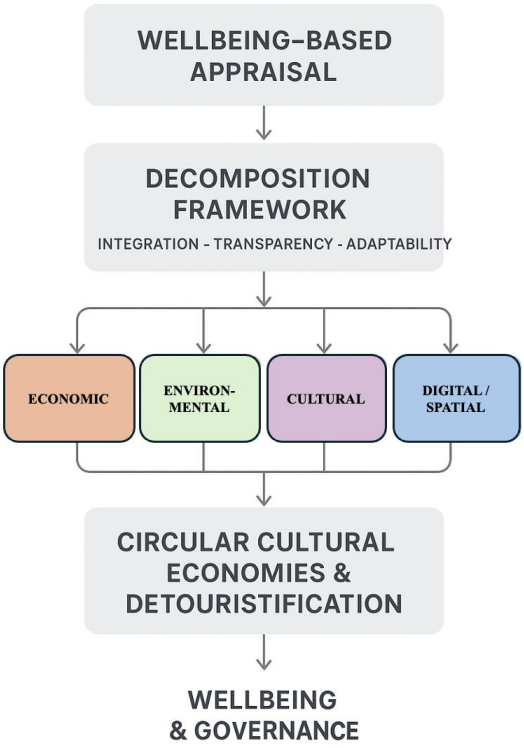

Figure 1. Conceptual architectural decomposition framework for wellbeing-based territorial appraisal.
Source: authors' own work.

This framework decomposes territorial value into five interdependent layers - economic, environmental, cultural, social, and digital/spatial - linked through the principles of integration, transparency, and adaptability. It provides the conceptual architecture connecting technical valuation and human wellbeing, transforming appraisal into a continuous, participatory, and learning-oriented system, capable of showing how value can be regenerated rather than only exploited. Clearly, this framework is not crafted in stone; it may be flexibly adjusted to specific planning issues, following the decomposition logic. The framework serves as the re-compositional methodological foundation for the wellbeing-based paradigm developed in the following section on circular cultural economies and detouristification, where the decomposition and recomposition logic becomes operational in practice. First, however, we will provide a few more elements of decomposition in spatial planning.

3.2 Principles of the Decomposition Approach

The decomposition framework rests on three core principles: *integration*, *transparency*, and *adaptability*.

- *Integration* acknowledges that no single variable or indicator can represent territorial value. Economic output, environmental resilience, and social equity must be assessed together to capture the multidimensional nature of sustainable wellbeing (Benczur et al., 2025; Costanza et al., 2016; OECD, 2020; Sarany and Chandrasekar, 2025), including cultural and digital dimensions that shape how places function and are experienced.
- *Transparency* demands that the appraisal process be open, participatory, and replicable. Evaluation criteria and data sources must be accessible to stakeholders - from local authorities to citizens and investors – strengthening mutual trust and accountability (Brezzi, et al., 2021; Innes and Booher, 2010). Transparency also strengthens social legitimacy, which is essential in contexts such as tourism, heritage reuse, and land redevelopment.
- *Adaptability* emphasizes the capacity of appraisal systems to progress with new data, societal priorities, and technological innovations. Territories are not static assets but living systems that require continuous re-evaluation as they change over time (Meadows, 2015; Peng et al., 2024). Adaptive appraisal, therefore, supports circular and regenerative development trajectories rather than linear growth models.

Through these principles, decomposition transforms traditional appraisal into a reflexive process — one that not only measures value but also stimulates learning and co-creation among actors (Kourtit, 2021).

3.3 Analytical Layers of Territorial Value

The decomposition approach operationalizes integrated appraisal by disaggregating territorial value into five analytical layers, each representing a distinct but interrelated dimension of performance:

- *Economic Layer* – assessing productivity, investment efficiency, and market performance while accounting for externalities such as congestion or land degradation (Acheampong and Opoku, 2023; Throsby, 2017).
- *Environmental Layer* – measuring ecological assets and sustainability indicators, including energy use, biodiversity, and carbon balance (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005).
- *Cultural Layer* – valuing heritage assets, creative capital, and identity-related attributes that contribute to a sense of place and long-term attractiveness (Fusco Girard, 2019).
- *Social Layer* – evaluating equity, inclusion, social cohesion, and wellbeing outcomes for residents and communities (Putnam, 2000).
- *Digital and Spatial Layer* – employing spatial analytics, visualization tools, and data infrastructures to integrate information across scales and time horizons (Batty, 2018; Kitchin, 2021).

Each layer provides a distinct perspective on the phenomenon concerned, but also gains importance only when interacting with the others. Their integration enables a holistic view of territorial performance – one where economic prosperity and human wellbeing are co-dependent outcomes (UN-Habitat, 2020), and where regeneration, circularity, and resilience can be explicitly assessed.

3.4 Operational Tools and Techniques

To translate the decomposition model into practice, a range of quantitative and qualitative tools can be applied. As mentioned above, several applications have demonstrated their operational and policy value. But next to conceptual architecture, empirical research tools are also needed. There is a variety of such supporting techniques which have proven their validity in practice. Examples are

- *Multicriteria Decision Analysis* (MCDA) and Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA) are used to evaluate the relative efficiency of regions, cities, or tourism systems across multiple criteria (Charnes et al., 1978; de Oliveira et al., 2023; Saaty, 2008), allowing comparison of trade-offs between economic gains and wellbeing outcomes.
- *Geospatial Modeling and Visualization* tools (such as GIS-based dashboards and 3D visualizations) enable dynamic exploration of spatial relationships, land use intensity, and accessibility (Goodchild, 2018).
- *Digital Twin Platforms* provide a virtual mirror of physical environments, integrating real-time data to test alternative planning or policy scenarios (Alvi et al., 2025; Kourtit et al., 2021).
- *Participatory and Co-Design Methods* facilitate stakeholder engagement, incorporating experiential knowledge and community preferences into the evaluative process (Friedmann, 2011; Healey, 2015).

It would be too space-demanding to describe all such applications in greater detail, but their relevance can be traced in urban planning fields like historical-cultural heritage planning, industrial brownfield planning, housing area design, and nature-based urban solutions. The combination of these methods allows the decomposition framework to function as a multi-actor laboratory, where technical assessment, local knowledge, and digital innovation converge (European Commission, 2020), offering a practical pathway toward wellbeing-based territorial governance.

3.5 Linking Decomposition to Wellbeing and Governance

A defining feature of this framework is the explicit linkage between appraisal and wellbeing. Traditional valuation metrics often treat social and environmental effects as externalities; here, they are recognized as core determinants of territorial performance. By disaggregating value flows, the decomposition model makes visible the trade-offs and synergies that shape wellbeing outcomes. For example, improving tourism revenues must be assessed in relation to housing affordability, environmental capacity, and residents' satisfaction. Similarly, the adaptive reuse of heritage assets can be appraised not only for its financial return but for its contribution to local pride, identity, and cultural continuity (Fusco Girard and Gravagnuolo, 2017). Governance structures play an important mediating role in this process. Multi-level and quadruple-helix governance models involving public institutions, private actors, academia, and civil society ensure that decisions reflect collective priorities (Carayannis and Campbell, 2012). The decomposition model thus acts as both an evaluative and a communicative platform: it transforms technical indicators into shared narratives about

wellbeing, inclusion, and sustainability, making appraisal an active instrument of territorial transformation rather than a passive reporting tool.

3.6 From Data Integration to Strategic Learning

A central methodological innovation in this approach lies in data integration and feedback learning. Territorial appraisal becomes a continuous cycle of observation, evaluation, and adaptation. The combination of open data infrastructures, visualization tools, and interactive dashboards enables policymakers and communities to interpret changes in real time. Such iterative 'learning-by-monitoring' cycles are foundational in adaptive governance (Armitage et al., 2009; van Assche et al., 2022). Through iterative learning, territories can self-correct and co-develop by adapting investment strategies, tourism management, and spatial planning in response to observed outcomes. This continuous feedback mechanism transforms appraisal from a static assessment into a strategic and anticipatory function, aligning short-term actions with long-term wellbeing objectives (De Vito and Taffoni, 2023; Senge, 1990), and directly supporting circular cultural and detouristification strategies.

3.7 Toward a Systemic Evaluation Paradigm

Ultimately, the decomposition approach reframes territorial appraisal as a systemic discipline that recognizes interdependencies among people, places, and policies. It aligns with the paradigm of integrated sustainability assessment (Halla et al., 2020; Ramos, 2019; Rotmans and van Asselt, 2001). It establishes a methodological foundation for linking quantitative precision with qualitative understanding, and economic efficiency with human wellbeing. The strength of this approach lies in its capacity to bridge the traditional divide between technical valuation and social relevance. By decomposing and re-integrating the multiple layers of territorial value, it opens pathways for a more inclusive, transparent, and wellbeing-oriented form of land economics. Such methodological integration provides the foundation for a new interpretative perspective on territorial value creation - one that goes beyond market growth to embrace cultural regeneration, circularity, and the equitable distribution of wellbeing (Aguado et al., 2024; Jeannerat and Crevoisier, 2022; UNESCO, 2022). Its core elements will now be briefly presented.

4. A New Perspective - Circular Cultural Economies and Detouristification Strategies

The evolution of appraisal and land economics toward multidimensional evaluation reflects a broader, more human-centered vision of how territories create, distribute, and sustain value. This vision is captured in the popular concept of circular cultural economies, where cultural heritage, environmental assets, and human creativity are mobilized as regenerative forces that enhance collective wellbeing (Capello et al., 2020; Fusco Girard and Gravagnuolo, 2017; Throsby, 2010). In this context, detouristification emerges as a spatial and social strategy that redistributes tourism flows, revitalizes peripheral areas, and reduces the environmental and social tensions associated with mass visitation (Devlin et al., 2026; Lim et al., 2022; Xing, 2024). Both perspectives challenge conventional models of growth by emphasizing regeneration over extraction, balance over expansion, and wellbeing over throughput. They align with post-growth and wellbeing economy perspectives (Jackson, 2017; Raworth, 2017). In this sense, circularity and detouristification represent concrete ways in which the multidimensional value layers identified earlier become actionable in practice. They reflect a shift in perspective from 'development of places' to 'development with and for places', recognizing territories as living systems that co-adapt with their inhabitants.

4.1 Circular Cultural Economies: Regenerative Value Creation

The circular cultural economy extends the logic of the circular economy into the cultural and spatial dimensions of development (European Commission, 2020; Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2019). It interprets culture, creativity, and heritage as productive resources that generate both tangible and intangible value (Sica et al., 2025; UNESCO, 2012). By linking economic efficiency with cultural meaning, this approach overcomes the traditional separation between material production and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986). At its core, a circular cultural economy operates through three value regeneration loops:

- The reuse and reinterpretation of heritage sites stimulates local employment and creative industries while maintaining the intrinsic identity of place (Yildirim, 2019; Lazzeretti et al., 2012).

- The reconnection between natural and cultural assets supports environmental restoration and sustainable tourism (Haines-Young and Potschin, 2010).
- The reintegration of community participation and cultural expression enhances social cohesion and territorial wellbeing (Pinto et al., 2018).

These interconnected cycles replace linear patterns of consumption with circular processes of creation, reuse, and renewal, ensuring that growth contributes simultaneously to prosperity, identity, and equity, and that appraisal explicitly recognizes culture as a regenerative rather than consumptive force.

4.2 Detouristification: Spatial Balance and Human Wellbeing

In traditional economic perspectives on tourism, the economic standard rule was that tourism would have an optimal level if its marginal benefits equalled its marginal costs. Such costs would be the result of environmental, cultural or crowding externalities. However, seen from a broader wellbeing perspective, the tourism sector may become problematic if citizens perceive a high tourist burden, e.g., overcrowding, high density, environmental decay, rising housing prices, etc.. Two extreme strategic options are then possible: (*i*) reduce or stop the influx of tourists ('tourism de-growth'), or (*ii*) re-distribute tourists over a larger surrounding area (see Bellato et al., 2022, 2023; Lim et al., 2022).

The concept of detouristification offers a methodological and policy perspective for rethinking tourism as a vehicle of territorial wellbeing. Rather than focusing on intensifying visitor numbers in iconic destinations, detouristification promotes spatial diversification, encouraging visitors to explore less crowded areas and engage with local cultures (Kourtit and Nijkamp, 2018; Lim et al., 2022; Romão and Neuts, 2017). This strategy reduces pressure on fragile sites, distributes economic benefits more evenly, and strengthens the resilience of smaller communities (Seraphin et al., 2018). From an appraisal perspective, detouristification highlights the multifunctional role of tourism in territorial economies. Tourism is not only a market activity but also a medium through which people experience place, culture, and environment (Jackson, 2025; Relph, 1976; Urry, 1990). Evaluating its contribution requires indicators that capture not only income and employment, but also complementary wellbeing outcomes, such as perceived quality of life, cultural satisfaction, and ecological stewardship (Hall and Gössling, 2013). Detouristification therefore transforms tourism appraisal from a purely economic exercise into an assessment of how spatial choices influence collective wellbeing and territorial balance.

4.3 Digital and Participatory Tools for Circular Transitions

Digital technologies are central to deploying circular cultural and detouristification strategies. Smart territorial platforms and geodesign tools allow planners to simulate tourism flows and land use scenarios (Goodchild, 2018; Nijkamp et al., 2024; Steinitz, 2012). Digital twins, open data infrastructures, and visualization platforms provide decision-makers with real-time information on land use, built environments, mobility patterns, and environmental impacts (Batty, 2018). When combined with participatory storytelling and co-design processes, these tools transform evaluation into a collaborative practice (Healey, 2015; Innes and Booher, 2010; Wacnik et al., 2025). Interactive visualizations help stakeholders understand trade-offs, anticipate risks, and co-create future scenarios that reflect shared values (McCall and Dunn, 2012; Pies and Valentinov, 2024). This fusion of technology and participation not only improves decision quality but also enhances democratic legitimacy and trust - two essential components of social wellbeing (Arnstein, 1969; Fung, 2015; Mikhaylovskaya, 2024; Nijkamp et al., 2023). In this way, digital tools operationalize the decomposition framework by linking data, governance, and lived experience into an integrated decision process. Thus, digital tools serve as both an analytical and communicative bridge between the technical rigor of appraisal and the lived experience of citizens. They transform abstract indicators into meaningful narratives about resilience, identity, and collective prosperity.

4.4 Toward a Culture of Regenerative Wellbeing

Circular cultural economies and detouristification converge in a broader cultural transition: the movement toward a regenerative wellbeing paradigm (Costanza et al., 2016, 2018; Raworth, 2017). In this paradigm, wellbeing is not the end product of growth but the very condition for sustainable development. Territories grow when economic vitality coexists with cultural richness, environmental balance, and social inclusion. This approach redefines the purpose of appraisal: from assessing what is to envisioning what could be (Burger et al., 2020; Lameque et al., 2023; Scharmer, 2018). It encourages planners and policymakers to treat heritage, nature, and creativity not as passive resources, but as active drivers of renewal. Here, wellbeing becomes the integrative criterion that reconnects territorial value creation with long-term social and ecological resilience. By placing wellbeing at the heart of territorial value creation, circular cultural economies offer a strategic alternative to the extractive logic of conventional tourism and land development. While this

new perspective reshapes how territorial value and wellbeing are understood today, its transformative power lies in its forward-looking orientation - learning from past trajectories.

5. Retrospective–Prospective Outlook

Reflecting on the historical evolution of appraisal and land economics shows an ongoing transformation: from a focus on economic performance to a broader concern for human and territorial wellbeing. This shift has been slow but significant, marking the emergence of a new evaluative rationality that integrates efficiency, equity, and meaning (Costanza et al., 2014; Stiglitz et al., 2009). In this closing section, the retrospective–prospective perspective highlights both the lessons learned from past practices and the opportunities that lie ahead for wellbeing-oriented territorial appraisal, building directly on the decomposition logic and the emerging paradigm of circular cultural economies and detouristification.

5.1 Retrospective View: Lessons from the Transformation of Appraisal

Historically, appraisal was primarily instrumental - designed to determine value for market exchange, taxation, or investment (RICS, 2017; Zhang et al., 2026). Over time, however, it became clear that purely financial metrics could not capture the full scope of what makes a place valuable. Environmental degradation, loss of heritage, and social exclusion have shown the limits of a narrowly economic approach (OECD, 2018; Pearson et al., 2021). The integration of sustainability principles introduced a more comprehensive understanding of value. Appraisal began to integrate environmental accounting, social impact assessment, and heritage evaluation (Elkington, 1997; Throsby, 2010; Vanclay, 2020), expanding its reach beyond property markets. Yet even these innovations often remained fragmented, addressing single dimensions rather than the whole system. The past two decades have therefore been characterized by a movement toward systemic integration, combining economic indicators with spatial, social, and cultural data (Fusco Girard and Nijkamp, 1997). This evolution has created the basis for the current wellbeing paradigm, where territorial performance is measured not only by growth, but by the capacity to sustain life, identity, and equity (OECD, 2020; Sen, 1999), and where appraisal becomes explicitly regenerative rather than extractive.

5.2 Prospective View: The Future of Wellbeing Appraisal

The appraisal discipline stands at a new frontier today. Advances in digital technologies, open data, and participatory governance provide unprecedented opportunities to create adaptive, transparent, and wellbeing-centered appraisal systems (Batty, 2018; Colasanti et al., 2025; Fleurbaey and Blanchet, 2013; Kitchin, 2021). These systems will move beyond static valuation to responsive monitoring and foresight, capable of capturing how territories change over time (Haarhaus and Liening, 2020; Meadows, 2008). From this perspective, territorial appraisal becomes an instrument of strategic intelligence - supporting decisions that promote long-term resilience and social flourishing (Bazile, 2025; Senge, 1990; UN-Habitat, 2020). Future appraisal models will likely combine:

- Quantitative rigor, ensuring comparability and accountability across regions.
- Qualitative insight, incorporating local narratives, identity, and sense of place (Tuan, 1977).
- Participatory inclusiveness, engaging diverse stakeholders in defining what wellbeing means for their territory (Innes and Booher, 2010).

This integrated framework can guide public and private investment toward outcomes that simultaneously improve economic efficiency, ecological balance, and social justice (Raworth, 2017; UNDP, 2022), while operationalizing strategies such as circular cultural economies and detouristification as levers for territorial renewal serving the wellbeing of citizens.

5.3 Policy Implications and Research Outlook

To embed wellbeing into the practice of appraisal, several policy and research directions emerge:

- *Institutional Integration*: Governments and regional agencies should adopt wellbeing indicators as complementary to economic measures in land use and investment appraisal (European Commission, 2020; WEGo, 2019).

- *Capacity Building*: Training appraisers, planners, and policymakers in multidimensional evaluation methods will enhance a shared understanding of wellbeing metrics (Fusco Girard et al., 2005).
- *Digital Governance*: The development of open-source data infrastructures and digital twin platforms will enhance transparency and enable evidence-based policymaking (Kitchin, 2014; Kourtit, 2021).
- *Cross-disciplinary Research*: Collaboration between economists, planners, sociologists, and data scientists can advance hybrid models that combine quantitative precision with qualitative depth (Rotmans and van Asselt, 2001).

Such initiatives would consolidate the transition from appraisal as a financial discipline to appraisal as a wellbeing science - anchored in systems thinking, human values, and spatial intelligence (Fusco Girard et al., 2005), and aligned with governance models that enable regeneration rather than short-term extraction.

5.4 Concluding Reflections: Appraising the Future

The retrospective–prospective view articulated above illustrates a simple yet transformative idea: the ultimate value of land lies in its capacity to sustain life and meaning (Norberg-Schulz, 1980; Relph, 1976). As societies confront complex challenges such as climate change, urbanization, demographic shifts, the task of appraisal extends beyond estimating worth. It becomes a means of navigating the ethical and strategic choices that define sustainable futures (Meadowcroft, 2007). Wellbeing-based appraisal reorients economic and territorial evaluation toward the quality rather than the quantity of growth. It aligns with a broader European and global agenda that envisions a circular, inclusive, and culturally rooted form of prosperity (European Commission, 2019; UNESCO, 2022). By integrating the perspectives of economic science, digital innovation, and human-oriented understanding, this approach offers a clear framework toward territories of wellbeing - places where value is not only measured, but lived, shared, and renewed, connecting decomposition, circular cultural economies, and future-oriented territorial governance.

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