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Supervisor Expression of Interest MSCA - Marie Skłodowska Curie Action - (PF) Postdoctoral Fellowship 2024

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Department Name: Department of Management, Economics and Industrial Engineering (DIG) of Politecnico di Milano

Research topic: : “Digitally preserving companies’ history and cultural heritage for the future”

MSCA-PF Research Area Panels:

- ECO_Economic Sciences
- ENG_Information Science and Engineering
- ENV_Environmental and Geosciences
- LIF_Life Sciences
- MAT_Mathematics
- PHY_Physics
- X SOC_Social Sciences and Humanities**
- CHE_Chemistry

Brief description of the Department and Research Group (including URL if applicable):

The Department of Management, Economics, and Industrial Engineering (DIG) of Politecnico di Milano was established in 1990. Its mission is to contribute to the common good and individual well-being through a critical understanding of the opportunities and challenges posed by technology to business and society. The Department pursues its mission with an international reach by creating and sharing knowledge through high-quality education, the quest for scientific excellence, and active community engagement.

We aim at:

- Educating responsible individuals who will shape the future of relevant corporations and institutions to serve society.
- Promoting original, rigorous, and relevant research at the intersection of engineering, management, and economics, focusing on a deep understanding of technology and its ecosystem.



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- Contributing to a sustainable and inclusive society by inspiring virtuous business practices and transformational policy measures

With approximately 160 professors, DIG is one of the largest departments of Politecnico di Milano. More information can be found at: <https://www.som.polimi.it/en/>

DIG HumanTech project has been selected and funded by the Ministry of University and Research (MUR) for the period 2023-2027 within “Dipartimenti di Eccellenza” (Law 232/2016), the ministerial initiative aimed at rewarding the departments that stand out for the quality of their research and at financing specific development projects. In particular, the objective of HumanTech is to redefine the relationship between technology and human beings to enable a sustainable digital transition of industrial systems. The project aims to propose new models and processes for the development and adoption of technologies, capable of accelerating the transition towards sustainable, inclusive industrial systems that make individual and collective well-being a priority.

The ReMAPS (Rethinking Management in Artis and Public Service) research group carries on studies and applied research aimed at supporting institutions and organizations that operate in the strategic fields of Arts and Public Services to rethink and innovate how policies and management are designed and implemented.

All ReMAPS researchers share the common belief for a collaborative and multidisciplinary approach to such kind of innovation to conciliate and integrate different goals, perspectives, methodologies, and experiences.

Collaborating with the ReMAPS group guarantees state-of-art results due to the diversified portfolio of its researchers’ competencies and their established network with leading institutions and organizations in both Italy and Europe.

More information can be found at:

Link SOM, <https://www.som.polimi.it/en/people/>

Link Humantech, <https://www.som.polimi.it/en/humantech/>

Link Remaps, <https://www.remaps.polimi.it/>

TITLE of the project: “Digitally preserving companies’ history and cultural heritage for the future”

Brief project description:

Against dynamic businesses and fast-pace digital technologies, companies are sourcing their cultural heritage for new strategies and managerial goals (Ravasi et al., 2019), with cultural heritage intended as tangible and intangible assets, belonging to company’s history (from the foundation to the present), which are of value not only for the company itself but also for the society.

Equally, this trend is growing in attention in academia, with publications and special issues on management journal investigating how companies source their company’s history and cultural heritage and retell it accordingly to their intended audiences (Argyres et al., 2020; Suddaby et al., 2010). For example, companies use their history to orientate their employees’ values (Sasaki et al., 2019), while challenges arise in the corporation’s present (Dalpiaz et al., 2016; Hatch & Schulz, 2017). Also, companies can use their history to communicate their innovation to the final customers (Ravasi et al., 2019; Iglesias et al., 2020). At the same time, by preserving their cultural heritage (e.g., epoch photos of the original plant and the industrial area, epoch photos of employees



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at the assembling line) and promoting it to the general audience, companies also can augment their sustainability practices (Carloni et al., 2023). Indeed, they support the memory of the community living where they were founded (Lubinski, 2018; Chaney et al., 2018) and the industrial heritage, which policymakers call to responsibly preserve (SDG 11.4).

So far, however, scholars have focused on the very “last mile” of the use of organization’s history and cultural heritage. They have focused on how companies make sense of an already fine-grained array of tangible and intangible artifacts which were already selected, codified in the company’s history, and made available to them (Oertel et al., 2015; Illia & Zamparini, 2016). Instead, they have not questioned what should be preserved from the past, in terms of tangible and intangible assets, and how to preserve it also by digital means to keep it plastic for the future. Further, scholars have not considered the importance of digital means for storing and integrating these forms of new knowledge (Decker et al., 2021) in the available knowledge management system of their companies.

With the intention to advance knowledge on the topic, the present research aims to understand the organizational models and processes by which organization’s history and cultural heritage are preserved and curated for companies’ and society’s future, with specific attention to digital technologies. This will contribute and benefit from synergies with DIG HumanTech strategic program.

A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods is suggested for the research. The candidate will start with a propaedeutic literature review on 1) the uses of companies’ history; 2) the organizational models for retaining and storing knowledge by digital means in companies; 3) the process of digitally preserving heritage in cultural institutions. This step is fundamental to reconnoiter the potential actors, practices, the opportunities, and challenges behind the digital preservation of companies’ cultural heritage. Then, at the empirical level, qualitative methods will be used to identify and compare diverse practices for digitally preserving companies’ cultural heritage. The propositions from the qualitative inquiry will then be further modelled into hypotheses and tested through quantitative methods for generalizability of results.

The suggested research setting is that of corporate museums, places that have the institutional mission to preserve, codify and curate, through a collection of tangible and intangible artifacts, the past of the company (Danilov, 1992; Nissley & Casey, 2002). Equally to traditional institutions, they preserve a collection of historical artifacts of value for the society. Contrarily, their peculiarity is that the collection innately speaks about the company.

With this articulation, the project proposal wishes to build a bridge between the academic communities interested on the uses of companies’ history for strategic purposes, the models for knowledge management through digital technologies, and the adoption of digital technologies in cultural institutions particularly for the preservation of heritage.

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