

## Conclusions

Valbona Flora, Kamela Guza

The conceptual, methodological and operational complexity of the work shown in the previous pages deserves a few conclusive words that aim to provide a brief summary of the salient features and to highlight some more general aspects that emerge after the work has been completed.

Each of the analysed sites has been read and interpreted from an interdisciplinary perspective that sought to bring forth the most relevant potentialities of each village, while contemporarily identifying the issues that could hinder their development.

In the villages of Përmet, the monumental heritage emerged with exceptional emphasis. In particular, the churches of Leusë and Kosinë together with the Katiu Bridge in Bënjë constitute a central core of the process of territorial analysis. The monumental architecture is here part of an evocative landscape and natural background, often accompanied by a built fabric of undeniable value. For instance, we could recall the presence of the “Bredhi i Hotovës-Dangëllia” National Park, or the streets in *kalldrëm*, the traditional stone houses, the Canyon of the Lengarica River and the thermal area of Bënjë, which every year attract numerous Albanian and foreign tourists. Especially Bënjë occupies a privileged position compared to the other two villages, having been declared a protected ‘historic centre’ in 2016.

Also in Zvërnec, the issue of monumental architecture provided a stimulating research opportunity. The Church of the Dormition of Mary on the Island of Zvërnec – an already established tourist destination – offered the chance to reflect not only on the intrinsic value of the monument, but also on its relations with the villagers and the lagoon landscape. In Zvërnec, the study of the landscape was essential to the understanding of the *genius loci*. The Vjosë-Nartë Protected Area – a unique ecosystem of extraordinary biodiversity and habitat variety – is a key factor for the village’s desired tourism development.

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Razëm constitutes a special case from the point of view of the architectural heritage. Since here the Cultural Monuments (recognized by the State) are missing, the focus of the research was oriented towards an interesting residential complex of the beginning of the last century situated in the centre of the village. A first attempt has thus been made to investigate this completely unknown research topic, opening the way to further, more specific studies. However, the most evident qualities of Razëm – confirmed by the village's belonging to Shkrel Regional Park and to the future National Park of the Albanian Alps – lie in the extraordinary alpine landscape, rich in natural resources. The mountain hut settlements in the alpine pastures around the village form an unmistakable landscape configuration with specific features and an architectural language of its own. The alpine pastures testify to the everyday practices and relationships with the territory connected to the ancient tradition of transhumance and to the processing and production of dairy products of undoubted quality.

In all the villages, the richness of the intangible cultural heritage is highly distinctive. Even though a conspicuous part of the local traditions has slowly faded into oblivion, it was still possible to identify the most significant elements.

In Përmet, a first common thread that runs through the entire area is undoubtedly the musical tradition of the *tosk* iso-polyphony, declared to be part of the UNESCO Intangible Heritage in 2005. This tradition finds its most eminent representative in Laver Bariu, whose music still undisputedly excels today in local popular festivals. In addition, the area of Përmet is particularly renowned for its contribution to pedagogy and literary production (thanks to the presence of the Frashëri brothers), for its gastronomic tradition as well as for the artisanal weaving, embroidery and traditional garments and also the wood and stone working that reached their full maturity in the period between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

In Zvërnec, instead, the presence of the Lagoon of Nartë on the one hand and the salt pans on the other, have led to a greater development of traditions related to fishing and salt production.

In Razëm, the *xhubleta* with its ancient roots plays an important role in the regional culture together with the rhapsodic tradition, which for centuries has contributed to spread the songs of the mountain epic narrating the resistance in the face of the expansionist Serbian threat.

These and other expressions of the cultural heritage have inspired the Guidelines' Intervention Strategies that aim at an integrated territorial enhancement.

Unfortunately, several issues hinder the regeneration of the villages and threaten their potential for social and tourism development.

The most impactful issues are attributable to the persistence of customs and behaviours that hold back social and economic progress (like, for instance, the influence in Northern Albania of the Customary Law of *Kanuni i Lekë Dukagjinit*), the abandonment of the agricultural land and traditions rooted in the peasant culture as well as the weakening of artisanal production, the degradation of the building heritage, the lack of effective policies in support of rural areas and the constant threat of choices that do not respect the delicate environmental balances, illegal building that undermines the authenticity of traditional architecture and the lack of infrastructure and basic public services. Many of these phenomena, as we know, are mainly caused by the constant emigration and consequent depopulation of the villages.

The Intervention Strategies have been structured through a series of specific Actions that aim to consolidate the identity of the villages analysed, to increase accessibility to local resources and enhance the attractiveness of the places through the perspective of an inclusive, enduring and sustainable tourism development. Hopefully this develop-

ment should take place also with the contribution of the villagers who have emigrated to other Albanian cities, or abroad.

A substantial part of the Guidelines Actions focuses on the landscape issues and represents an undoubted novelty for the Albanian context. Many of them aim to provide planning tools capable of managing the landscape in its entirety and at the same time recognising its intrinsic value. The substantive projects dealing with landscape enhancement aim at the creation of a *Digital Inventory of hiking and transhumance paths*, the construction of greenways and the redevelopment of specific contexts such as the thermal area in Bënjë, the open space surrounding the Church in Kosinë or the complex of the villas in Razëm. Particular attention has been given to the area of Zvërnec, significantly altered from an ecological point of view by the pollution caused by the industrial sites (operating or decommissioned) in the neighbouring area and also threatened by questionable urban planning forecasts. The environmental urgency, a clear obstacle to tourism development, requires first of all actions aimed at mitigating the health risks for the inhabitants. Among the Actions included in the Guidelines there are, in fact, proposals for the environmental remediation of the site where the former Uzina PVC plant was located, the elimination of illegal dumps and other environmental impact analyses.

Another issue we focused on concerns the conservation, reuse and redevelopment of the architectural and monumental heritage, with proposals that pay special attention to environmental and socio-cultural features, to the needs and requests of local communities, jointly addressing physical and social degradation. Indeed, in addition to the Cultural Monuments to which specific Actions that take into account their historical and constructive complexity are dedicated, the widespread building heritage has also been the subject of particular attention. In this case, we have proposed a coordinated set of actions aimed at the safeguard of the main features of traditional architecture and at the functional restoration and conversion of the built heritage in order to enhance the basic public services, tourism and artisanal activities. An Action worth mentioning is the regeneration of the historic centre of Bënjë through the creation of a dispersed hotel. This rather innovative solution for the Albanian context was proposed with the intention of triggering a virtuous circle that actively involves the local community and allows economic and tourism development based on the authentic resources available on the area.

A very important component of these Guidelines is the inclusion of local communities in the development processes. Numerous Actions are based on the involvement of the villagers in the protection, conservation and maintenance of public spaces, the creation of *Community Maps* and the regeneration of potentially valuable tangible and intangible assets that could contribute to the collective well-being. To this end, we have suggested the creation of community enterprises as an opportunity for the villagers to have an active role in decision-making processes. Community enterprises have been conceived as emancipating tools especially for women, unemployed young people and village elders who preserve the knowledge of the local culture.

The involvement of the villagers is particularly incisive in the Actions concerning the intangible heritage. Most of the attention, in this case, has been given to the promotion of experiential tourism with proposals related to the food heritage through the creation of an *Inventory of the gastronomic culture* – a specific tool for the storage of memories to be handed down to future generations – or through initiatives aimed at promoting tourism and rediscovering ancient traditions (for example, the creation of a *Local feasts calendar*).



The Katiu Bridge as a metaphor of “The Diaspora as a Resource for the Knowledge, Preservation and Enhancement of the Lesser Known Cultural Sites in Albania” research project.

These Guidelines, constitute a tool for planning substantive actions in the area and a necessary step towards the creation of Local Development Plans and Territorial Marketing Plans.

In our view, the adopted methodology constitutes a ‘model’ that can be easily replicated in other rural contexts, not just in Albania. The versatile nature of this tool makes it accessible to local communities, institutions as well as to NGOs working in the area and also to scholars and researchers. More generally, we think that the Guidelines can interact with a wide range of people interested in establishing a more direct relationship with the places, more adherent to the vibrant resources of an environment still capable of transmitting values and experiences.

The book is an unprecedented scientific product among the studies and research related to the Albanian cultural heritage and its ability to be a driver for the socio-economic development of the country. All the components of the cultural heritage of the villages have been addressed and analysed here, trying to identify connections and exchanges between tangible and intangible cultural heritage, a complex but inevitable (as well as fascinating) process along the arduous path towards the knowledge of the places.

It would not have been possible to achieve this result without the commitment of Antonio Lauria who defined the methodology of the research project, the structure of the Guidelines and coordinated the implementation of the work with the collaboration of other University of Florence staff.

At the same time, a decisive role was also played by students, young scholars and professionals of the Albanian Diaspora in Italy (of which the authors of these Conclusions are part) that participated in the “The Diaspora as a Resource for the Knowledge, Preservation and Enhancement of the Lesser Known Cultural Sites in Albania” research project.

Our presence in the working group has given this research a unique character. It was a sort of 'secret ingredient' capable of better interacting with the 'substances' of the places which we have long since left. This transfer of the knowledge (acquired on our educational and professional paths in Italy) towards the *mëmëdheu* (The "mother land", in Albanian) is tinged with a double meaning. It became a journey that occurred in two complementary directions and which requires here a brief personal interlude.

The first direction (the most obvious one) goes from Italy to Albania, towards the places we analysed and investigated which were mostly unknown to most of us before this research experience.

The second direction (the more unexpected one) was revealed during the stay in the villages and does no longer belong to the geographical space, but to the 'space' inside us. Our contact with the places, the people, the traditions, the landscape and the most representative buildings was capable of awakening ancient bonds suspended within us. The research then served as a catalyst for a process that had remained unfinished for us after leaving Albania in the first place. Despite the years of distance, we found ourselves essentially close to our origins and therefore able to put into dialogue the two worlds that inhabit us without having to give up any part of their identity. The result was thus an authentically 'anthropological journey' that adds value to the research experience documented in the pages of this book and embodies an essential condition for a real immersion in the mystery of places.



# Annexes

## ANNEX 1 – THE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW FORM

### General information

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Village

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Date

### Interviewee profile

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Gender                      Male       Female

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Age

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Nationality

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Main occupation

### Questions

- 
1. Could you speak about the history of your family? Where does your family come from? Where were you born?
  2. Which religion do you belong to? Do you practice? How much do you feel connected to the religious doctrine?
  3. Could you speak about your everyday life, your relationship with the community and with the village? How has it changed in time?
  4. How often do you go to town and why? How do you usually go there? Is there a public transportation service? What is the duration of the journey?
  5. What is the role of public institutions in your life? Do they properly operate according to your needs?
  6. How do the health and educational services work?
  8. Which were/are the places where you met/meet in the village? Has your social life changed in time?
  9. What are the public buildings of the village (civil of religious) worth to you?
  10. Have you ever thought of leaving the village? If so, why? Where would you like to move to? What changes, according to you, could the migrated inhabitants bring to the village?
  11. Is the village visited by tourists? What are the things they most appreciate? According to you, what do they think about the village?
  12. Could you describe a memory, a custom, a recipe or anything belonging to the past (now lost), which you think would be important to recover?
  13. Which are the popular feasts and traditions of the village? Could you describe them?
  14. Which are the typical products and traditional dishes of the village? What has got lost in time?
  15. Could you describe a recipe from the local cuisine of the village?

### Additional information and observations of the interviewer

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## ANNEX 2 – THE ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY DATA SHEET

### BUILDING SHEET no.

BUILDING CODE	DATE OF SURVEY	LOCATION

### 1. GENERAL INFORMATION

#### PLAN

#### 1.1 ADDRESS AND GPS COORDINATES

1.2 AGE GROUP	<input type="checkbox"/> UP TO 1945	<input type="checkbox"/> 1945-1990	<input type="checkbox"/> AFTER 1990
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#### 1.3 ORIENTATION LONGITUDINAL AXIS

1.4 ALTERATION TO EXISTING BUILDING	<input type="checkbox"/> BASIC RENOVATION Specify _____	<input type="checkbox"/> EXTENSIVE RENOVATION Specify _____
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1.5 ACCESSIBILITY	EASY	PASSABLE	DIFFICULT
- PEDESTRIAN	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- VEHICULAR	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1.6 BUILDING OCCUPANCY	ORIGINAL	ACTUAL
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1.7 CURRENT USE	<input type="checkbox"/> INHABITED	<input type="checkbox"/> TEMPOR. INHABITED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNINHABITED
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**2. TYPOLOGICAL FEATURES**


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2.1 CONFIGURATION       ISOLATED       GROUP       CONTIGUOUS

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RESIDENTIAL       NON RESIDENTIAL

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2.2 BUILDING TYPOLOGY       FARM HOUSE       AGRICULTURAL  
 COURTYARD HOUSE       EDUCATIONAL  
 TERRACED HOUSES       RELIGIOUS  
 TERRACED HOUSE       COMMERCIAL  
 TOWER HOUSE       MILITARY  
 OTHER (specify) \_\_\_\_\_       OTHER (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

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2.3 PROPERTY       SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSE  
 MULTI-FAMILY HOUSE

---

2.4 No. OF STOREYS      ABOVE GROUND      BELOW GROUND

---

2.5 No. OF ROOMS

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2.8 ROOMS       ENTRANCE  
 KITCHEN-LUNCH  
 COMMON SPACE  
 BEDROOM/S  
 INDOOR BATHROOM  
 OUTDOOR BATHROOM  
 STABLE  
 STOREROOM  
 OTHER (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

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2.9 COURTYARD       NO  
 YES (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

---

2.6 AGRICULTURAL ANNEXES       NO  
 YES (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

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### 3. MATERIALS AND CONSTRUCTIONAL ELEMENTS

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3.1 ENCLOSURE COURTYARD

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3.2 RETAINING WALLS

---

3.3 FOUNDATION

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3.4 VERTICAL LOAD-BEARING STRUCTURE

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- EXTERIOR WALLS	Average Thickness
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- INTERIOR WALLS	Average Thickness
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3.5 DOOR OR WINDOW HEADS  
(lintel, flat arch, relieving arch, etc.)

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3.6 ARCHES AND VAULTED STRUCTURES

---

3.7 GROUND FLOOR

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3.8 INTERMEDIATE FLOOR/S

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3.9 FALSE CEILING

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3.10 PAVINGS	-1 FLOOR	GROUND FLOOR	+1 FLOOR
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3.11 ROOF

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3.12 COVERING

---

3.13 INFILL WALLS

---

3.14 PARTITIONS

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3.15 STAIRCASE/S

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3.16 TECHNOLOGICAL SYSTEMS  
(water, electrical, heating, waste water, etc.)

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3.17 DOORS AND WINDOWS

---

3.18 OTHER (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

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**4. STATE OF CONSERVATION**

4.1 SYNTHETIC ASSESSMENT OF THE BUILDING	<input type="checkbox"/> INHABITABLE	<input type="checkbox"/> NOT INHABIT.	<input type="checkbox"/> RUIN
4.1.1 ENCLOSURE COURTYARD	<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> POOR
4.1.2 RETAINING WALLS	<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> POOR
4.1.3 FOUNDATION	<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> POOR
4.1.4 VERTICAL LOAD-BEARING STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> POOR
4.1.5 DOOR OR WINDOW HEAD	<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> POOR
4.1.6 ARCHES AND VAULTED STRUCTURES	<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> POOR
4.1.7 GROUND FLOOR	<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> POOR
4.1.8 INTERMEDIATE FLOOR/S	<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> POOR
4.1.9 FALSE CEILING	<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> POOR
4.1.10 PAVINGS	<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> POOR
4.1.11 ROOF	<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> POOR
4.1.12 COVERING	<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> POOR
4.1.13 INFILL WALLS	<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> POOR
4.1.14 PARTITIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> POOR
4.1.15 STAIRCASE/S	<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> POOR
4.1.16 TECHNOLOGICAL SYSTEMS	<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> POOR
4.1.17 DOORS AND WINDOWS	<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> POOR
4.1.18 OTHER (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> POOR
4.2 MAIN DISEASES	<input type="checkbox"/> FOUNDATION ISSUES <input type="checkbox"/> WALL CRACKING AND BUILDING MOVEMENTS <input type="checkbox"/> OUT-OF-PLUMB WALLS <input type="checkbox"/> CRACKS IN ARCHES AND VAULTED STRUCTURES <input type="checkbox"/> POOR CONNECTION BETWEEN STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS <input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED MORTAR JOINTS <input type="checkbox"/> DETACHMENT OF STONE ELEMENTS <input type="checkbox"/> CORROSION OF STEEL ELEMENTS <input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATION OF WOODEN ELEMENTS <input type="checkbox"/> CARBONATION IN REINFORCED CONCRETE ELEMENTS <input type="checkbox"/> RAIN INFILTRATION <input type="checkbox"/> CONDENSATION PHENOMENA <input type="checkbox"/> DRAINAGE PROBLEMS <input type="checkbox"/> RISING DAMP <input type="checkbox"/> CRACKING OR DETACHMENT OF PLASTER <input type="checkbox"/> EFFLORESCENCE <input type="checkbox"/> PLANT GROWTH <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (specify) _____		

**5. SEISMIC VULNERABILITY**


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5.1 SOIL FEATURES	<input type="checkbox"/> SANDY <input type="checkbox"/> GRAVEL <input type="checkbox"/> CLAY <input type="checkbox"/> ROCKY <input type="checkbox"/> MIXED  <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (specify) _____
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5.2 CRITICALITIES	<input type="checkbox"/> THRUSTING STRUCTURES (ARCHES, VAULTS OR RAFTERS WITHOUT TIE) <input type="checkbox"/> LACK OF BRACING STRUCTURES <input type="checkbox"/> REDUCED DISTANCE BETWEEN WINDOWS <input type="checkbox"/> OPENING NEAR THE CORNERS (< 100 cm DISTANCE) <input type="checkbox"/> LOW QUALITY MASONRY <input type="checkbox"/> DRYWALL <input type="checkbox"/> INACCURATE TOOTHING BETWEEN WALLS <input type="checkbox"/> WORKS THAT HAVE COMPROMISED THE LATERAL BUILDING RESISTANCE  <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (specify) _____
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5.3 ANTI-SEISMIC SOLUTIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> CURBS OR HOOPINGS <input type="checkbox"/> TRUSSES <input type="checkbox"/> RING BEAM <input type="checkbox"/> TIE-BEAMS <input type="checkbox"/> WEDGES <input type="checkbox"/> BRACING WALLS <input type="checkbox"/> BUTTRESS  <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (specify) _____
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**6. SURVEY DRAWINGS AND PHOTOS****7. NOTES**


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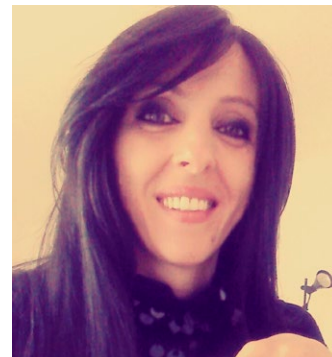
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