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WORLD HERITAGE CITIES DECLARATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN EUROPEAN CITIES

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Abstract

There is a great deal of research focusing primarily on the analysis of cities' sustainable development, in which the role of culture plays an important role. Accordingly, a range of research disciplines consider the influence of culture on sustainable development. The relationship between culture and sustainable development is analysed from two perspectives: the development of the cultural sector and the presence of cultural dimension in different public policies. One of the elements that encourage cultural development is the recognition of human heritage; there are currently 1,007 world heritage sites: 779 cultural, 197 natural and 31 which are a combination of the two. According to the Organization of World Heritage Cities, 265 cities have been declared world heritage sites. This declaration involves a number of obligations, with a notable example being environmental protection. In this paper we analyse the influence of world heritage declaration on sustainable development for the European cities. Specifically, we classify European cities according to whether or not they have been declared heritage cities and, taking into account this classification, we analyse the effect of this status on the main environmental, social and economic variables with information available. The results show that being awarded world heritage city status has a clear positive effect on the economic variables related with employment and the tourist sector, as well as citizens' perception of their quality of life perception. There is, however, a negative effect on the environmental variables related with air contamination and water use.

Key words: economic, environment, Europe, social, sustainable development, world heritage city

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