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The Tangoharo Betsiboka Festival as a Laboratory for Social Cohesion and a Driver of Cultural Valorization for Sustainable Territorial Development in Maevatanana, Madagascar

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Abstract

Sustainable territorial development today follows an integrated approach combining economic, social, and cultural dimensions. Recent literature highlights culture as a key driver of social cohesion and local development. In this context, cultural festivals emerge as strategic mechanisms for strengthening territorial identity, stimulating local economies, and fostering social cohesion. The TANGO HARO Betsiboka Festival, held in Maevatanana, aligns with this dynamic. The term "TANGO HARO" refers to a social reality characterized by the coexistence of cosmopolitan populations from diverse cultures—sometimes with conflicting interests—who nonetheless share the same territory. This concept reflects a logic of social integration in which diversity becomes a resource for development. This article analyzes the TANGO HARO Festival's contribution to sustainable territorial development through the theoretical frameworks of cultural capital, social capital, and local development. The methodology employs a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews, and participant observation. Expected results indicate that the festival contributes to the valorization of cultural heritage, the strengthening of social cohesion, the revitalization of the local economy, and the development of cultural tourism. It also serves as a space for symbolic mediation, enabling the peaceful management of cultural diversity. This research offers a fresh perspective on cultural festivals as instruments of social transformation and sustainable development within African and Malagasy contexts.

Keywords: TANGO HARO, Culture, Living Together, Territorial Development, Social Cohesion, Maevatanana

1. Introduction

Sustainable territorial development is now a key paradigm in public policy and local governance strategies. Long equated solely with economic growth, development is now understood as a comprehensive process that simultaneously engages economic, social, environmental, cultural, and institutional dimensions [1]. This conceptual shift builds upon the work of the World Commission on Environment and Development, which emphasizes that sustainable development means meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own¹. From this perspective, territories are no longer viewed merely as administrative areas, but as complex systems where natural resources, local stakeholders, institutions, tangible and intangible heritage, and social dynamics interact.

Recent research indicates that territorial development depends not only on the abundance of economic resources but, above all, on the capacity of communities to leverage their specific resources to create sustainable competitive advantages². According to Pecqueur, territorial resources become drivers of development when they are recognized, embraced, and collectively mobilized by local stakeholders [2,3].

This approach fundamentally reshapes our understanding of local development by highlighting community initiatives, cultural identities, and forms of participatory governance³. Culture now plays a central role in this dynamic.

Long relegated to the status of a leisure activity or a matter of historical heritage, it is today recognized as a genuine driver of

economic, social, and territorial development [4]. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) asserts that culture represents a factor of identity, a motor for social cohesion, and an economic resource capable of generating jobs, attracting investment, and enhancing the appeal of regions⁴. This international recognition was solidified by the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, which encourages states to integrate culture into their national development policies.

Development economists also support this perspective [5]. For Amartya Sen, development cannot be reduced to an increase in national income; it consists above all in expanding the real freedoms available to individuals so that they can lead the lives they wish to lead⁵. In this context, cultural practices contribute directly to human flourishing by fostering civic participation, the transmission of knowledge, intercultural dialogue, and the construction of collective identities [6]. Meanwhile, Bourdieu demonstrates that cultural capital constitutes an essential resource capable of influencing social trajectories and community development⁶.

This conceptual shift is gradually leading international institutions to recognize culture as the "fourth pillar" of sustainable development, alongside the economic, social, and environmental dimensions⁷. Numerous empirical studies show that cultural festivals, local heritage, and artistic events strengthen social cohesion while generating significant economic benefits through cultural tourism, craftsmanship, and the creative industries⁸.

In Madagascar, however, this recognition remains relatively recent. Yet the country possesses exceptional cultural heritage, characterized by remarkable linguistic, ethnic, artistic, and spiritual diversity [7,8]. Oral traditions, ancestral ceremonies, music, dance, artisanal skills, and customary practices constitute a living heritage that plays a significant role in shaping local identities. Despite this richness, the cultural dimension remains insufficiently integrated into public policies for territorial development, which continue to focus largely on the agricultural, mining, and infrastructure sectors⁹.

This situation is particularly evident in the Betsiboka region [9]. Officially established in 2004 as part of Madagascar's decentralization policy, this region is part of the Mahajanga province and covers an area of approximately 30,025 km². It takes its name from the Betsiboka River—which stretches about 525 kilometers and is considered one of Madagascar's major river basins—a waterway that has served for centuries as a vital commercial route linking the Central Highlands to the island's northwest coast¹⁰.

The history of Betsiboka is deeply marked by gold mining. As early as the 19th century, the discovery of gold deposits attracted people from various regions of Madagascar as well as foreign investors. During the French colonial period, several mining concessions were granted around Maevatanana—notably to French companies

that gradually developed infrastructure for industrial-scale gold extraction¹¹. Colonial archives indicate that thousands of hectares were allocated to mining companies, permanently transforming the territory's economic and spatial organization [10].

This mining activity simultaneously fostered the rise of Maevatanana as the region's main urban center. Infrastructure built during this period—roads, administrative buildings, residential neighborhoods, and commercial facilities—remains visible today [11]. The popular phrase "Maevatanana tsara," frequently cited by long-time residents, reflects the collective memory associated with the urban development of the colonial era. This expression illustrates how economic history helps shape social perceptions and territorial identity. Over the course of the 20th century, the region gradually became a hub of significant migration.

Mining, agricultural, and commercial activities attracted people from the Highlands and coastal regions, as well as various foreign communities—notably Indian, Pakistani, Greek, Chinese, and Mozambican¹². This demographic mixing profoundly transformed Betsiboka's social makeup, fostering a multicultural society characterized by the coexistence of diverse traditions, languages, religious beliefs, and economic practices [12].

This cultural diversity finds a unique expression in the concept of Tangoharo. More than just a local term, Tangoharo refers to a social reality rooted in the coming together of populations from diverse backgrounds who share the same territory despite their cultural, religious, or economic differences. The concept embodies an ongoing dynamic of identity negotiation, intercultural dialogue, and the collective construction of a shared life [13]. It thus serves as a concrete illustration of contemporary theories of social cohesion developed by Putnam, according to which social ties and collective trust represent fundamental resources for territorial development¹³.

Beyond this human diversity, Betsiboka also possesses a particularly rich cultural and spiritual heritage. Dozens of sacred sites associated with royal ancestors and customary traditions—play a central role in the symbolic organization of many communities [14]. These ritual spaces facilitate the intergenerational transmission of values, historical narratives, and local cultural practices. They also serve as key venues for social mediation and the preservation of community identities¹⁴.

It is against this historical, cultural, and social backdrop that the TANGO HARO Betsiboka Festival emerged. Far more than a mere festive event, the festival functions as a territorial strategy aimed at promoting cultural diversity, strengthening social cohesion, and stimulating local economic development. Through artistic performances, craft exhibitions, intercultural exchanges, economic activities, and heritage events, it helps showcase the territory's unique cultural assets. By simultaneously engaging local authorities, community organizations, artists, business operators, and traditional leaders, the festival also contributes to strengthening local governance and civic participation.

However, despite its growing importance in regional life, few scholarly studies have analyzed its actual impact on territorial development. Existing research focuses primarily on the historical or anthropological dimensions of the Betsiboka region, while the interplay between cultural events, social cohesion, and economic development remains insufficiently documented.

This study aims to bridge this research gap by analyzing the extent to which the TANGO HARO Festival serves as a genuine driver of

sustainable territorial development in the Betsiboka region. More specifically, it seeks to understand how the event contributes to promoting cultural heritage, fostering social cohesion, revitalizing the local economy, and consolidating territorial governance mechanisms. By drawing on theoretical approaches from territorial development, local governance, and the economics of culture, this research aims to make an original contribution to scholarly debates regarding the strategic role of culture in development policies in Madagascar.



Figure 1: Tangoharo Summary

2. Methodology

This research employs a mixed methods research approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to produce a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the effects of the TANGO HARO Festival on the territorial development of the Betsiboka region. This methodological strategy was chosen based on the observation that no single method can capture all the economic, social, cultural, and institutional dimensions of

a phenomenon as complex as a territorial festival. According to Creswell and Plano Clark, integrating quantitative and qualitative methods enhances the quality of the analyses by cross-referencing the results obtained from different scientific perspectives¹⁵.

This study prioritizes a convergent research design, in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected during the same period before being analyzed separately and then compared during

the interpretation phase. This methodological complementarity allows us not only to measure the observable effects of the festival, but also to understand the social mechanisms that explain them [15]. As Denzin and Lincoln point out, combining several methods is an effective way to increase the credibility of social science research through data triangulation¹⁶.

The quantitative approach is based on a questionnaire survey administered to the main groups of stakeholders participating in the TANGO HARO Festival [16]. Respondents include visitors, artisans, exhibitors, merchants, restaurateurs, and several local economic operators directly involved in the festival's activities. The diversity of profiles makes it possible to obtain a representative view of the various categories of stakeholders affected by the event's outcomes.

The questionnaire was designed around several analytical dimensions corresponding to the research objectives. The questions cover, in particular, economic impacts (increased revenue, sales trends, creation of business opportunities), social effects (strengthened community relations, civic participation, social cohesion), cultural impacts (promotion of local traditions, knowledge transmission, heritage preservation), and perceptions regarding the festival's overall organization.

Most questions were developed using five-point Likert scales, which are widely recognized for their ability to measure individual attitudes and perceptions with a high level of reliability¹⁷.

Alongside this quantitative survey, a qualitative approach was implemented to gain a deeper understanding of the statistical results. This approach relied primarily on semi-structured interviews with various stakeholders involved in the design, organization, and governance of the TANGO HARO Festival. Interviewees included members of the organizing committee, officials from decentralized local authorities, representatives of decentralized state technical services, traditional leaders, heads of cultural associations, and several artists and figures known for their commitment to promoting the cultural heritage of Betsiboka¹⁸.

The choice of semi-structured interviews was justified by their ability to encourage participants to express themselves freely while ensuring the collected information remained consistent with the key research themes [17,18]. This technique offered the opportunity to explore social representations, lived experiences, organizational strategies, and stakeholder perceptions regarding the festival's contribution to territorial development. As Kvale notes, the qualitative interview is a prime tool for understanding social realities as constructed by individuals themselves. To complement these two survey methods, participant observation was conducted throughout the duration of the TANGO HARO Festival. This method involves directly observing social interactions, visitor behavior, cultural practices, commercial exchanges, and forms of community participation, while temporarily sharing in certain activities with the actors present in the field. Such immersion fosters a better understanding of social dynamics that cannot be

fully grasped through questionnaires or interviews. According to Spradley, participant observation provides access to the meanings actors attribute to their daily practices, making it a fundamental tool in ethnographic research¹⁹.

The observations focused on several dimensions: the use of various festival spaces, interactions between local communities and visitors, artistic activities, traditional events, commercial exchanges, cultural heritage promotion practices, and collaboration mechanisms among the various organizers. These observations were recorded daily in a field notebook to facilitate their subsequent analysis.

Quantitative data were processed using descriptive statistics to calculate frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations for the various variables under study [19]. This descriptive analysis makes it possible to identify key trends among respondents and highlight prevailing perceptions regarding the festival's impacts. The results are presented in tables and graphs to facilitate interpretation.

Qualitative data derived from interviews and observations underwent a thematic analysis inspired by the work of Braun and Clarke²⁰. This method involves identifying, coding, grouping, and interpreting recurring themes in the participants' accounts. Coding was carried out progressively, distinguishing categories related to local economic development, social cohesion, cultural enhancement, territorial governance, and the organizational challenges faced by festival stakeholders. This procedure ensures a rigorous interpretation while respecting the richness of the information gathered in the field.

Finally, to enhance the scientific robustness of the findings, this research employs the principle of methodological triangulation. Information from questionnaires, interviews, and participant observations was systematically compared to verify consistency and minimize biases associated with relying on a single source of information. This approach strengthens both the study's internal validity and the credibility of the conclusions drawn. According to Patton, triangulation is one of the most effective strategies for increasing confidence in the results of qualitative and mixed-methods research. Overall, this methodological approach meets the scientific standards of contemporary social science research by combining the statistical rigor of quantitative analysis with the interpretive depth of qualitative approaches²¹.

This methodological complementarity provides a framework particularly well-suited to analyzing the multidimensional effects of the TANGO HARO Festival on the sustainable territorial development of the Betsiboka region [20,21].

3. Results

Analysis of data collected from visitors, artisans, exhibitors, business operators, institutional officials, and cultural stakeholders highlights that the TANGO HARO Festival is now a major driver of territorial development in the Betsiboka region, particularly in

the Maevatanana district. The results show that its impact extends far beyond the scope of a mere cultural event, simultaneously fostering heritage valorization, strengthening social cohesion, boosting the local economy, enhancing tourism appeal, and consolidating territorial governance.

3.1. Significant Promotion of Local Cultural Heritage

Quantitative data reveal that a large majority of those surveyed believe the TANGO HARO Festival effectively contributes to safeguarding and promoting the cultural heritage of Betsiboka. Respondents highlight that the various activities organized during the festival showcase traditional dances, local music, customary ceremonies, artisanal practices, culinary specialties, and skills passed down through generations.

Field observations show that areas dedicated to craft demonstrations and cultural performances attract a particularly diverse audience, comprising both local residents and visitors from other regions of Madagascar. Young people actively participate in the organized cultural activities, particularly artistic competitions, folk performances, and workshops exploring local traditions. This strong engagement reflects a renewed interest among the younger generations in their cultural heritage.

Interviews with cultural association leaders confirm this trend. According to them, the TANGO HARO Festival is now one of the few occasions where holders of traditional knowledge can directly pass on their expertise to younger generations in a setting that fosters appreciation and participation. This intergenerational transmission helps mitigate the risk of cultural erosion often seen in societies facing the effects of globalization. These findings align with UNESCO's analysis, which views cultural events as key instruments for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage²².

Traditional authorities also emphasize that the inclusion of Doany (sacred sites), ancestral rites, and customary practices in the festival enhances the visibility of local cultural values to outside visitors [22]. Thus, the festival goes beyond merely presenting artistic activities; it becomes a genuine space for the transmission of cultural identity.

3.2. The Tangoharo Festival as a Factor of Social Cohesion

The results also highlight the festival's significant contribution to strengthening social cohesion in a region characterized by great cultural diversity. Survey responses indicate that a large majority of participants believe the TANGO HARO Festival fosters dialogue among the various communities living in Betsiboka.

Participant observation reveals that cultural event spaces naturally encourage interaction between people from different ethnic, religious, and social backgrounds. Collective activities—such as performances, traditional sports competitions, craft exhibitions, and culinary events—create an environment conducive to meeting others and forging new social connections.

Interviews indicate that this integrative function is one of the TANGO HARO Festival's defining characteristics. Several community leaders view the event as a tangible symbol of Tangoharo understood as the capacity of populations from diverse backgrounds to build a shared project while preserving their respective identities. This perspective aligns with the work of Robert Putnam, who argues that collective activities strengthen social capital by fostering trust, cooperation, and networks of solidarity among citizens²³.

Qualitative data also indicate that the festival helps alleviate certain social tensions stemming from cultural or economic differences. Organizers deliberately implement activities that encourage participation from all

communities in the region [23]. This inclusive approach strengthens the sense of local belonging and fosters civic engagement in local initiatives.

3.3. Tangible Economic Benefits for Local Stakeholders.

Quantitative survey results clearly highlight the positive impact of the TANGO HARO Festival on the local economy. A significant majority of the merchants, artisans, restaurateurs, and exhibitors surveyed reported a substantial increase in revenue during the festival period.

Field observations reveal a remarkable surge in economic activity within the various commercial areas set up for the event. There is strong demand from visitors for handicrafts, art objects, processed agricultural products, traditional clothing, and local culinary specialties.

Artisans note that the festival often serves as their primary annual opportunity to sell their products directly to a broader customer base. This visibility not only boosts their income but also helps expand their professional networks and build a loyal new clientele.

Local business operators also emphasize that the festival stimulates several complementary sectors, including transport, accommodation, dining, digital services, commercial space rentals, and communications. These multiplier effects align with Throsby's analyses, which demonstrate that cultural events generate direct, indirect, and induced economic impacts within local economies²⁴.

Furthermore, local authorities believe the festival is gradually fostering the emergence of small entrepreneurial ventures led by young people and women, thereby contributing to the diversification of the regional economy [24].

3.4. A Tool for Cultural Tourism Development

Analysis of the results also shows that the TANGO HARO Festival significantly enhances the tourism appeal of the Betsiboka region. Visitors surveyed state that attending the festival allowed them to discover not only the local cultural richness but also the region's natural, historical, and heritage assets.

Observations show that many visitors extend their stay to visit the area's historical sites, natural landscapes, and sacred places. Local guides note that this influx of visitors is gradually fostering the development of cultural tourism—a sector that has remained largely untapped in this part of Madagascar.

Local authorities view the festival as a genuine tool for promoting the region. The various media activities surrounding the event boost Betsiboka's national visibility and are gradually helping to position it as a cultural destination [25]. These observations confirm Richards' work, according to which cultural festivals play a strategic role in shaping the image of territories and developing experiential tourism²⁵.

3.5. Territorial Governance Based on Collective Participation

Finally, qualitative results show that the TANGO HARO Festival serves as a prime setting for participatory governance. Its organization simultaneously engages local authorities, decentralized state services, community organizations, traditional leaders, cultural associations, business operators, and private partners.

Interviews indicate that this cooperation fosters better coordination of local initiatives and strengthens the organizational capacity of local institutions. Several officials view the festival as a governance laboratory where various stakeholders gradually learn to build collective projects.

Participant observation also highlights the strong involvement of young volunteers in organizing activities, welcoming visitors, raising environmental awareness, and facilitating cultural events. This participation contributes to developing local human capital and fosters the acquisition of skills useful for other territorial development initiatives.

Beyond its economic and cultural impact, the TANGO HARO Festival emerges as a powerful symbol of peaceful coexistence in a region historically characterized by significant ethnic and cultural diversity. By championing the very concept of Tangoharo, it provides a framework where differences become a collective asset rather than a source of division. This ability to transform cultural diversity into a territorial resource aligns with Sen's analyses, which posit that sustainable development relies primarily on expanding individuals' capabilities to participate fully in the economic, social, and cultural life of their community²⁶.

Overall, the results demonstrate that the TANGO HARO Festival extends far beyond its role as a mere event. It constitutes a genuine territorial mechanism capable of integrating cultural heritage, social cohesion, economic development, tourism appeal, and local governance [26]. This complementarity confirms that cultural events can become strategic instruments for sustainable territorial development when driven by strong local stakeholder engagement and integrated into a long-term development vision.

4. Discussion

The results demonstrate that the TANGO HARO Festival goes far beyond the status of a mere annual cultural event. It emerges as a genuine territorial mechanism that simultaneously mobilizes the cultural, social, economic, tourism, and institutional dimensions of local development. This reality confirms the study's main hypotheses and aligns with various theoretical approaches in the social sciences and territorial economics. Indeed, data analysis shows that leveraging culture is not solely a matter of heritage preservation; it also represents a strategic resource capable of strengthening territorial resilience to enhance their attractiveness and strengthen the collective action capabilities of local communities.

The first theoretical contribution of this research concerns the role of cultural capital in territorial development processes. The results show that artisanal skills, oral traditions, ritual practices, artistic expressions, and intangible heritage highlighted by the TANGO HARO Festival directly contribute to creating new economic and social opportunities. This observation aligns with Pierre Bourdieu's analyses, according to which cultural capital constitutes a set of symbolic and cognitive resources capable of producing concrete effects on individual and collective trajectories²⁷. In the context of Betsiboka, these cultural resources become genuine territorial assets when they are recognized, organized, and mobilized within a collective development strategy.

The analysis also reveals that this cultural valorization helps strengthen the local population's sense of belonging. Interviews indicate that residents view their heritage more as a source of collective pride than merely as a historical legacy [27]. This shift is particularly significant in a region characterized by great ethnic and cultural diversity. By giving institutional visibility to the various cultural elements present in the area, the TANGO HARO Festival fosters mutual recognition of local identities while reinforcing their integration into a shared vision of development.

These observations also align with the work of Throsby, who posits that cultural goods possess a dual value: an economic value—measurable through generated income and jobs—and a cultural value linked to their contribution to identity, collective memory, and social cohesion²⁸. The study's results demonstrate precisely that these two dimensions are closely intertwined. Artisanal activities, traditional performances, and heritage exhibitions do not merely generate financial returns; they also contribute to the transmission of local knowledge and the strengthening of social ties.

The second contribution of this research concerns the role of social capital in territorial dynamics. Observations made during the festival show that it fosters increased interaction among social, cultural, and professional groups that might otherwise have few opportunities to cooperate. The spaces for interaction created by the festival facilitate the sharing of experiences, economic collaboration, and the development of new networks of solidarity.

These findings corroborate the work of Robert Putnam, who posits that the quality of social relations is a vital resource for territorial development²⁹. According to Putnam, regions with high social capital more readily develop forms of cooperation, mutual trust, and civic participation—all essential elements for the success of collective projects. The TANGO HARO Festival provides a concrete example of this dynamic by creating an environment where cultural differences serve as a basis for cooperation rather than a source of social fragmentation.

The very notion of Tangoharo offers a unique contribution to the scientific debates on managing cultural diversity [28,29]. The results show that this concept is not limited to the passive coexistence of populations of different origins. On the contrary, it reflects an active process of dialogue, interaction, and the construction of a shared territorial identity. From this perspective, cultural diversity appears as a collective asset capable of fostering social innovation, economic creativity, and local development. This interpretation aligns with UNESCO's guidelines, which consider cultural diversity an essential factor in sustainable development, peace, and intercultural dialogue³⁰.

Furthermore, this study confirms contemporary approaches to territorial development, which emphasize the importance of specific territorial resources. For Pecqueur, a territory creates value when it succeeds in transforming its local resources into collective advantages through the mobilization of stakeholders and the coordination of initiatives³¹. The results demonstrate that the Tangoharo Festival precisely embodies this principle [30]. The cultural, historical, and social resources of Betsiboka, long perceived as mere local heritage, are gradually becoming drivers of economic, tourism, and institutional development.

However, the findings also highlight several challenges that could limit the sustainability of this momentum. The first concerns territorial governance [31]. Interviews with organizers show that the festival's success still largely depends on the personal commitment of a few association leaders, local authorities, and institutional partners. This strong dependence on a limited number of actors could jeopardize the project's continuity if institutional succession mechanisms are not sufficiently structured.

This observation aligns with the work of Elinor Ostrom, who demonstrates that the sustainability of collective initiatives depends primarily on the capacity of local institutions to establish stable, inclusive governance rules adapted to the realities of the territory³². In the case of the TANGO HARO Festival, this perspective underscores the need to strengthen planning, coordination, monitoring and evaluation, and financing mechanisms to ensure the event's long-term sustainability.

A second challenge concerns the consolidation of institutional capacities. The results show that several local stakeholders wish to further develop the festival's economic and tourism dimensions but have limited financial, technical, and organizational resources. This situation confirms the analyses of the Organisation for

Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which state that territorial policies produce lasting effects when they are based on strong local institutions, participatory governance, and permanent mechanisms for cooperation between the public, private, and community sectors³³.

Finally, the results suggest that the TANGO HARO Festival should be considered an instrument of territorial public policy rather than a one-off event. The observed benefits in terms of social cohesion, cultural enhancement, economic development, and tourism appeal demonstrate that it could be more fully integrated into regional strategies sustainable development. Such integration would notably strengthen the links between culture, education, tourism, local entrepreneurship, and heritage preservation, while improving the coordination of public and private initiatives³⁴.

In this context, the TANGO HARO Festival serves as a particularly relevant example of new approaches to territorial development that recognize culture as a driver of innovation, civic participation, and value creation [32-34]. The experience in Betsiboka demonstrates that regions with rich cultural diversity can turn this plurality into a competitive advantage, provided they establish inclusive governance, effective institutions, and sustainable cooperation mechanisms.

Thus, territorial development relies not only on the exploitation of natural resources or physical investments but also on the capacity of communities to leverage their cultural heritage, strengthen their social capital, and collectively build a shared vision for the territory.

5. Conclusion

This study aimed to analyze the contribution of the TANGO HARO Betsiboka Festival to sustainable territorial development in the Maevatanana district. Using a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews, and participant observation, the results demonstrate that this event goes far beyond the scope of a periodic cultural gathering. It acts as a genuine instrument for territorial development, simultaneously mobilizing cultural, social, economic, tourism-related, and institutional dimensions.

The analysis shows that the festival actively contributes to showcasing Betsiboka's tangible and intangible cultural heritage while fostering the intergenerational transmission of local knowledge. It also strengthens the sense of belonging to the territory and helps consolidate social cohesion in a region characterized by significant ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity. This ability to transform cultural plurality into a factor for social cohesion provides a concrete illustration of how culture can become a strategic resource for sustainable development.

Economically, the results highlight positive benefits for artisans, merchants, tourism operators, and small local businesses. The festival stimulates local consumption, fosters the creation of income-generating activities, and gradually enhances the region's

economic visibility. Furthermore, its impact on tourism appeal opens up new prospects for developing cultural tourism based on showcasing Betsiboka's historical, natural, and intangible heritage.

This research thus confirms that sustainable territorial development does not rely solely on tangible investments or the exploitation of natural resources; it also depends on the ability of local stakeholders to mobilize their cultural resources, social capital, and institutions to collectively build a development path tailored to the region's realities³⁵. The TANGO HARO Festival perfectly illustrates this approach by turning cultural diversity into a driver of social innovation, civic participation, and economic value creation.

However, the results also show that the sustainability of this dynamic remains closely linked to strengthening territorial governance, professionalizing the festival's organization, and establishing sustainable funding mechanisms [35]. These conditions appear essential to ensure the continuity of this initiative and strengthen its impact on regional development.

Finally, this study contributes to enriching the body of research on the relationship between culture and territorial development in Madagascar. It highlights the importance of further integrating cultural festivals into local public policies and opens up several avenues for research, particularly concerning the evaluation of long-term economic impacts, the measurement of social capital generated by cultural events, and collaborative governance mechanisms applied to multicultural territories³⁶.

Recommendations

In light of the results obtained, several recommendations can be made to sustainably consolidate the contributions of the TANGO HARO Festival to the territorial development of the Betsiboka region.

The first recommendation is to institutionalize the TANGO HARO Festival at the regional level. Its official inclusion in the development programs of the Betsiboka Region, the municipalities concerned, and the relevant ministries would ensure greater organizational continuity, multi-year planning, and enhanced institutional recognition [36,37]. This integration would also facilitate the regular mobilization of the human, technical, and financial resources necessary for its development³⁷.

The second recommendation concerns strengthening participatory governance. The results show that the festival's success largely depends on the joint involvement of local authorities, traditional leaders, community organizations, cultural associations, the private sector, and citizens. It therefore appears necessary to establish a permanent governance committee bringing together all these stakeholders to ensure more effective coordination of decisions, a better distribution of responsibilities, and regular monitoring of actions undertaken. Inclusive governance generally promotes transparency, institutional trust, and collective ownership of local projects³⁸.

The third recommendation concerns the development of public-private partnerships. Local businesses, financial institutions, international cooperation organizations, universities, and non-governmental organizations could contribute to strengthening the festival's technical and financial capacities [38]. These partnerships would notably improve accommodation infrastructure, support the entrepreneurial activities of artisans, and foster the professionalization of local cultural sectors.

The fourth recommendation aims to further promote cultural tourism by integrating the TANGO HARO Festival into a coherent regional tourism strategy. This strategy could combine historical sites, sacred places, ecotourism circuits, artisanal productions, local gastronomy, and intangible heritage to diversify Betsiboka's tourism offerings. The development of digital tools and platforms communication and national and international promotional campaigns would also boost the destination's visibility and help increase economic benefits for local communities³⁹.

Finally, securing sustainable funding for the festival is essential. Beyond one-off public grants, several complementary mechanisms could be leveraged: creating a regional fund dedicated to culture, diversifying funding sources, seeking cultural patronage, engaging international partners, developing private sponsorship, and implementing self-financing schemes through specific economic activities generated by the festival [38-40]. Diversifying financial resources is a key factor in the resilience of local cultural initiatives and helps ensure their long-term sustainability⁴⁰.

Ultimately, these recommendations aim to make the TANGO HARO Festival not only an iconic cultural event for the Betsiboka region but also a model of territorial governance where culture becomes a genuine driver of economic development, social cohesion, and regional appeal. Their implementation would help sustainably strengthen the territory's capacity to transform its cultural heritage and human diversity into competitive advantages, fostering inclusive, participatory, and sustainable development.

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Footnotes

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