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Cultural Routes of the council of Europe: New Paradigms for the Territorial Project and Landscape.

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ABSTRACT

The article aims at offering a methodological contribution to the study and project of cultural routes. The cultural routes are analysed considering their nature of complex territorial systems.

The potential which cultural routes may develop, if considered as cultural complex and inclusive goods, is the understanding of the interactions with the landscape at the change of socio-economic and cultural contexts crossed. In this sense, cultural routes are tools of development for a landscape project based on the endogenous resources of the territories.

Keywords: Cultural Routes; Landscape; Territorial Development; European Council

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1. Introduction¹

We are flesh and geography. Space is a necessary condition in the construction of our identity and more we are moved away from its direct manipulation even more our identity becomes insignificant, loses its value also for ourselves.

F. La Cecla (2007, p.128)

Studying cultural routes, and in particular those of the Council of Europe, means studying complex cultural goods, rooted in the territorial realities they cross.

The complexity of cultural routes can be understood and studied by assimilating these articulated cultural goods to “systems of systems”, by understanding their complexity through a multidisciplinary and holistic perspective.

Each cultural route project represents above all a territorial project, helping in reading the signs of history etched in the landscape and allowing at decompiling this collective autobiography and interpreting old and recent evidences.

Heritage, tangible and intangible, has to be interpreted as key elements in the construction of cultural routes at the European level and in the creation of the identity of territories involved in.

2. Origin and development of the programme of Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe.

The important steps of the development of this cultural programme is essential in order to understand the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, object of study.

The programme of Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe celebrated in 2012 25 years, twenty-five years from the certification of the two first cultural routes: Rural habitat and Saint-James Ways. The debate about the opportunity of creating a framework for cultural cooperation along the route was developed in the Seventies, when a working group presented a report underlining an increasing awareness about the existence of cultural sites attracting European people and about the role that they can play as attractors during their leisure time, in a society where paid holidays give Europeans the possibility to discover their neighbour countries and their cultures.

The conclusions of this report were oriented to an idea of rediscovering common heritage through travelling, exchange of people and ideas, intercultural and interreligious dialogue, protection of landscape, in order to develop and reinforce cultural cooperation in particular between East and West of Europe (Berti, 2012).

Starting from 1987, the Programme of the Cultural Routes was reinforced and structured, by certifying new cultural routes and creating new resolutions and

special criteria, in order to creating a reference frame for the new projects and the monitoring of existing routes.

Cultural Routes certified until today have different geographical coverage and different themes. Following the steps of pilgrims and traders, to Santiago or Rome or in the middle of Europe (Saint-James paths, Via Francigena, Via Regia), walking through vineyards or olives landscapes, from the south of Europe and Caucasus to the Mediterranean basin (Iter Vitis, Olive Tree Routes) or rediscovering the travels of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (European Mozart Ways). Since its origins Cultural Routes' programme highlights the educational role of travelling, underlined also in the past by the didactic journeys of young people from the high class, already existing in the classical and Hellenistic period, then for clerics during the Middle-age and in the XVIII-XIX centuries with the "invention" of Grand Tour.

At the same time, the programme provide Member states of the Council of Europe with a frame encouraging cultural cooperation, by developing projects involving different political-administrative levels, from the local one to the national and European. It is a European programme aiming at stimulating citizenship and democracy in culture and landscape policies, involving local people in all the steps of the creation of the route.

According with the definition given by Michel Thomas-Penette in 1997, just before the approval of the resolution on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe:

Cultural Routes are funded on a cultural cooperation process answering three functions. The first one is a function of protection of European cultural values, considering existing tensions between local, regional, national, European identity.

The second one is a function of dynamic observatory, allowing at exchanging information and experiences. The third one is an experimental function, underlining the cooperation between different and complementary research sectors, new forms of exchanges for young Europeans, raising awareness of the role of less-known heritage

The resolution on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, CM/Res (2010)53, defines a Cultural Route as a cultural, educational heritage and tourism co-operation project aiming at the development and promotion of an itinerary or a series of itineraries based on a historic route, a cultural concept, figure or phenomenon with a transnational importance and significance for the understanding and respect of common European values.

3. A landscape approach to Cultural Routes

Each Cultural Route is a territorial cultural project, which has to be based on the “virtuous circle” resource/project/territory (Lajarge, Roux, 2007), elements which are interrelated between each other. Territories exist through projects developed coherently with existing resources. In the same way, project generates new resources for the territory.

When cultural routes are compared to complex territorial networks it is useful to remind the theories elaborated by Dematteis (1997) on the urban dynamics, in particular the so called multipolar networks. In these networks centers with different dimensions and at different hierarchy levels operate in a complementary manner.

This model is the product of long processes of historic and identity stratification, which are integrated in the regions tracing and drawing landscapes as they are perceived today.

This kind of network is structured starting from multipolar links: the central role is not necessarily depending on the dimension of the center, but on the capacity of the center in being incorporated into the channels of exchange, economic but also environmental and socio-cultural. Such a structure has a strong geographical-territorial structure and seems to be the more appropriated model for studying cultural routes, because it can reproduce the complexity of different kinds of links existing at local level (in our case it is necessary to go beyond the administrative borders up to the European scale). This complexity is innate for each territory and has to consider both the horizontal and vertical relations.

If we transfer this reticular model into the specific case of cultural routes, each pole of each network takes on a specific role according to the relation developed with the theme of the route and with the meaning it has both at the local and at the European level.

In the case of cultural routes founded on historic heritage, the systems of deep relations existing provoked, during the centuries, the organization of interdependences and interconnections more or less spontaneous between territorial elements, depending on the historical, cultural, environmental, social, ethnical, political relations and events, often expressed also by visual relations. Assimilating each route to a territorial network allows to reading different levels of existing relations between route and territories involved in the project and to recognise the linchpins and the functional connections between elements and context.

Cultural route, as a network, can produce and recompose internal links for local populations, through relationship-wise forms of negotiation, solidarity, economic coalition, as Dematteis (1997) theorises. These connections include in the case of cultural route, different stakeholders, from residents to institutions, from local to international and European level.

Since their initial phase, the transnational dimension is one of the fundamental criteria for cultural routes: this aspect allows the traveller to not perceive administrative borders, in particular in the case of path walkable by foot. Landscape becomes bearer of meanings and sense for societies which produces it.

Following their geographical structure, cultural routes can be divided into three categories, founded on the relations between elements of the route and territory.

If the theme is the key to understand heritage, the categories created according to geography helps in the understanding of the connections between heritage and landscape created during the centuries.

At a large scale, cultural routes can be distinguished between:

- territorial route (areas) in other words routes involving entire territories associated by a same theme. Through these areas different paths are proposed in order to better understand the theme;
- linear routes, corresponding to a physical path or to a network of itineraries, univocal and recognisable;
- archipelagos routes, corresponding to network of sites or tangible goods, reachable by different paths, sometimes suggested by the routes.

Territorial cultural routes develop themes which link different regions of Europe and beyond, leaving strong traces into landscape as well as into heritage (tangible and intangible). Visual and perceptive connections contribute in letting understanding travellers the theme of the route (Majdoub 2010; Zabbini, 2012).

4. Principles for a landscape project for Cultural Routes.

In order to propose a good cultural route project it is essential to operate not following abstract principles, but understand each time fragilities and opportunities offered by places part of the route, considering a double point of view: the inner point of view, in the network of the route and the point of view from the route to the context.

The first one facilitates the understanding of internal links, those between elements part of the route, also whit the change of countries. The second one facilitates the analysis of existing and under evolution interdependences between route and landscape.

Both these points of view on the route and on landscape along or around the route and its elements have to be coordinated and used as an analysis tool, in order to organise the cultural route project in coherence with the context in which it is developed.

As in every landscape project, it is important to understand the genius loci of the sites involved, which makes sites authentic and living, and examine the

endogenous resources of the territory object of the project, its vocations and potentiality.

The analysis of the route components, operated through the division into thematic systems, makes possible to give a sort of anamnesis, identifying forces and weaknesses of the "cultural route" as a system.

It is crucial a proactive involvement of local people, or insider according to the definition made by Daniel Crosgrove (1984), into the governance policies of the routes. Local people have to be the first interlocutors for those in charge of the project, who often are insiders too. Raising awareness of local people it will be possible to involve them in the process of re-reading and re-interpretation of their living heritage and, by doing this process actively, they will be ready to share their heritage with the outsiders.

Cultural routes have a function of media of this system of relations, which is necessary in order to live the experience of the route: all routes are places in which travellers and tourists (outsiders) enter in a relationship with local people (insiders). In order to define a model to precede in the project of cultural routes it is important to take into account the fact that the context involved in the cultural routes is the context of life for local people.

Cultural routes can become tools to guide a sustainable development of territories, in order to avoid the vulgarisation and the homologation of places, the loss of social identity, the deterritorialisation (Raffestin, 2005), the consequences of which change landscapes. It is a matter of maintaining and recuperating those connections between people and space defined by Augustin Berque (2008) as the links of ecumene, where landscape is at the same time topography element and existential place (chora). Relationships between people and territory and between different communities are understandable through memory and history.

Semiological and perceptive analysis, associated with territorial investigations, analysis of environmental, anthropic, landscape resources, are necessary in order to identify the elements organising this complex system of connections between landscape and route and among elements of the same route.

5. Defining boundaries for the project

First of all it is necessary to choose the more appropriated boundary to be considered in the project of a route, if only the path and the places part of the route or a larger area.

The more appropriate possibility, in this network approach, is to establish the frame on the basis of functional, visual, cultural connections, and not on the basis of an abstract boundary, which could create a corridor in conflict with the assimilation of cultural routes with territorial network. By highlighting cultural, environmental, landscape resources it is possible to understand which elements

constitute this complex system of connections route and landscape (Gumuchian, Pecqueur, 2007).

The analysis to delimitate the boundary of projects, on which the cognitive frame will be based, have to include this context, without exceptions or omissions based on an aesthetic judgment (Clement, 2005).

The definition of the operational frame changes, according to the type of route. The perceptive analysis, in particular the studies on visibility between route and landscape and the visibility related to the path, the interpretation of different landscape's matrixes and of natural signs, morphology, hydrography, facilitate the definition of boundary. It is necessary to define the faces of the visual "container" along which the traveller moves along and which contains the dense net of sensorial and cultural connections generated between route and context.

Linear cultural routes retrace generally historic paths. In this case the system of connections is connected to deep link developed between routes and landscape (Mc Harg, 2007). The context of the route is easily identifiable with that "container" perceived by travellers walking along the routes and visual-perceptive relations are useful to delimitate boundaries.

The perceptions analysis is fundamental also for defining the area of the route in the case of archipelagos routes, in particular taking into account the intervisibility between goods (simple or aggregated) part of the routes. In this case the context can be defined using intervisibility between goods and sites and landscapes surrounding them.

The studies on this issue (Berti, 2012) highlight that the analysis conducted using pictures integrate usefully the three-dimensional models. In particular in order to increase effectiveness, pictures have to be taken from the paths to landscape in the case of linear routes, from landscape to the goods, between the goods (when it is possible) and from the goods to landscape in the case of archipelagos routes, in order to be effective for the results of the analysis.

6. Preparing a project

Taking into account the complexity of routes as dynamic cultural goods it will be necessary to consider the potential of each route (Berti, 2012), in particular:

- **creating a continuity** in reading landscape beyond political-administrative barriers;
- **creating connections and highlighting** historic landscapes, allowing a reading of the theme of the route and of the history of the territory;
- **redefining and giving a context to landscape's fragments** having lost a coherence because policies and dynamics which did not read the deep signs of territory;
- activating **creation's process for new shared landscapes**;

- **activating process for trans-border cooperation on the theme of landscape**, which consider landscape of different routes as a continuous system of relationships along the path, on territories or between goods part of different routes;
- **establishing an observatory** on transformations and on dynamics existing on European involved landscapes.

During the project process, as it is a landscape project of a territorial network, landscape does not represent an element “of decoration”, a maquillage which travellers only observe, but a unifying principle in the complex system “cultural route”: considering landscape as a global hypertext we find different levels of reading landscape and it is possible to find a complex net of connections between elements.

The different steps of landscape project, which will structure the route, have to be articulated according to the following scheme:

- establishing the type of route we are planning, in order to understand potentialities and criticisms linked to geometry;
- establishing the scale for the development of the route;
- defining the frame for the project, taking into account that a route is not only a path, or a monument alone or a part of territory, but it is a system of existing relations, both territorial and cultural, between the different components of the routes;
- preparing a participatory composition of the cognitive frame;
- defining and reading connections' systems between landscape and elements of routes which present declinations coherently with the characters of both the route and landscape;
- preparing a SWOT analysis, which is necessary for defining the priorities for the route;
- delecting one or more useful solutions in order to realise the priorities founded in the previous phases;
- defining stakeholders to involve in the project phase and appropriated economic tools.

The success of a project is linked with the comprehension of the context, the relationships systems, and has to take into account the complexity of cultural routes.

An important step during this process is the analysis of these connections' systems in the route: these interconnections and continuities are part of the route and represent the basis to describe good guidelines for further developments of the projects.

7. Conclusions

Through the assimilation of routes to complex territorial networks and thank to the division in three geographic macrocategories, different elements shall be taken into consideration and cultural routes become paths of a planetary garden, with strong potentials from an ecological point of view.

As each route is a network, we can conclude that the group of certified routes are a complex network with nodal points in those places where cultural routes intersect each other.

The potential of the landscape project of the routes is founded in the comprehension that landscape changes when socio-economic and cultural contexts change.

A development in this sense can be considered as a potential solution vis-à-vis the fragmentation and the extensive use of landscape, through the research of the continuity of the connections' system developed between routes and landscape (Berti, 2012).

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