

Cultural landscapes under the threat of tourism and climate change: lessons from Europe

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Cultural tourism has become an increasingly complex phenomenon with political, social, economic, educational, environmental, and aesthetic dimensions. The achievement of a beneficial interaction between conflicting needs entails many opportunities but also many risks. If not managed properly, cultural tourism can easily turn into a "value extractive" industry, generating negative environmental, social and cultural impacts on local communities and ecosystems.

Clearly, cultural landscapes and cultural heritage are major tourism attractions and are a fundamental aspect of our communities and economies. However, they are vulnerable to continuous effects of climate change and other risks, like environmental pollution and over-tourism. Therefore, fostering resilience is essential. In this context, a series of EU-funded projects, such as Be.Cultour and RescueME show the links between cultural landscapes and communities, contributing to the identity, resilience and cultural diversity of territories. Specifically, Be.Cultour (Beyond Cultural Tourism) develops specific strategies to promote an understanding of cultural tourism, which moves away from a "stop-and-go" consumer-oriented approach towards one that puts humans and circular economy models at its centre, paying attention to nature, communities and cultural diversity. "Place" is intended as the genius loci, the ancient spirit of the site and "people" are co-creators of its uniqueness, culture, art, tradition, folklore, productivity, spirituality. In the framework of the project sustainable human-centred innovations for circular cultural tourism have been co-created and tested through collaborative innovation networks/methodologies and improved investments strategies. Targeting deprived remote, peripheral or deindustrialized areas and cultural landscapes as well as over-exploited areas, local Heritage innovation networks have defined a long-term heritage-led development project in the areas involved enhancing inclusive economic growth, communities' wellbeing and resilience, nature regeneration as well as effective cooperation at cross-border, regional and local level.

Also focussed on cultural landscapes, RescueMe (Resilient Cultural Landscapes) demonstrates that an innovative data-driven, community-based, heritage-centric actionable landscape approach to resilience enhancement can protect our heritage and support the transition to a green society and economy. Specifically, the project tests the effectiveness of an actionable framework based on the resilient historical landscape approach complemented by data, models, methods and tools to protect European cultural heritage, through five case studies currently being carried out in coastal landscapes.

In both projects, strong involvement of citizens is driving reflection and implementation of civic responsibility and (inter)cultural policies. Lack of co-creation with communities in establishing goals, strategies, policies and protocols for the identification, conservation, management, presentation and interpretation of their heritage resources and practices can lead to conflicts and have an adverse impact on communities. The projects show that building a heritage community can be an effective starting point for stimulating not only its resilience but also community bonds, civic responsibility, and potential entrepreneurial activities for longer-term sustainable development.

References:

[D3.4 – Report on Challenge-driven innovation in Be.CULTOUR regions](#)

D3.5 – Action Plans and concept solutions for sustainable cultural tourism in pilot heritage sites