

## **Networking on the cultural landscape. The Example of the European Cemeteries Route in France and Spain**

Montserrat Crivillers Simon

PhD student  
EIREST, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne  
montserrat.crivillers-simon@univ-paris1.fr

### **Abstract**

In the European setting, the network of Cultural Routes is used as a means of promoting common European history and identity. The Council of Europe launched the Cultural Routes programme in 1987. The objectives were focused on boosting the historical and cultural identities of European peoples; on the protection and revitalisation of tangible cultural heritage; and on the creation of new cultures of leisure and entertainment focused on cultural tourism. This article highlights the networking of the European Cemeteries Route in France and Spain. This cultural route was specially created for cultural tourism; its analysis allows us to understand the nature of the different relationships established between the actors at different levels.

*Keywords:* networking, cultural routes, sustainable tourism, cultural landscape, cemeteries, governance.

### **1. Introduction: cultural tourism and networking**

Cultural tourism is an activity that presents characteristics that make it particularly interesting for analysing the networking process. It has always been cross-cutting, as its development requires the assistance of various sectors, which, while working towards the same goal, have independent and, in many cases, contradictory logics. Moreover, cultural tourism needs the collaboration of both public and private sectors, because for its development it is essential to use public resources, the responsibility and management of which falls upon the various levels of government (natural resources, cultural, territorial, etc.). But it is, additionally, important to consider the level of involvement of the host society necessary for the proper development of the tourism sector, which, in terms of governance, means the involvement of civil society.

One of the characteristics of cultural tourism is its non-exportable character due its territorialisation. In a context of cultural globalisation, different cultural landscapes maintain the distinctive characteristics of local identities and generate ownership.

Sometimes problems are caused by tourism bringing two cultures—tourists and residents—together. Tourism can put the identity and freedom of the inhabitants of a place in question and there is a risk of “folklorising” their culture (García Canclini, 1989). Tourism has been identified as the main factor responsible for the commercialisation and falsification of many traditional cultural events (Croall, 1995), but also tourism is often used to enhance the identity and qualities of the local culture (Du Cluzeau, 2005). Tourist destinations find competitive advantages in resources available in terms of landscape, climate, heritage and local competitions that reflect the uniqueness of the site, for example, in popular culture, the arts, design, architecture, events, traditions, etc. These are the elements of identity of place that should be reflected in the development of cultural tourism products and destination promotion strategies (Govers & Go, 2009).

The tourist area that may include a cultural landscape is a meeting point for actors from different sectors that share a degree of interdependence. In recent years, a considerable number of studies have been dedicated to analyses of the complex structure of tourist destinations, of their stakeholders, systems and the ways their interaction contributes to the creation of a tourism product (Butler, 1980; Jackson & Murphy, 2002; Sorensen, 2002). In order to offer a satisfactory tourism experience, tourist destinations require coordination and cooperation between all the sectors involved, as well as the implementation of networks between the different stakeholders in the tourism activity (Tinsley & Lynch, 2001). Their scope can be local, regional, national or international; however, it is at the local or regional level that the representation of all the stakeholders is most important (Coleman, 1988). A network is more efficient when it is established between groups or individuals who have developed relational links of mutual support, a common goal and horizontal or equal power (Wasserman & Faust, 1994; Moulin & Boniface, 2001). The public and private sectors have an essential role in the correct development of the tourist destination. Companies are not the only ones that establish links between themselves, relationships are also built between public administrations and the private sector (Dredge, 2006).

## **2. The European Cultural Routes**

The concepts developed above (cultural tourism, identity, territory) are related to the subject of thematic routes. The study of this phenomenon is relatively new. A cultural route is a thematic route that assigns a central role to cultural attractions (Puczko & Ratz, 2007). These cultural routes can be based on already-existing historical roads (such as the Santiago de Compostela Pilgrim Routes) or can be specifically created for cultural tourism. This “flexibility” leads actors in many regions of the world to launch and develop Cultural Routes as territorial strategies for economic revitalisation and positioning in the international tourist market (Ramírez, 2011). These routes are used as development tools

for destinations with less tourist importance, since they are expected to stimulate economic activity and attract tourists thanks to their affiliation to stronger destinations (Majdoub, 2010; Mariotti, 2012).

The network configuration of the territories is the main driving force behind the Cultural Routes. The fragmented and diverse nature of the tourism industry is often an obstacle to the adoption of sustainable practices. Cooperation can help to overcome this fragmentation and can contribute to achieving the goal of sustainability, particularly through its integrative approach (Majdoub, 2010). Briedenhann and Wickens (2004) argue that the clustering of activities and attractions in less developed tourist areas stimulates cooperation and collaboration between local communities and serves as a vehicle for economic development through tourism.

The Cultural Routes programme of the Council of Europe was created in 1987 and was consolidated in 1998 with the creation of the European Institute of Cultural Routes (a technical body). The aim of the Council of Europe was the rediscovery of culture, not only of the great cultural property, but also the other, forgotten goods in less well-known tourist regions to find this idea of the European identity in all its expressions. These are projects anchored in the territory that can offer travellers from other continents a new idea of Europe, a Europe of wider themes, which can be known through these types of projects. At the same time, the Cultural Routes allow us to enhance the knowledge and awareness of Europeans about landscapes and cultural tourism. These routes seek to become an essential tool for disseminating and sharing European heritage as a cornerstone of European citizenship, a means of improving quality of life, and a source of social, economic and cultural dynamism. In this way, the importance of Cultural Routes is recognised in relation to the development of sustainable cultural tourism and cross-border cultural cooperation that builds on local knowledge and skills, as well as on heritage assets, and enhances Europe's status as a destination offering a unique cultural experience (Council of Europe, 2010). At present, 33 Cultural Routes benefit from the Council of Europe's certification. Each project must promote research and development and favour the memory of European heritage. It must also take into account the charters, conventions and recommendations of institutions like the Council of Europe, ICOMOS and UNESCO.

The Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe offer enormous potential for cooperation at all levels: European, national, regional and local. The programme must be based on this potential, as well as on experience, know-how and the reputation acquired to develop common strategies and establish alliances with different actors and levels of authority both at European and international level. In 2010 an Enlarged Partial Agreement (EPA) was created in the Council of Europe (Council of Europe, 2010) to bring together the countries particularly interested in the development of Cultural Routes. The EPA was confirmed

permanently in December 2013. Resolution CM/Res(2013)66 (Council of Europe, 2013a) provides the following definition of Cultural Route: “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”.

The project initiatives have to establish multidisciplinary networks implanted in several member states of the Council of Europe. They must be endowed with a legal structure, work in a democratic way, propose a general programme and specify their objectives, partners, the participating countries and the overall development of the medium and long-term programme. Finally, the projects have to define and implement indicators to measure the impact of the Cultural Routes activities.

If we define the term governance within the scope of this research, the Council of Europe is responsible for the values applied in the context of a label guaranteeing the intrinsic quality of a route, in particular its role within the framework of the fundamental missions of the organisation. It guarantees exemplary character, based on the Enlarged Partial Agreement. In this chain of governance, the coordination of each cultural route is assured by the authorised networks. These are the interlocutors of the Council of Europe, the Enlarged Partial Agreement and the European Institute of Cultural Routes.

### **3. Cultural landscapes and cemeteries**

In recent years various international texts, formulated, principally, by the Council of Europe and UNESCO have been published on cultural heritage and the landscape. The importance of “Cultural Landscape” is affirmed for the first time in UNESCO’s World Heritage Convention (UNESCO, 1992), saying they represent: “the combined works of nature and of man”. To this first statement on Cultural Landscape others have been added, as for example, contained in the European Landscape Convention (Council of Europe, 2000) which says: “[Landscape] means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factor”. This definition gives importance to the local populations and emphasises the significant dimension that the landscape gives a distinctive character to the region. It is a more global definition of the concept and promotes the development of policy, and legislative and educational strategies for protection and conservation. Through their cultures, societies transform a natural landscape into a cultural landscape. The landscape is culture and is living, dynamic and continually being transformed. Nature exists by itself, but landscape only when it is related to the human being who perceives and takes ownership of it. The cultural landscape has

always had a major role in the creation and consolidation of territorial identities. Usually people feel part of the landscape and establish many complicities with it.

The cultural landscape is the physical support for different actions and it is possible to intervene in it by means of processes of planning, management, etc. For proper management of the cultural landscape sustainable development and the participation of society must be taken into account. In cases where the management model is sustainable, the processes of consensus will occupy first place among the different agents. On the other hand, when a model of management of the cultural landscape does not include the group of actors involved, conflicts will appear, which will hinder its management. In its preamble, the European Landscape Convention (Council of Europe, 2000) makes significant reference to the importance of achieving sustainable development based on a balanced and harmonious relationship between social needs, economic activity and the environment. In this part of the Convention, it is necessary to emphasise that the aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve greater unity between its members for the purposes of safeguarding and realising the ideals and principles which are their common heritage, and that this aim is pursued in particular through agreements in the economic and social fields. The landscape contributes to the formation of local cultures, which is a basic component of the European natural and cultural heritage, contributing to human well-being and the consolidation of the European identity. This reference to the European identity promotes the idea of working cohesively. European landscapes constitute a common resource and it is important to cooperate in their protection, management and planning.

The link between the Cultural Routes programme and the European Landscape Convention is evident in Resolution CM/Res(2013)67 (Council of Europe, 2013b), according to which routes should “take account of and promote the charters, conventions, recommendations and work of the Council of Europe, UNESCO and ICOMOS relating to heritage restoration, protection and enhancement, landscape and spatial planning”. If we analyse the interrelationships between Cultural Routes we also see that there is a direct relationship between landscape and society. Not only do we refer to the inhabitants who live along the routes but also the visitors who cross them. During their trip visitors have the opportunity to dive into the theme of the itinerary. The landscape takes on meaning and cultural significance for the people, as well as for the visitors, and is an essential component of the traveller’s experience. Therefore, the cultural landscape is an important element of regional policies relating to the creation and marketing of cultural route projects.

Continuing the theme of cultural landscapes and focusing on cemeteries, we basically find two types of cemeteries in Europe. On the one hand, is the crowded monumental cemetery that gives all the attention to the tombs and buildings. This type of cemetery is generally characteristic of southern Europe and is a model we can find in Spain. On the other hand,

another type of cemetery appears closer to nature and is inspired by the English landscape garden. We find these in central and northern Europe. An example of the latter model is Père-Lachaise in Paris.

Currently, a trend for tourism focussed on visiting cemeteries is growing. One of the reasons for this new form of tourism is found in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the moment demand began for artists to produce sculptures and architectural elements to make tombs into works of art. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, safeguarding associations of the most representative cemeteries were created. In Europe the Association of Significant Cemeteries (ASCE) was founded. This new trend is reinforced by declarations like Newcastle (2005) (UNESCO, 2005) presented at the Tenth International Seminar of Forum UNESCO – University and Heritage entitled “Cultural Landscapes in the 21st Century: Laws, Management and Public Participation”. The principal novelty of this text was the expansion of the concept of cultural landscape: “That Cultural Landscapes are not only enjoyable and convivial places but that they can also be places of pain, suffering, death, war, therapy, reconciliation and memory” (Art.2.12) (UNESCO, 2005).

#### **4. Methodology**

In this article we have analysed the networking example of the European Cultural Routes in Spain and France. We chose these two countries because of their leading roles. According to a study by the Council of Europe (2015), France is the leader in terms of the number of Cultural Routes with 16.4% of the total number of routes, followed by Spain with 14.2%. We can differentiate two types of Cultural Routes: those that go from one point to another, linear routes, we refer to as “routes”; while Cultural Routes that include dispersed sites without territorial continuity but which have a common theme are referred to as “networks”. These routes are in fact thematic networks which can articulate common proposals. The management and development issues can be quite different from one case to another. We chose to analyse a thematic network, the European Cemeteries Route. One reason for this is that these routes allow us to see the different relationships established between sites (nodes) and whether the fact of being a part of the network/route helps the less important sites (heritage assets) to have more visibility. Another reason is that, normally, these networks have been recently created for cultural tourism; there is no imaginary/identity behind them as with the Santiago de Compostela Pilgrim Routes. Finally, they are networks that operate as tourist destinations, which allows us to analyse the different relationships established between the various nodes as well as to make a similar examination of networking in a tourist destination.

The selection of actors is related to the degree of route development. An initial exploration to identify the actors is made by internet search, especially on the route's website. On the website of the cemeteries route we can identify the members of the heritage assets and there are no other members related, for example, with other sectors such as tourism. We have met the members of heritage asset networks in Spain and France (Père-Lachaise Cemetery (Paris), the Cemeteries of Montjuïc and Poblenou (Barcelona), Cemetery of Ciriego (Santander), etc.). The main method used for obtaining the information was the semi-structured interview with different members of the route who have experience and significant knowledge of the subject under study. Another method used for obtaining the data was the compilation of secondary sources such as statistics, memoranda, reports, etc. In the interviews with the agents of the heritage sites we tried to find out:

- The level of interest of the members in being part of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe;
- The criteria that is respected among members of the European Cultural Route;
- Operating rules;
- Type of funding;
- Contact with the coordination of the route, with the European Institute of Cultural Routes, etc.;
- Joint promotions and marketing activities;
- Partnerships with other sectors such as tourism, etc.;
- Existence of a cultural tourism product for marketing;
- Existence of visitor and satisfaction statistics;
- Evaluations for the constant improvement of the project;
- Activities to publicise the cemetery and the route to the local population;
- Regular evaluations after being given the title by the Council of Europe.

## **5. The European Cemeteries Route**

The European Cemeteries Route brings value to and spreads the heritage of the remains of the most important cemeteries in Europe. This route is composed of 67 cemeteries in 54 cities in 20 European countries. It was incorporated into the Cultural Routes programme in 2010. The route is an initiative promoted by the Association of Significant Cemeteries of Europe (ASCE). This non-profit organisation was founded for the protection of cemeteries of particular historical and artistic importance in Europe. The route is also managed by the same association and has many of the same goals. The specific part of the itinerary emphasises the aspects of tourism, while as an organisation ASCE takes care of many other aspects of the network that affect the cultural route. ASCE organises an annual general meeting to speak of various issues and projects which have cultural heritage in mind. To be a member of the European Cemeteries Route, first a cemetery should be recognised as a

significant cemetery by the ASCE. To become a member requires not only recognition and rights, but also participation in activities and joint projects. As the route talks about history and heritage, it is of great importance to provide accurate data and scientific value. For this reason, the route is supervised by a scientific committee.

The itinerary consists of actors who are interested in their cultural heritage at local, regional and European level. However, it is important that managers do not cease preserving and working with this heritage. In Spain, 21 cemeteries are part of this thematic route; in France, however, the only cemetery included in the network is Père Lachaise and the Cimetière du Nord (Rennes) has recently been incorporated. This means that there is a disproportion in the number of members in the two countries. This underrepresentation in France makes it difficult to analyse the networking and the different links that can be created between the different member countries. It is clear that the creation of European cultural tourism is in this case difficult.

The itinerary is closely coordinated with other activities of the ASCE. The posts of secretary and president of the ASCE are rotated every four years and are responsible for coordinating all activities in this regard. But most of the cemeteries in Spain use the old secretariat in Barcelona because communication is easier for them. The secretariat establishes a basic organisational framework with the members and the projects of the cultural route. For easier management the route is promoted through the same tools as the ASCE even though among its own members confusion may be created in distinguishing where the association ends and the route begins.

Finally, there is no joint cultural tourism product to be commercialised: each member of the route produces its own activities (guided tours, etc.). There are no common statistics of frequency and satisfaction and there are different levels of stakeholder involvement. The analysis of this cultural route reveals that it is difficult to create a cultural route without the foundation of a strong, pre-existing identity like the Santiago de Compostela Pilgrim Routes. In their efforts to create a European dimension through their local territories, some components of these Cultural Routes can even become antagonistic, because they communicate through different channels. They cannot therefore successfully respond to their initial mission, which is to promote European identity. Their stakeholders are faced with the intrinsic difficulty of coordinating a network which is located in different countries. One of the main difficulties is that at the moment of its creation the European Cultural Route was not a consistent cultural product with the vision to create a tourist destination, but a simple aggregation of different sites. Most of the members who worked on the route do so on a voluntary basis and cannot manage the network professionally. The search for funds is a priority in order to ensure their sustainability and survival.



## 6. Conclusion

The case studied illustrates how the Cultural Routes are at a stage of development where the social and economic impacts of every route varies considerably because of differences in their characteristics, network formation and management, geographical dimensions and the standards of quality products and services they offer. Among the most visible problems, it is worth noting a lack of experience in managing networks that would enable the different European, regional and local actors to operate with common goals.

Networking varies according to the country and each itinerary is organised differently. The results of the governance structures, in particular networks of actors, are not immediate. In fact, some of these results require a medium term to appear because they are linked to changes in the organisational cultures of traditional actors. In the majority of cases a period of twenty to twenty-five years is needed to achieve the full benefits of interventions supported in the fields of culture and tourism. In our case there is a clear lack of visibility of the Cultural Routes programme.

The degree of involvement in territorial development is very uneven because there are many actors involved with the routes operating with different realities. So far the routes do not have indicators to measure their impact on their territory. It is an issue that is currently being structured to account for tourism. The routes are interested in learning more about the public visiting them but, as yet, there is no common method of acquiring this information about the route as a whole. It's important to keep in mind that in the same network there are several groups, so the cohesion that exists within each group is higher than the cohesion between groups; this means that diverse actors benefit from the cohesion of their group but not that of the entire network. Where there is greater cohesion, it also indicates lower transaction costs for all activities carried out collectively by the group. Therefore, these routes can generate profits for actors that are part of them, depending on the position occupied by each actor in the network, its structure, the intensity of their links and the appropriate assessment tools.

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