

Cultural Route and Planning

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Introduction

Before defining cultural routes, it would be appropriate to determine the destination regions that form the basis of these routes, i.e., cultural heritage. Cultural heritage is the tangible and intangible values of humanity's life experience, intellect, and creativity that have survived from the past to the present [1].

Due to the unique characteristics of cultural assets, many tourists travel to learn about the cultures of different societies. Travel and accommodation undertaken to see and learn about these other cultures is called 'cultural tourism.' According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, cultural tourism is defined as 'work tours, art and culture tours, participation in festivals and other cultural events, visits to monuments, nature, folklore or art, and other human activities motivated by cultural factors' [2].

Cultural tourism is growing rapidly around the world. According to the Council of Europe (COE) cultural tourism report [3], cultural tourism is estimated to account for 40% of European tourism. Today, approximately 4 out of every 10 tourists consider cultural characteristics when choosing a destination.

Cultural Routes

Cultural routes are a rich concept that inspires diversity in various dimensions through mutual interaction and dialogue between regions and countries, has social, symbolic, and philosophical dimensions, is dominated by cultural change and a culture of peace, exhibits continuity and diversity, and offers significant advantages for regional development [4]. It is emphasized that cultural routes demonstrate how the cultural heritage of different countries contributes to a shared and living cultural heritage through a journey based on the relationship between place and time [5]. Cultural routes should not be perceived merely as routes of human movement. These routes

offer opportunities for people to refresh themselves in historical and cultural environments, countering the fatigue caused by modern lifestyles and urbanization in the human mind and body [6].

As a result of the protocol signed between the Council of Europe and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg in 1997, the European Cultural Routes Institute was established to implement the Council of Europe's cultural routes program. Immediately following this development, in 1998, the 'ICOMOS International Committee on Cultural Routes' was established through the efforts of a group of ICOMOS members from different parts of the world. The main objectives of these institutions are to research, register, preserve, and develop cultural routes and their heritage, as well as to develop their social and economic impacts [7]. Following the declaration of the Santiago de Compostela Pilgrimage Route as a 'world heritage site' by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in 1993 [8], the concept of 'cultural route' was brought to the agenda at the World Heritage Committee meeting held in Madrid in 1994, and as a result of this meeting, the first document on the subject, titled 'Routes as Part of Our Cultural Heritage,' was published. Cultural routes were accepted as World Cultural Heritage by the World Heritage Committee and included in the World Heritage List [9].

According to Çetin and Gültekin [10], ten years later, the same Committee established fourteen typological categories, different thematic areas, and chronological-regional framework areas to ensure the recognition and sustainability of natural and cultural heritage values. Cultural routes are included in the typological category (pilgrimage routes, trade routes, canals, railways, etc.) and the thematic area defined as human movements (migration, slavery, transportation, etc.), and in every stage of the chronological-regional framework [11]. According to UNESCO's definition, "A cultural route is a path/trace of heritage consisting

of tangible data that can be traced spatially and temporally along the route, resulting from exchange and comprehensive dialogue between regions and countries [12]: (1) historical transportation routes and (2) non-historical, later-developed routes.

Classification of Cultural Routes

The use of cultural routes may vary according to their scale, scope, and purpose. When examining the themes, scope, and functions of cultural route examples worldwide, routes can be divided into two groups based on their historical significance.

- i. Transportation routes that were used during a specific period in history
- ii. Routes that were not used in the past but have been planned and developed for various purposes in the present day

The cultural routes in the first group also correspond to the routes defined by ICOMOS. These routes, which were used for purposes such as trade, worship, migration, war, and exploration during a specific period in history, have been the scene of regular and collective population movements.

The routes in the second group are planned itineraries that did not exist in the past but have been developed around a specific theme, using cultural and natural heritage as their basic material.

Cultural routes designed today are significant in revitalizing and promoting cultural heritage. In a route program developed around a specific theme, key examples of the cultural heritage in question are linked together through a virtual trail or historical routes, while at the same time establishing a comprehensive framework for that theme.

Conclusion: The Necessity of the Planning Process

Cultural routes, whose basic components are cultural heritage and natural structures, must be designed according to a specific method to plan the future of these components, meet today's expectations, and ensure the sustainability of the work. The development and implementation of this method, which focuses on a series of topics such as researching and understanding the geography being worked on, identifying unique themes, route selection, project development, and partnerships, can be broadly referred to as the 'cultural route planning process.'

In addition to its benefits during the work process, the cultural, social, and economic impacts of creating a cultural route can also be regulated through a defined design and planning process. The fragility of cultural and natural heritage, the necessity of comprehensively understanding, narrating, and protecting this heritage, the threats posed by uncontrolled tourism movements to this heritage and local identity, and the need to support local development all necessitate that the development of a cultural route in a given geography be carried out through a defined planning process.

When considering the scope of planning processes, it is necessary to work within a broad framework regarding spatial aspects, the diversity of stakeholders, and decision-making issues. Depending on the breadth of their physical and social dimensions, planning regional cultural routes should involve a multi-dimensional planning process, from detailed field studies and analysis stages to on-site meetings and evaluation stages..

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