

Proceedings

Walkability, digital technologies and internal area tourism

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Abstract: European strategies for rethinking rural interior spaces, albeit rich in potential productive resources, are constantly plagued by significant depopulation rates and difficult access to primary services. The reactivation of spaces is the subject of national and international scientific dialogue through multiple approaches including slow tourism. The construction of a multifunctional network of space also connected to the most recent technological innovations motivates various projects capable of regenerating local economies. This work aims to highlight, in the case study of Sardinia, the role of sustainable "rural walks" (walkability) as promoters of a new accessibility to internal areas and a different and more structured organization of the tourist offer based on a slow use of the territory.

Keywords: slow tourism; sustainable tourism; internal areas.

1. Introduction

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The European strategy for the revitalization of inland areas firmly supports local development policies that leverage technology, the sustainability of transport and tourism to improve accessibility and the criticalities of rural areas [1]. Walkability is part of the numerous regeneration projects of local development, also and above all for the post COVID-19 [2]. In fact, the planning of pedestrian areas, while being the prerogative of urbanized areas, is increasingly explored also in rural areas as an interesting element to take advantage of small rural realities [3, 4]. We therefore want to evaluate rural routes designed in other parts of Sardinia according to the model of the "Santa Barbara Mining Path", Sulcis-Iglesiente in Sardinia (Italy), to evaluate the degree of predisposition to pedestrian use of natural and rural contexts of great importance of the landscape deriving from the accessibility and intermodality. In this sense, we want to evaluate, through a conceptual approach, how the gap between the reference model and the proposals derived from it can be overcome. The paper is developed in the following paragraphs: area of study, conceptual approach, results and conclusions.

2. Area of study

The Sulcis-Iglesiente region is located in the south-western part of the island of Sardinia which has seen its environmental and socio-economic evolution linked to the world of

mining. The mines abandoned over time have been converted into sites of cultural interest whose enhancement, from a sustainable perspective and under the guidance of slow tourism, aims to improve local development [5]. The mapping from a tourist point of view of the ancient miners' paths highlights a set of itineraries that are part of the Geo-Mining Historical-Environmental Park of Sardinia. The system of paths of the "Santa Barbara Mining Path", and its intrinsic and extrinsic characteristics constitutes a best practice, so much so that it has been proposed for replication in other similar contexts in Sardinia (Fig. 1).

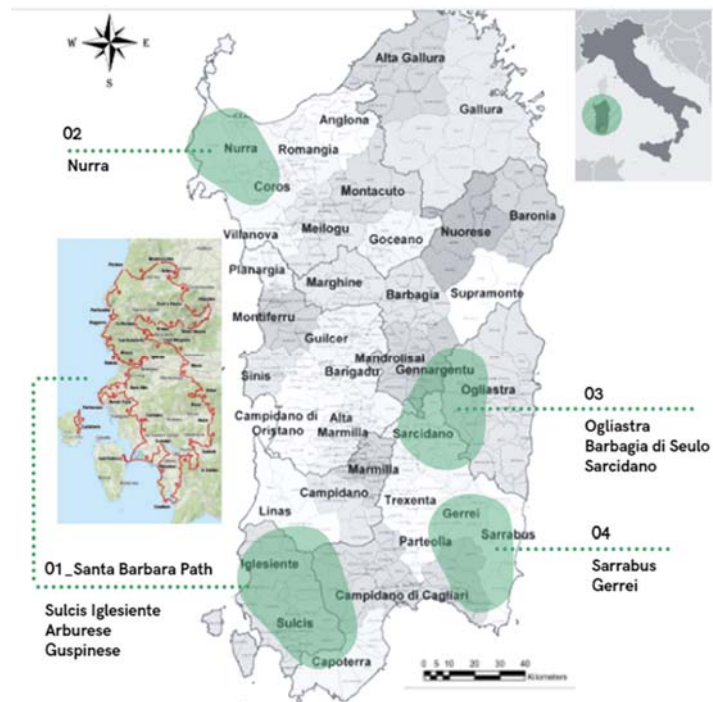


Figure 1. Location of mining path of Santa Barbara and new proposal (02-04), Sardinia, Italy (Author: Balletto G., 2021)

3. Conceptual approach

From the elaboration of the ICE index (Inclusion of Community and Environment) in a previous research [6] with the aim of supporting the design decision-making processes for all in the paths in internal and rural areas, it was possible to highlight the gap with the reference (01 part). In particular, with this research it intends to highlight the main critical elements that arise from the ICE index assessment to identify improvement strategies.

In particular, the Santa Barbara Mining Path (good practice) and the replication proposals (02-04), allow us to highlight how although the 01 path is good practice, it was not designed according to the universal design (Fig. 2).

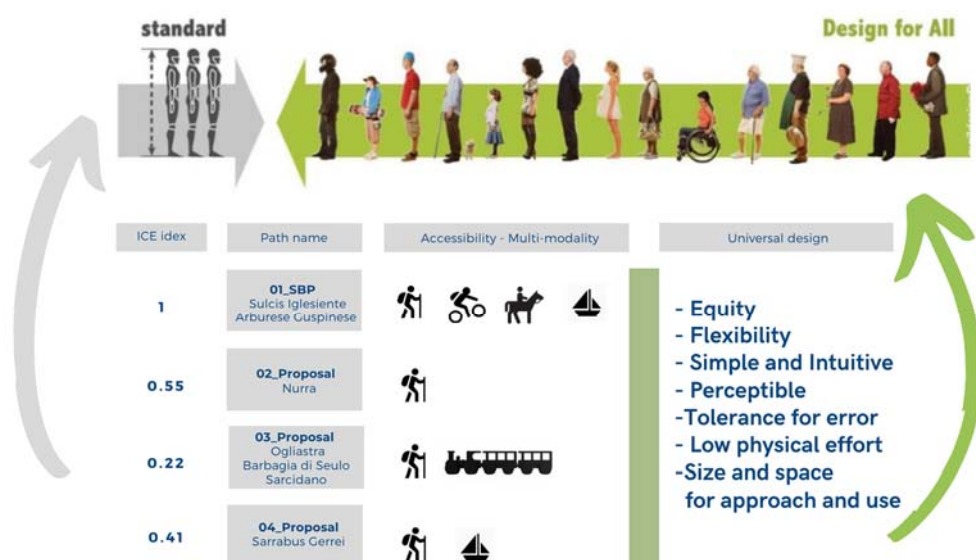


Figure 2. Comparative analysis 01-04 Mining Paths (Author: Balletto G., 2021)

Similarly also the 02-04 paths, although they involve 472 cultural and landscape assets and with 20 municipalities involved, the related draft is not based on the universal design. In this sense, it is believed that this articulated patrimonial wealth must be exploited in order to transform the peripheral condition of these rural areas to converge towards a diversified, sustainable and inclusive tourist offer [7]. The other weaknesses observed along the itineraries (02-04 paths) can be seen in the limited participation by different stakeholders to activate development projects. There are also important gaps in the digitalization of natural and historical-cultural information, and these are compounded by limited forms of mobility and the absence of a rural hospitality network. In this case, the hospitality is expressed through 90 agriturismo that have difficulty in creating multifunctional activities able to revitalize the territory outside of the summer [8].

4. Results

The proposals of the new paths, while constituting an important initiative, nevertheless present a not negligible deficit that derives from the reference model (path 01) designed according to the traditional approach of standard users. For this reason, if you want paths 02-04 to constitute an inclusive and sustainable offer, their relative design must be based on the universal design paradigm, that is, to facilitate a continuous process of space usability which combines the three dimensions of accessibility (structural, experiential and informative). This would allow for even higher performance than the reference model to be achieved. Furthermore, universal design offers at the same time important elements to adapt what until now has been considered a best practice (path 01).

5. Conclusions

The slow tourism philosophy, intrinsic to the definition of rural tourism, combined with sustainable mobility and greater walkability of the sites, brings benefits both in environmental terms (conservation of natural resources, no emission of pollutants)

and in social and economic terms (higher quality travel and life for residents, increased security and social interaction) [9]. The 02-04 proposals for paths in Sardinia (Italy), although rich in a vast cultural heritage, require a more careful and structured organization of the accessibility of the territory. The approach that is outlined is multi-scalar; from the objectives of the 2030 Agenda, to universal design with the support of thimbles technologies (from concept to use). Finally, particular attention should be paid to the intermodal nodes and in particular to those of the marinas, the real gates for the inland areas. The current transitions underway (ecological, digital and energetic) require a rethinking of the project paradigms especially for those of the network such as paths, which constitute tangible and intangible elements of the past, present and future, possibly prosperous. The research will continue with the development of design guidelines for universal design in combination with the ICE index.

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