
CULTURAL ROUTES: THE VIA FRANCIGENA CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

European Cultural Routes, being both linear landmarks and cross sections in the European landscape, give tangible form to a European cultural identity. Implementing cultural routes, as physical and cultural networks, means developing a sustainable tourist offer. By strengthening this network, pressure can be released from major cultural tourism attractions; thus allowing cultural tourism to expand in minor heritage sites, revitalizing them and contributing to the economic well-being of regions. Cultural Routes are therefore potential tools for promoting sustainable and quality tourism in Europe, strengthening European identity, disseminating the richness of European cultures and fostering the intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding.

Nowadays the Via Francigena, one of the 29 European Cultural Routes, can be a positive element for the union of European cultures and populations. According to these remarkable credentials in year 2004 the Via Francigena has been declared “Great Cultural Route” by the European Council, together with the “Camino di Santiago”.

In 2006 Regione Lazio approved the “Parroncini Law” forwarding the cultural, tourist and environmental regeneration of the Via Francigena. Regeneration and marketing of historical - religious routes (including Via Francigena) were approved by Regione Lazio as priority policies for the management of European funds for the years 2007 – 2013.

Keywords: European Cultural Routes, Via Francigena, historic roads, sustainable tourism, Regione Lazio.

INTRODUCTION

The Cultural Routes programme was launched by the Council of Europe in 1987. In December 2010 the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted Resolution 53 [CM/Res(2010)53], establishing an *Enlarged Partial Agreement* (EPA) on Cultural Routes, to enable closer co-operation between states particularly interested in the development of Cultural Routes.

The resolution underlines the importance of Cultural Routes as:

- tangible illustrations, through European trans-border itineraries, of the pluralism and diversity of European culture based on shared values;
- means for intercultural dialogue and understanding.

29 Cultural Routes have received the Council of Europe Cultural Route certification and the activities of networks, which have been approved to implement these routes, are constantly growing, spanning across most of continental Europe and beyond.

Cultural Routes now carry out hundreds of cultural events, educational exchanges and tours each year, involving hundreds of thousands of people, hundreds of organizations and local communities.

The Enlarged Partial Agreement’s aim is to reinforce the potential of Cultural Routes for cultural co-operation, sustainable territorial development and social cohesion.

Thus EPA will provide assistance and guidance for the setting up and functioning of project networks and organizations, the research on the historical background of the routes, the development of cultural and educational activities and the development of a sustainable tourist offer based on Cultural Routes.

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THE VIA FRANCIGENA

The "Via Francigena" or "Frankish Route" (meaning road coming from France) is one of the oldest pilgrimage routes that reached Rome from Europe, crossing France, Switzerland and Italy.

Its route is more of a 'cultural site' than just a historic road: a number of paths through which can be retraced the political and historical influences, exchanges and developments which have shaped European cultures.

The route was first documented as the "Lombard Way". In the VI century the Lombards settled in northern and southern regions invading Byzantine Italy. In order to avoid Byzantine territory the Lombards created a new road that crossed the Appenine Mountains. This new path was the Monte Bardone trail ('Mons Langobardorum') connecting Fornovo and Pontremoli through the "passo della Cisa", reaching Luni harbour in Southern Etruria. When the Franks took the place of the Lombards, the road was completed in the direction of France and of Rome.

At the end of the 10th century (990) Sigeric the Serious, the Archbishop of Canterbury, used the Via Francigena to and from Rome to be consecrated by the Pope. Sigeric recorded his route and its 79 stops on the return journey.

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The European Association of the Vie Francigene has identified the Italian itinerary of the Via Francigena, aiming at its regeneration. This itinerary, made official by the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali (MiBAC), is subdivided in a number of stops, from the Great St. Bernard to Rome. The "Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri" (Prime Minister Office) has implemented an interregional project to promote cultural tourism along the route, starting from Regione Toscana.

REGIONE LAZIO AND THE VIA FRANCIGENA PROJECT

In 2006 Regione Lazio approved the "Parroncini Law" forwarding the cultural, tourist and environmental regeneration of the Via Francigena.

Regeneration and marketing of historical - religious routes (including Via Francigena) were approved by Regione Lazio as priority policies for the management of European funds for the years 2007 – 2013.

In December 2006 an interdisciplinary team, formed by different regional areas (Culture, Environment, Tourism, Finance), has been assigned the task of implementing research on the Via Francigena, leading to the route regeneration. Its objectives were:

- to identify the route on the Regional Maps scale one to ten thousands (1:10.000);
- to study pedestrian, bicycle, horse and vehicular routes;
- to study historical, artistic, archaeological and environmental monuments to be regenerated along the route;
- to implement actions aimed at promoting cultural tourism and improving facilities along the route.

The route of the Via Francigena was identified taking care of historical evidences, but considering also the present situation, where the original path has been transformed in very dangerous motorways like regional street n. 2 Cassia. Main aim of the regional team was to find an easy and safe pedestrian route, along smaller roads and trails. Total distance in Lazio region is approximately 170 Km, from Proceno to Rome.

The team has been advised by Massimiliano Vinci, vice president of the "Confraternita dei Romei della Via Francigena", one of the major pilgrimage experts in Italy. The number of people walking along the route every year is around 4000. In the next five years we are expecting this number to increase up to 30.000.

The activity of the team ended with a formal act in October 2007, that establishes the official route of Via Francigena in Lazio region.

In autumn 2008 "Sviluppo Lazio" Company delivered to local municipalities a document commissioned by the "Area Valorizzazione del Territorio e del Patrimonio Culturale" of Regione Lazio. The team was lead by architect Antonio Pietro Latini and members were architects Marco Antonini, Roberto Capecci, Simone Quilici, Raffaella Sini, together with Professor Riccardo Wallach. The document called "Regole Quadro" contains:

- a detailed analysis of the pilgrimage route and adjacent areas;
- guidelines for the activities aiming at making safe and regenerating the route;
- recommendations leading actions in charge of the municipalities.

The “Regole Quadro” (Guidelines) are subdivided in one book and three appendixes. The book is made up of two parts:

- analysis, divided in 324 files that describe every single part of the route;
- guidelines and recommendations for municipal activities, subdivided in 15 typical cases.

A “correlation scheme” identifies the relationship between the single parts of the path and the typical cases. The three appendixes contain:

- a sequence of 4836 photos, that describe all the route;
- a series of 377 sections;
- a series of 340 forecasts of the regeneration costs of every single part of the route.

The last appendix has been used by regional offices for the correct distribution of funds. Analysis includes:

- map with notes;
- pictures;
- sections;
- description;
- first proposals.

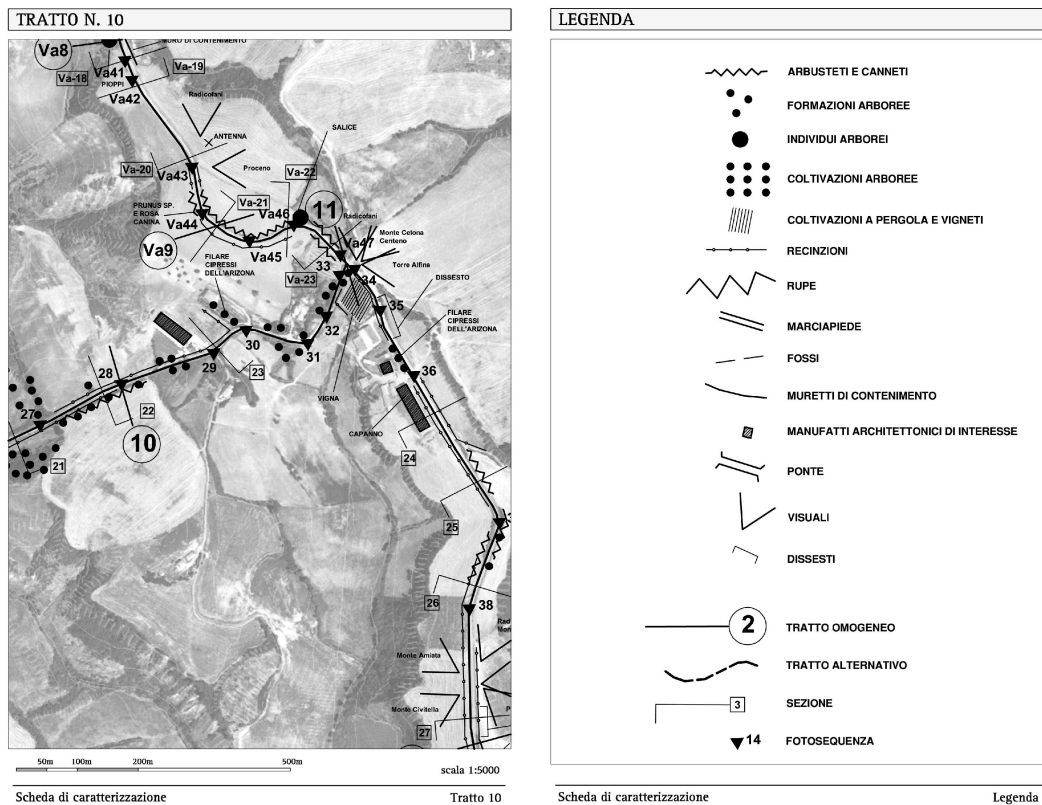


Figure 1 Analysis: map with notes

Guidelines include:

- brief description of the typical case: in this case, major road on steep land;
- typical elements and sections;
- necessary activities aiming at making safe and regenerating the route;
- proposals.

Proposals include:

- new trails along motorways at a safety distance;
- sideways along main roads (including flyovers);

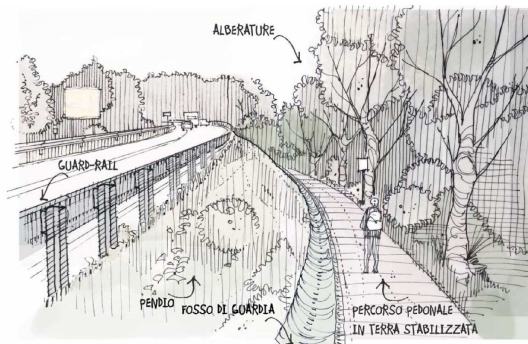
- proper trees along country roads;
- restoration of ancient and medieval roads;
- new facilities along the route in rural areas;
- new trails in rural areas and woods;
- new trails on steep land using natural engineering techniques;
- new pedestrian areas in city centres.

Tipo ET1a – Strada extraurbana di transito

SUGGERIMENTI



Stato di fatto



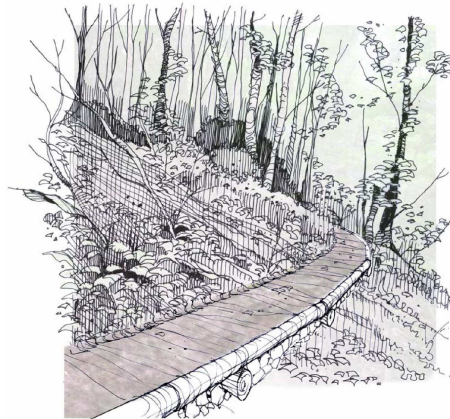
Ipotesi di realizzazione di un nuovo itinerario ciclo-pedonale in affiancamento all'infrastruttura esistente

Tipo EA3c – Percorso su suolo naturale in contesti acclivi

SUGGERIMENTI



Stato di fatto



Apertura di un nuovo sentiero – Opere di sostegno della sede realizzate mediante tecniche di ingegneria naturalistica.

Figure 2 Proposals: new trails along motorways - new trails on steep land using natural engineering techniques

CONCLUSIONS

The municipalities crossed by the via Francigena are now implementing works on the route, following the “Regole Quadro” guidelines. Regione Lazio funds are the major financial sources.

Many kilometers of new trails have been constructed and many works of restoration of ancient part of the historical road have been implemented. Between the cities of Monterosi and Nepi architects had to face the difficult task of crossing a motorway. An existing flyover was identified and completed with pedestrian sideways, together with a new guard rail, in accordance to the regional guidelines. A new ramp was built to connect the route with the existing bus-stop and car park. In Nepi a new trail was built along the motorway at a safety distance. Natural engineering techniques were used, leading to remarkable results.

The project has successfully reached the first goal of pedestrian safety setting along the path, but is now waiting for new funds for the next necessary steps including the enhancement of cultural assets along the way and the organization of the overnight structures for pilgrims and walkers.

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