
THE ROUTE AS A PRETEXT

PLACES OF JAMES I AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF LANDSCAPE

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The cultural route is a tool that, over the years, has transformed into a virtuous pretext for enhancing the historical, artistic, and landscape heritage of a territory. This function is noticeable in how the route serves as a bridge between the past and the present. It engages communities, institutions, and visitors in a meaningful dialogue about collective memory and the various elements that capture the essence of a place. To fully understand why the cultural route assumes this function, it is necessary to analyse its intrinsic features and the context in which it develops, starting a multitude of actions that combine the project dimension with the cognitive one during their development. Project-oriented approach, after all, is present at every moment of the cognitive process, aimed at idealising, visualising, and contextualising—in a near or distant future—events, episodes, and elements of a specific historical heritage. Therefore, these two dimensions coexist in every action undertaken to develop knowledge, but in the context of a route, understood as a path scattered across a territory, they must be clearly distinct or distinguishable in the logic and structure of research. This allows the route to establish a connection with the cultural models it draws upon.

In the architectural dimension, these cultural models focus on a variety of historiographic and technological aspects that link a product or a work, born from a specific culture, to a territorial dimension over a time span that, especially when dealing with historical or historicised heritage, is long enough to be traversed, contaminated, and influenced by additional cultural models and processes of habitation and transformation.

Documentation aimed at understanding a widespread heritage, which can be shaped into a cultural route, represents a complex but essential activity to create a representative and narratively critical synthesis. The cultural route is not merely a sequence of places or monuments, but a narrative and identity-based ecosystem shaped by profound and detailed knowledge. This type of documentation does not merely record data but operates as an interpretive and creative act, thereby revealing the in-depth connections that unite the different elements of the heritage.

Walter Benjamin, in his famous essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*¹, emphasises that documentation is never neutral but influences the way the public perceives a work or a place. Applying this principle to cultural routes, we can say that documentation creates the narrative

Side page, Fig. 01

Out of scale

The Monastery of Puig in a play of correspondences between the historic settlement and the new one in the background.

¹ Benjamin (1935), *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit* (*The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*).