

Innovative and Sustainable Cultural Heritage for Local Development in the Face of Territorial Imbalance

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Abstract

Recent changes in the conception of cultural heritage have led to considering it not only as an object of protection and safeguarding but, beyond that, as a resource for sustainable development. Consequently, the effects of correctly handling heritage issues may significantly contribute to one of the great contemporary challenges of the western world: the urban-territorial imbalance. In this study, our purpose is to extract the key means of contributing to the innovative and sustainable deployment of cultural heritage for the local development of rural, peripheral, and/or vulnerable areas. Through the consideration of both socio-economic and urban-territorial aspects, and analysis of two European case studies, we aim to demonstrate how these practices and the very presence of cultural heritage can contribute to alleviating territorial imbalances. For this purpose, we set out the findings of bibliographic and documentary research with recourse to data processing. We have mainly applied statistical data on demographic trends across different scales as well as data on facets of natural and cultural, tangible and intangible heritage. The two cases chosen are southern Spain and Hungary. They reflect the plurality of the rural territories of Europe and their diversity of circumstances, both in terms of their territorial occupation and the socio-demographic evolution and treatment of their respective heritage. The results not only reveal how the mere presence of heritage and its protection contribute to improving demographic trends in vulnerable areas but also that these effects are enhanced when accompanied by innovative initiatives and territorial cooperation.

Keywords: Sustainable heritage; local development; territorial imbalance

Citation

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Patrimonio cultural innovador y sostenible para el desarrollo local frente al desequilibrio territorial

Resumen

Los recientes cambios en la concepción del patrimonio cultural han llevado a considerarlo no sólo como objeto de protección y salvaguarda sino, más allá, como un recurso para el desarrollo sostenible. En consecuencia, los efectos de su correcto tratamiento podrían contribuir significativamente a uno de los grandes retos contemporáneos del mundo occidental: el desequilibrio urbano-territorial. Nuestro propósito en este estudio es extraer las claves de la contribución del uso innovador y sostenible del patrimonio cultural para el desarrollo local de zonas rurales, periféricas o vulnerables. A través de la consideración de los aspectos socioeconómicos y urbano-territoriales, y del análisis de dos estudios de caso europeos, trataremos de desvelar cómo estas prácticas y la propia presencia del patrimonio cultural pueden contribuir a paliar el desequilibrio territorial. Para ello, combinaremos la investigación bibliográfica y documental con el uso y tratamiento de datos. Hemos utilizado principalmente datos estadísticos sobre la evolución demográfica a diferentes escalas, así como datos sobre elementos del patrimonio natural y cultural, material e inmaterial. Los dos casos elegidos son el sur de España y Hungría. Reflejan la pluralidad del territorio rural en Europa y su diversidad de circunstancias tanto en términos de ocupación del territorio como de evolución sociodemográfica y de tratamiento del patrimonio. Los resultados revelan que la mera presencia del patrimonio y su protección contribuyen a mejorar el comportamiento demográfico de las zonas vulnerables, pero que los efectos se potencian cuando van acompañados de iniciativas innovadoras y de cooperación territorial.

Palabras clave: Patrimonio sostenible; desarrollo local; desequilibrio territorial

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1. Introduction

The concept of cultural heritage has in recent decades emerged as a core facet of the human and social sciences. The concept has also evolved significantly from its first propositions, associated with the historical or monumental (Riegl, 1996), to more recent approaches linked to the territory, society, and even the environment (Blake, 2000). Over this time, in parallel to its deepening significance, there has been growing awareness about the need to safeguard its values. This has been accompanied by theories and methodologies that have crystallized in a multitude of legislation on heritage protection that includes local particularities on the definition of what heritage is and how its protection should be structured (Blake, 2015). The range of scientific fields (e.g., archaeology, museology, economic history, social practices, exploring political intentions, cultural tourism, and marketing) involved in its conservation and management continues to expand and coupled with attempts to rethink their self-understanding and internal traditions in response to the challenges of heritage. Moreover, in recent years, a change of focus has taken place: theories on the safeguarding of heritage are giving way to guidelines for ensuring its sustainability or even its resilience. In general, to speak today of sustainable heritage immediately implies that the inherited elements must be maintained over time in a balanced way. In many cases, this is interpreted as a simple economic problem. However, as we shall return to below, this can also mean that heritage assets, as well as any cultural expressions, must contribute to the physical and social sustainability of their host environment. According to the Hungarian constructivist position, heritage is not inherent but is created by processes of collection, selection, and presentation. Thus, the social group or institution that creates it, also transforms it into a symbolic or economically profitable product (Gyáni, 2007).

Beyond this, what might be understood as simply a practical question (Del Espino Hidalgo, 2015) holds deeper conceptual roots. Related to the generalized usage of the term for economic matters, the origin of the word patrimony lies in the reference, as early as in Roman law, to the properties that patricians inherited from their father -pater- to be passed on, generation after generation, within the family (Engels & Untermann, 2021). Centuries later, its usage began to be associated with that of community owned goods, extending the notion of cultural heritage (Prats, 2000). We would note how this semantic evolution, from the private to the common, preserved two characteristics that had already appeared in the first definition. On the one hand, the appreciation of those goods that are inherited and, on the other hand, the need to transmit them to the future, that is, the transcendence of a legacy.

In this sense, the definition of heritage interlinks with the proposal of the Brundtland Report in 1987 that first enunciated what is now considered sustainable development: that which *meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs* (Brundtland *et al.*, 1987). As seen, both concepts include an appreciation of common goods in the present that must not only be safeguarded but, and moreover, passed on to future generations. Thus, our cultural heritage - what we have inherited and, therefore, has been maintained over time - becomes inherently sustainable. Moreover, due to this need for transcendence, it must continue to be sustained in the same or better conditions than those in which we received it. In addition, and even though the current official guidelines maintain the word sustainability as a conceptual framework, we must now also incorporate resilience into the discourse as an interrelated paradigm. Even if initially applied to urban studies regarding the adaptation of territories after natural disasters and assessment of their associated risks (Bosher & Coaffee, 2008), resilience was later related to the urban and territorial heritage aspects addressed in this work. One example would be the value of community in the strategies and outcomes of heritage-based resilience according to which the theory of resilient thinking (Folke *et al.*, 2010), based on three main pillars, addresses: resilience as persistence, adaptability as the ability to adjust responses to external drivers and internal processes, and transformability to create new registers of stability for development. This paradigm identifies cultural heritage as a vector for transformation and, ultimately, for embracing change towards cultural resilience (Holtorf, 2018).

This theoretical framework naturally extends to consideration of how cultural heritage impacts on local development, both in terms of urban sustainability (Roders & Van Oers, 2011) and, especially, in social and economic aspects (Loulanski, 2006). However, studies on this relationship have traditionally encountered difficulties in precisely defining the role heritage factors have played in local or territorial regeneration (Guzmán *et al.*, 2017). This arises because, while it is common practice to commodify them and transform them into cultural or tourist resources, their impacts on creating brand images for territories, promoting local identities or, simply, their contributions to local or regional economic development, are rarely visible. However, innovative and sustainable strategies can particularly contribute to strengthening the socio-economic fabric of vulnerable but heritage-rich territories through nurturing employment opportunities, the recruitment and training of qualified personnel, bolstering the service sector and rooting younger populations, among other eventual outcomes (Mata Olmo, 2008).

From the official spheres, there are a growing number of documents on the active role that culture, and specifically cultural heritage, can play in achieving sustainability. In the European sphere, we may highlight the conclusions on cultural heritage as a strategic resource for a sustainable Europe (Council of the European Union, 2014), which state that European heritage *resources are of great value to society from a cultural, environmental, social, and economic point of view and thus their sustainable management constitutes a strategic choice for the 21st century* (*ibidem*: 1).

The document highlights aspects such as the capacity of cultural heritage to create and develop social capital through social participation, a sense of belonging or cultural integration, enhancing the economy through job creation and integrated into a wider range of public policy areas beyond the cultural field (*ibidem*: 1). Furthermore, Member States are urged to strengthen the role of cultural heritage in sustainable development, especially in rural and urban development (*ibidem*: 2).

Undoubtedly, rural areas play a fundamental role in the European urban network and social structure. According to official numbers (European Commission, 2021a), 137 million people live in rural areas in Europe, which accounts for almost 30% of the population and covers over 80% of European territory. Moreover, the rural fabric embodies some of the characteristics that most clearly identify European culture, including the production of food, the conservation of natural resources, the protection of landscapes, and the celebration of traditions and rituals (Von der Leyen, 2020). All these factors, which, after all, constitute the cultural heritage of these areas, contribute both to the legibility and transmission of European culture and identity and the generation of positive impacts on the natural, social and economic dimensions. However, the social and demographic processes that are characterizing European population movements within the last decades are affecting rural areas the most, mainly due to depopulation and ageing (European Commission, 2020).

Furthermore, according to the public consultation made between 2020 and 2021 (European Commission, 2021b), the following constitute the main factors of vulnerability for rural and remote areas. They may primarily stem from the lack or poor quality of mobility infrastructure, poor access to digital connectivity, a lack of basic services, a scarcity of employment opportunities, and, in general, the lack of participation or interests of rural society in decision-making processes. On the contrary, the main opportunities identified relate to sustainable agriculture, social innovation, the green transition, quality of life, sense of belonging and the preservation of *rural character*.

Demographic decline, alongside the corresponding depopulation of small settlements and the progressive ageing of the population, precisely encapsulates one of the main problems currently afflicting the territorial structure of a significant proportion of the European territory. This is particularly relevant in small and medium-sized municipalities (Del Espino Hidalgo, 2017), characterised by the existence of a trend towards the disintegration of rural settlements which,

nevertheless, treasure valuable heritage (Klusáková & Del Espino, 2021): magnificent examples of dispersed religious architecture, some of the best elements of archaeological heritage, landscape enclaves of great historical importance and/or dense networks of agricultural heritage structures linked to agriculture and livestock farming, among others (Costa and Barretto, 2007). On the other hand, this decrease in population density, particularly the ageing population, is defined by the scarcity of employment opportunities and socio-economic growth present in the rural world. This, in turn, is shaped by the characteristics of the territory itself: the great distances and complicated internal communications that serve to hinder physical mobility. In this context, cultural heritage appears as a key factor for resilient territorial development in rural areas (Del Espino Hidalgo, 2020). Most of the successful initiatives carried out in this sense demonstrate that working with the defining features of local identity plays a fundamental role in rural resilience (Franklin *et al.*, 2011), It is worth highlighting the corresponding need both to work with the local community and to include digital networks (Beel *et al.*, 2017), even if grassroots initiatives are rare, even though generally successful, in comparison to those implemented by state government entities (Del Espino & Klusáková, 2021).

The acceleration of urbanization, economic development, changes in the social fabric, wars and natural disasters, and alongside the damage, decay, and reconstruction of historic buildings and neighborhoods all generate losses. Hence, the existing traces of the architecture, settlement structures and ways of life of the past still visible today are now being valorised after becoming facets eligible for heritage protection. However, how did heritage protection become cultural heritage protection? The word 'cultural heritage' in Central and Eastern Europe was adopted and became part of the public consciousness with the ratification of the World Heritage Convention in 1972. In the Hungarian "Műemlékvédelem/Heritage protection" journal, the term cultural heritage first appeared in 1971. In the subsequent fifty years, the term has appeared in 187 (2.9%) titles and with the word heritage appearing six to seven times more in the titles of this journal's article. The combination of built heritage and the historic landscape represents the physical and spatial dimensions not only of urban history but also of historical ecology. Changes in the memories and the collective memories form part of the national and historical heritage. In the aforementioned region, mirror translations of the terms applied by UNESCO and ICOMOS were and still are used (Fekete, 2005).

In Hungary, a more detailed and precise definition, the Law on Monuments was adopted in 1997 and remained in force until 2001 (Act LIV of 1997 on the Protection of Monuments, p. 21): "National monument: any building, structure, installation or other work of a real estate character, as well as their functionally coherent ensemble (system), or part thereof, or its ruins or fragments, which is of outstanding importance to the past of our country in terms of architecture, history, science, urban planning, fine and applied arts, landscape architecture, archaeology or an ethnographic or technical (technical-historical) monument of the country, together with their historic components, accessories, and equipment, which are or once were part of it and which are still in existence, in whole or in part, as well as their annexes and the area of land (site) belonging to it, which is worthy of protection and conservation on account of these values and which has been declared as such".

Cultural heritage features that are presented as monuments open to visits are often, in fact wrongly, presented as World Heritage sites, primarily in tourism and museum contexts. The first list, which includes at least the term 'world' in its name, includes works that, as documents inscribed in stone or bronze, are also typical monuments or ensembles of monuments - some of which may even be eligible for inclusion among the 'classic' UNESCO World Heritage sites. In the case of intangible heritage, this in any case reflects a sign of the superficiality of the concept of heritage, which is based on conceptual confusion, as exemplified by the Hungarian and Slovenian "busójárás", the indefinite nature of the heritage concept. Under the framework of the Office for Cultural Heritage Protection, established in Hungary in 2001, archaeology and other institutions and tasks were merged under the protection of monuments.

The “waterhead”, which immediately provoked generalised anger, stemmed from the naming of undefined and indiscriminate heritage protection disappearing and, what lacks any name, slowly ceases to exist (Lóvei, 2020).

The departments of the heritage protection authorities, which were outsourced to county government offices in 2011, lost their authority to safeguard protected monuments in 2012 and left only able to state their opinion on planned interventions as a specialized authority with rather weak powers. From 2013 onwards, the atomization of activities was completed with the role of the first instance authority handed over to the district levels and, in the second instance, by the counties. There does not even contain the slightest possibility of ensuring that the protection of historic monuments takes place across the country according to the uniform criteria that would otherwise be expected not only from a professional perspective but also from the public’s point of view. A successful moment in Hungarian heritage protection came from the national ratification of the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage in Society, adopted in Faro in 2005. The European Union and the Council of Europe are striving to develop the conceptual framework of European citizenship that reached beyond the political “citizenship” of the European Union and unites the people of Europe in the cultural field. The Faro Convention amounts to an important step in the process of creating a unified cultural vision of Europe even in all its diversity. In this field, it is also particularly important to not always emphasize isolation and backwardness but also the fact they belong together. As defined by Sonkoly (2016), the inherited past serves the heir and his or her present interests.

Based on this diagnosis and these principles, our purpose in this study involves extracting the keys to the contribution of the innovative and sustainable usages of cultural heritage for the local development of rural, peripheral or vulnerable areas. Through consideration of both socio-economic and urban-territorial aspects, and following analysis of two European case studies, we seek to convey how these practices and the very presence of cultural heritage contributes to alleviating territorial imbalances.

For this purpose, we combine bibliographic and documentary research with the application and processing of data. We have mainly drawn on statistical data describing the demographic evolution across different scales coupled with data on natural and cultural, tangible and intangible heritage. The two cases chosen are southern Spain and Hungary. The first case study presents the evolution of urban space in Central and Eastern Europe, with a special focus on the factors affecting cultural heritage protection in Hungary in terms of the spatial structure. The second case study describes key data for a smaller territorial unit, one region of Spain. These cases reflect the plurality of the rural territory in Europe and its diversity of circumstances, both in terms of the territorial occupation and the socio-demographic evolution and treatment of heritage.

2. Cultural heritage as a local resource in Central and Eastern Europe

The settlement structure of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe stems from a significant historical tradition, with both urban and rural development being characterized by similar types of settlement, with country-specific factors. These factors are also reflected in the protection of cultural heritage. The concepts of national heritage, historical heritage and cultural heritage are often applied synonymously in these countries. The relationships of these societies with cultural heritage and historical traditions are expressed in many different ways. These issues may be approached at the transnational, comparative, national and local levels and, in many cases, susceptible to examination at the level of the local communities that define themselves through their heritage (Erdősi-Sonkoly, 2004). This chapter assumes that cultural heritage is site-specific, spatially dependent and can therefore be expressed and represented as a local resource.

2.1 Urban development in the macro-region

In an urban geography interpretation, Central and Eastern Europe display a low level of urbanization within the European context (Enyedi, 1996; Tsenkova, 2006). The macro-region can mostly be characterized by “oversized” capital cities in comparison to the size of the countries, especially in economic terms (Hajdú *et al.*, 2017), and by few and weak regional centers (Dogaru *et al.*, 2014). There is broadly a hybrid pattern of urbanization in which facets representing convergence with Western Europe and the distinctive regional development trajectories based on path-dependence and reaching back to the pre-socialist era are simultaneously present (Taubenböck *et al.*, 2019).

There have also been developmental differences in many areas across the region. Considering that due to their size and geographical position, large cities and small towns fulfill the role of economic, employment and service centers in regions with a population of a million, within the framework of our research, it is reasonable to analyze regional functions fulfilled by urban areas in conjunction with the competitive conditions. The settlement structure of the Czech Moravia was characterized by a dense network of small and medium-sized towns, similar to urban networks in Western Europe. Moving further east, the urban networks of the Slovakian regions, Hungary, and Poland were less developed. In the southern and south-eastern parts of Europe, prolonged wars hindered the development of urban networks both administratively and physically. Industrial development and urbanization only began following the acquisition of national sovereignty (Lux, 2020). In the 1940s, the countries in the region were characterized by the predominance of the agricultural sector. In Romania, 75% of the population lived in villages with agriculture as their main livelihood, while in Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, 60% of the population lived in rural areas in this decade. During the development of civil administration in the Carpathian Basin countries, it was mainly the cities that benefited from the development of administrative centers. The status of administrative seats elevated many lower central municipalities to an urban status and increased their economic weighting and social prominence. In Central Europe, more historians are now analyzing the sites (urban squares) of social conflicts of interest and expressions of opinion, the removal, and transformation of monuments, and the symbolic spaces of power. Particularly important are ethnically and denominationally mixed areas, such as all those places and urban spaces in the Carpathian Basin that became border areas or part of another country due to changes in state borders.

Table 1. Urban population in Central and Eastern Europe in 2011 and 2020

Country	Urban population in 2011	Urban population in 2020	Proportion living in towns	
			with less than 20,000 inhabitants	with more than 20,000 inhabitants
Bulgaria	73.1	76.0	17.4	58.6
Croatia	57.8	58.0	20.5	37.5
Czech Republic	73.4	74.0	32.7	41.3
Hungary	69.5	72.0	23.9	47.1
Poland	60.9	61.8	13.0	48.8
Romania	52.8	54.0	15.2	39.8
Slovak Republic	54.7	54.8	16.4	38.4
Slovenia	49.9	55.0	28.3	26.7

Source: own calculation based on the citypopulation.de database.

In Central and Eastern Europe, more than half of the population live in towns and cities and with over 75% living in urban areas. Given the historical background, the high proportion of urban dwellers in Bulgaria and the Czech Republic is striking (Table 1). Kovács (2002) states that the lower the level of urbanization, the higher the rate of urbanization, which can be seen by analyzing the proportion of the population living in urban areas. In 1950, the Czech Republic maximized the level of urbanization at 41%.

The urban population threshold was then minimized to 5,000 inhabitants, but when including municipalities with between 2,000 and 5,000 inhabitants, which can be functionally classified as urban areas, in the urban population definition (formerly *agrar-towns/oppida*), the urban population then exceeds 55%. In 2011, the urbanization rate stood at 73.4%, representing a population of 7,732,000. This increase, however, emerges as negligible when considering the urbanization rates in Romania and Bulgaria. In Bulgaria, the urbanization rate surged by a third in the forty years after 1950 to 53% at the time of the change of regime. In 2011, the urban population as a percentage of the total population had reached 73.1%. Romania has experienced a 'slight' increase of 30%, with 54% of the population living in urban areas.

The spatial categories implemented in Romania strongly recall the system of the Hungarian pole program (Budapest - poles of development – sub poles - small and medium-sized towns in the region). The only new feature is the metropolis, which has no Hungarian equivalent. The reason mainly derives from the lower populations of Hungarian cities, the smaller areas of their territories and the low number of international level functions. A very important factor stems from the Romanian system considering the functional area of urban and rural areas as the basic unit for the development policy. The process of urbanization in Slovakia shows the strengthening of cities of regional importance and the loss of dwellers and economic position of small towns. The number of small towns with less than 20,000 inhabitants increased from 65 to 97 in the decade before the change of regime with almost one-third of the small-town population having moved to large cities due to internal migration. The Czech-Moravian region was dominated by a dense small and medium-sized urban structure with the legacy of one in three Czech town-dwellers today living in a small town.

In Hungary, the numerous town-planning declarations and decentralized development policies led to a denser network of towns and cities during the socialist era and resulted in significant shifts in the hierarchy. The number of small towns of less than 20,000 inhabitants rose from 16 to 106, accounting for 7% and 19% of the urban population respectively. Hungary had a particular development path as it was this network of small towns, mainly with under 10,000 inhabitants, that grew dynamically during this period while it was mainly the larger towns that expanded in the rest of the region (both in number and population) (Kovács, 2002; Horeczki, 2021). In Hungary, 166 municipalities with urban status existed at the time of the regime change and, although there were still many regions with a shortage of urban areas, the municipalities that had been established and declared urban were the de facto economic, social, cultural, and administrative centers of smaller regions. Poland is still another exception as the predominance of the capital is not as great as in Hungary or Austria. The size of the country also influences the development of regional metropolitan centers, with the network of small towns playing a 'merely' complementary role and, even while involved in the economic life of the country, lacking any decisive economic weight.

Given the historical context, we may state that cities were the cornerstone of the future for the socialist states. In most countries (as in Hungary), they enjoyed advantages over villages and farms, mainly in terms of development resources. The system of Romanian regional development has been characterized by a fundamentally urban focus ever since the regime change. At this level, the concentrated social, economic and environmental problems have been identified and, in their opinion, can handle the problems of rural areas associated with their cities. The zone of the cities predominates in the center's development-oriented thinking with one exception; tourist destinations. Due to the historical delay and certain functional deviations, the urban network has always displayed particular weaknesses in Eastern and Central Europe, containing relatively few and smaller elements. Therefore, small towns have played more significant roles in the urbanization to the east of the Rhine, especially to the Oder: the lack of cities made small towns the only urban places available and correspondingly representing the most accessible and characteristic level of the urban network (Burdack-Knappe, 2007; Konecka-Szydłowska & Maćkiewicz, 2015; Trócsányi *et al.*, 2018; Vaishar, 2004).

The combination of low spatial mobility and the deficiencies of larger city networks made the regional importance of these settlements more emphasized as central locations – primarily as cultural centers concentrating workplaces and resources – in comparison to Western Europe (Pirisi *et al.*, 2016). On the other hand, their relative weakness, and the limitations of their economic power appear as key factors hampering regional convergence (Bartosiewicz *et al.*, 2019; Cole–Svidroňová, 2021; Horeczki, 2021; Molnár, 2015). In addition to its position in the Carpathian Basin and its membership of the European Union, Hungary has had to adapt to the changes taking place worldwide in keeping with the appropriate geopolitical preferences and authentic medium- and long-term development visions.

2.2 Cultural heritage in local resource management in Hungary

Cultural tourism is the most complex product organization within the tourism market, spanning (world) history tourism, castle and fortress tourism, non-secular and cultural tourism, history tourism, movie tourism, spiritual tourism, pilgrimage, and retreat tourism, metropolis visits, and cutting-edge artwork tourism. Cultural sights generally tend to draw a broader variety of people, with a developing call for cultural and vacationer sights, combining tourism and cultural tourism.

These tourism products, genuine and specific experiences, with visitors enabling their creation and sustainability. Built history and history websites represent the principal means of appealing to the world's cultural travellers, however, the weighting of every sub-product is changing. The percentage of galleries, arts and fairs has been gradually increasing whilst museums remain famous for their visitor-friendly, interactive, and wonderful classical facilities. Visits to the metropolis are becoming increasingly important and locations with lively, atmospheric and inviting surroundings are especially appealing to tourists. The search for enjoyment and the unfolding of virtual technology also constitutes fantastic opportunities for culturally improving cultural tourism. Cultural tourism participants in Hungary are typically domestic tourists. Current direct tourism development and indirect tourism development in Hungary will preserve its landscape values, its rich flora and fauna, its natural habitats, and its cultural heritage (Magyar Turisztikai Ügynökség, 2017).

For land-use planning, cultural heritage, with its wide range of spiritual, intellectual, artistic, and other real estate values represents the primary focus. The four main groups of these values (cultural landscapes, monuments, archaeological monuments and sites, settlements, and architectural ethnographic monuments) was finally completed in 1998 by VÁTI, a Hungarian non-profit organization for regional development and urban planning. The Hungarian heritage list contains nearly 10,000 items, listing all built heritage (NÖF webpage: <https://nof.hu/hu/varak-kastelyok/>). The ethnographic heritage is categorized in accordance with the Ethnographic Atlas and the archaeological heritage database is not yet complete. A list of landscapes of high value within the cultural heritage framework, which is a separate collection from landscapes protected solely for their natural value, and focuses in every case on man-made features: historical gardens, wine-growing areas, areas of special cultivation, and historical and cultural links. Unfortunately, some details in these databases are not available on the government portal. Cultural heritage is a non-renewable resource with their fragility also turning their maintenance into a moral issue for municipalities. The landscapes and historical gardens for protection under the auspices of cultural heritage coincide with the tourist-cultural zones defined in Government Decree 429/2020 (14.IX.20). These zones also include World Heritage settlements, extended to include natural values, archaeological sites, and most ethnographic collections. In keeping with Hungary's rich history, different areas of the country contain different amounts of protected heritage. The counties of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, Győr-Moson-Sopron, Pest and Veszprém are particularly rich in excavated values (Table 2). In these counties, three types of cultural local economic development are already in place: based on the built heritage (for example castles and “tájház”/country houses), the intangible heritage (for example Traditional Public Works Programme, association activities, joint programs) and the natural heritage (for example thermal bath and gardening).

Table 2. Number of settlements designated as World Heritage sites by county, 2019 (number)

County	Municipality listed as a World Heritage Site	Municipality covered by a Future World Heritage Site
Bács-Kiskun	-	10
Baranya	1	10
Békés	-	8
Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén	57	12
Budapest	1	1
Csongrád-Csanád	-	4
Fejér	-	9
Győr-Moson-Sopron	12	19
Hajdú-Bihar	11	7
Heves	2	11
Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok	5	2
Komárom-Esztergom	-	13
Nógrád	1	3
Pest	-	27
Somogy	-	5
Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg	-	7
Tolna	-	14
Vas	-	4
Veszprém	-	36
Zala	-	5

Source: own calculation based on the Teir database.

Applying the integrated planning method, the Hungarian National Spatial Plan considers cultural centers (e.g., European Capitals of Culture) and tourism as a single entity. Thus, cultural heritage becomes a developmental attraction and a potential competitive advantage for regions.

Taking into account the national spatial structure and urbanization rate, we can observe a gradual change in the landscape's degree of involvement: an increase in the number of cities, the spread of suburbs, and the expansion of industrial areas. The spatial structure of the country also reflects a kind of historical legacy: Budapest is central (both in socio-economic and cultural terms), and the regional centers, although strong, have not been able to catch up with the level of development of the cities in the outer rings (Bratislava, Košice, Cluj Napoca, Osijek, etc.).

Within the country, the main transport routes are capital-centered, serving to facilitate access to the capital rather than channel the countryside into the economic mainstream (Hajdú *et al.*, 2017). Every new piece of infrastructure built to meet the challenges of the times takes away a piece of the cultural landscape. The following factors therefore receive particular attention in the regulations: preventing unjustified internal land growth (favouring brownfield investments, with no new building land in the farmland areas of Alföld) that would break up the settlement structure of the historic landscape. Roads should be designed to minimize the formation of suburbs while taking environmental considerations into account. The construction of vertical structures in cultural and protected landscapes should be discouraged with heritage tourism one of the key regional drivers in Hungary, pushing both disadvantaged and better-off regions in a positive development direction.

The development of heritage products represents a local activity and any success depends on the work of local bodies, organizations, and citizens. Achieving a favourable competitive position is now unthinkable without a consensus of local stakeholders and the involvement of local authorities. Nevertheless, heritage products also generate conflicts of interest: site managers concerned over the load-bearing capacity and preserving quality; government organizations perceiving them as a marketing tool for enhancing their image; and local government and residents seeing them as a "break-out point". Innovative technological solutions, services, and business models play a major role in the tourism toolbox, generating growth in the related sectors and thereby contributing to improving the competitiveness of the SME sector and strengthening the national R&D&I performance.

Tourism provides a winning sector (while the recent pandemic period has forced the sector to respond differently, the change is certainly positive for domestic tourism), responding to the disruptive effects of digitalization with appropriate and timely responses (Máté, 1999).

3. The territorial balance in Andalusia and the role of innovative practices based on cultural heritage and inter-local cooperation

The second case study addressed is Andalusia, the southernmost region of Spain, in the far south-eastern corner of Europe. Compared to most European territory, including a large part of Spain, it is densely populated and, more importantly for this paper, an eminently urban region.

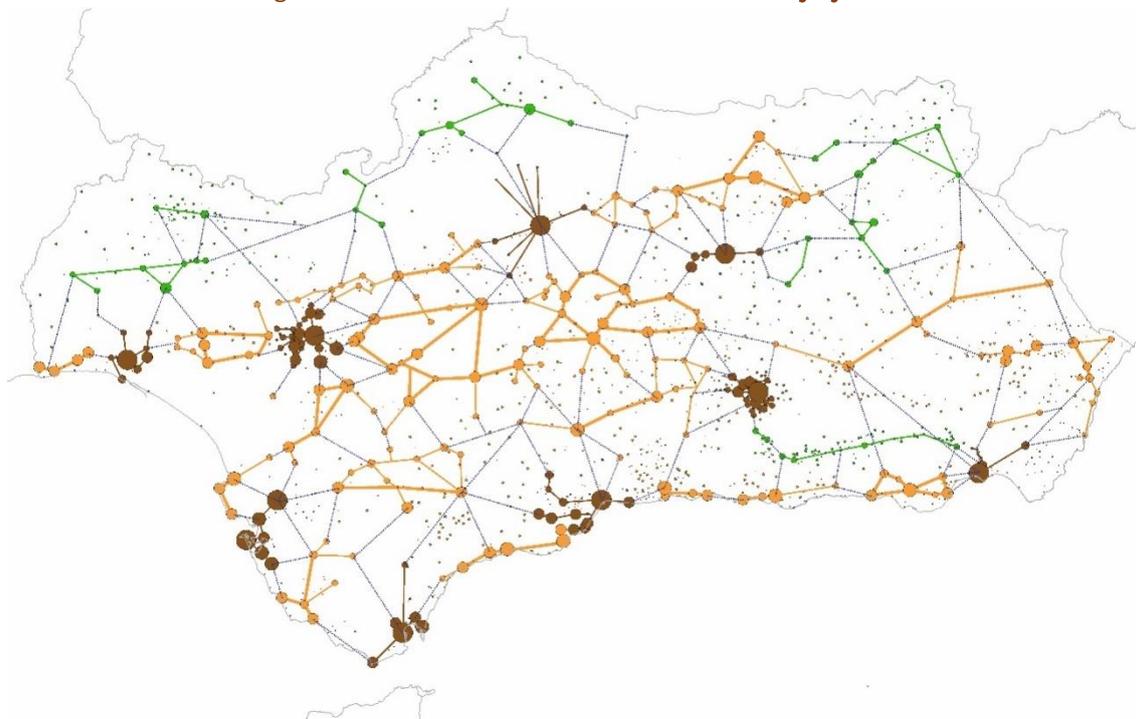
3.1 *The Andalusian urban-territorial model*

According to official statistics (Eurostat, 2020), 39.3% of the European population lives in cities. However, in Andalusia, 48.5% live in urban centers (IECA, 2020).

In contrast, only 11.5% of Andalusians live in rural areas, compared to 29.1% of the total European population. In turn, a large proportion of the urban-territorial structure in Andalusia is structured around urban clusters, mostly networks of medium-sized cities, which are home to 38% of the regional population.

Finally, to provide a complete overview, it should be noted that the average population density in Europe is 31.6%, while in Andalusia this rises to 40%.

Figure 1. Territorial structure of the Andalusia city system



Source: Own elaboration from Plan de Ordenación del Territorio de Andalucía (POTA), 2006.

Hence, we must firstly understand that the urban-territorial structure is, in general, balanced. In Figure 1, we can observe an abstraction of the Andalusian city system, defined by Andalusia's land-use plan (hereinafter, POTA), which portrays how practically all its territory, including the smaller settlements, are in close proximity to a city, whether a regional center or a medium-sized city. However, and partly because of this fact, the differences in population dynamics between densely populated areas and the few sparsely populated areas have only increased in recent decades.

Most rural areas in Andalusia are in mountainous areas or traditionally productive agricultural landscapes. In addition to the problems arising from the loss of population and the scarcity of facilities or infrastructures, these are compounded by environmental imbalances resulting from the abandonment of traditional agricultural landscapes, the decline of traditional agrarian systems of great environmental and cultural value, and, consequently, the acceleration of soil erosion and desertification. This has all contributed to the risk of losing the traditional cultures and practices that have historically characterized the relationship between the Andalusian population and its environment (POTA, 2006:22).

Regarding rural areas, the territorial model defined by POTA establishes three basic types of organization for rural space based on their functioning networks: networks organized by medium-sized towns, networks organized by rural centers, and other networks of rural settlements. The latter is further subdivided into dense networks of strongly cohesive and homogeneous rural settlements, networks of rural settlements within centralized structures, and networks of low-density rural settlements with loosely defined structures (*ibidem*:29).

On the other hand, however, what POTA classifies as medium-sized cities could be equivalent, in terms of their populations, to what in other European areas are termed small cities or even small towns (Del Espino Hidalgo, 2017). Nowadays, they constitute a network that configures most of the regional territory, as defined by the colour orange in Figure 1. Furthermore, they possess a special value regarding the territorial equilibrium of the region. In particular, those located in inner Andalusia, founded in the mid-20th century, represent a unique urban phenomenon: settlements with the dimensions of cities but maintaining the typical structure of the agricultural world (López Ontiveros, 1994). In terms of their social dynamism, they were generally linked to a rural system of exploitation based on large estates, with a segregated social hierarchy and a lack of provision of services and facilities in proportion to their population.

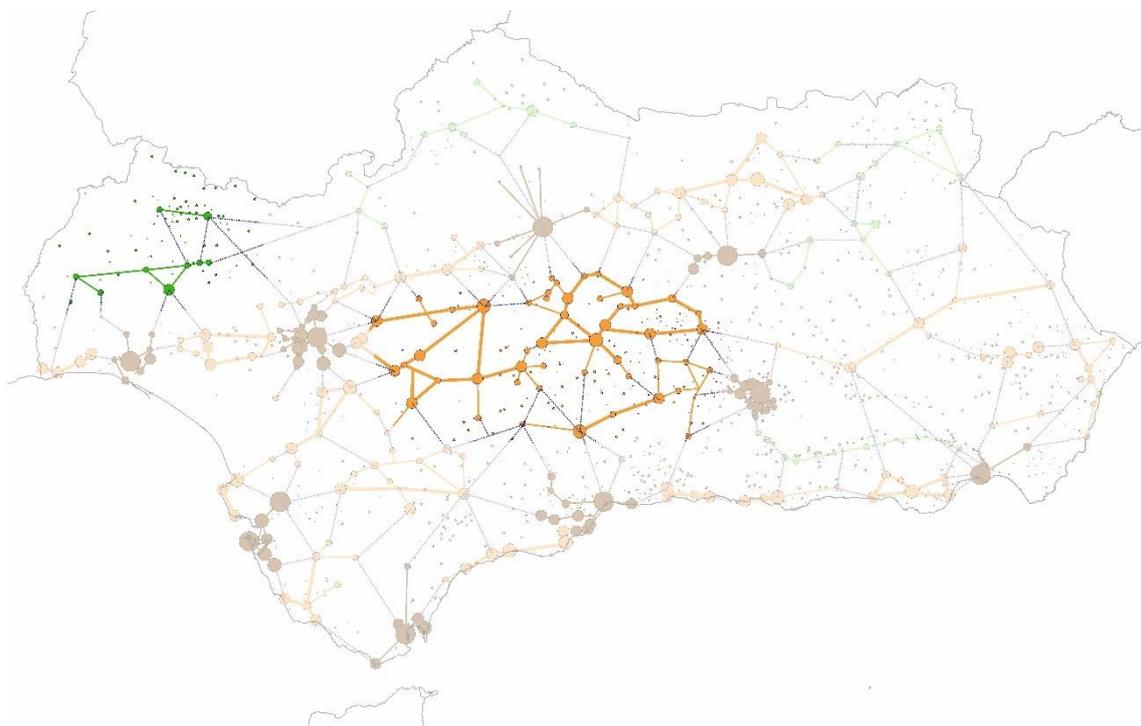
3.2 *The socio-cultural and demographic characteristics of two territorial networks in Andalusia*

We now undertake analysis that seeks to clarify to what extent, and in what ways, has the presence of heritage assets influenced the urban-territorial balance of Andalusia. For this purpose, we analyze the territorial node sets of two areas in the Andalusian city system, with different and complementary characteristics (Figure 2): on the one hand, the territorial nodes of the set formed by the medium-sized cities of the center of Andalusia and, on the other hand, the territorial nodes of the set formed by the rural areas of the interior of Huelva province.

Medium-size Andalusian cities are characterized by their large municipal areas and dense urban cores. Their average population densities vary from 40 to 100 inhabitants per square kilometer, with about 90% of the population generally living in the main city of the municipality, in densities of between 50 and 80 dwellings per hectare.

Over time, they have experienced a territorial, urban, and even economic valorization process. Thus, they have acquired the proper functions of cities and turned into new areas of opportunity for articulating the region (POTA, 2006). For this study, we will focus on the territorial node set in the center of Andalusia that POTA identified in 2006 as particularly potent in terms of socio-economic development. The demographic and productive crisis suffered in the 1950s, which was caused by the decline of the agricultural system (López Ontiveros, 1994), provoked an increase in the variety of niche markets that provided them with new social and economic dynamism.

Figure 2. The two territorial networks selected for study. On the left, the territorial nodes of rural areas of the interior of Huelva province. In the middle, the territorial nodes of the medium-sized cities of the center of Andalusia



Source: Own elaboration based on Plan de Ordenación del Territorio de Andalucía (POTA), 2006.

In addition, due probably to the strategic positioning of the region regarding opportunities for providing road connections, small and large-size industries were set up without any clear connection to previous traditional activities. In the 1980s, this trend strengthened and partially superseded the agricultural sector as the socioeconomic base, making recourse to the term *agro-town*, even if outdated, as a definition for this urban phenomenon (Caravaca *et al.*, 2002). Moreover, the new urban functions required and reinforced a noticeable increase in the services sector, which today accounts for at least 50% of the jobs in each of the cities studied and, in some instances, up to 70% (Instituto de Estadística y Cartografía de Andalucía, 2010).

As a result, the loss of their agricultural identity has had a powerful impact on the rural landscape, which is divided into several landscape units that correspond to the official administrative districts: Sevilla Countryside, Cordoba Countryside, Subbetic, and Jaen Mountains, and Antequera and Archidona Meadows (Fernández Cacho *et al.*, 2010). Although the geographical features of these units differ, all share some landscape similarities, particularly those related to the predominant crops: which are usually olive trees, frequently cereals, and, more rarely, vineyards or vegetable gardens.

Regarding urban heritage, they share some common features inherited from their historic genesis. Significant archaeological sites exist as most were secondary urban centers during the Roman Empire or even in Proto-History. There are the castles and large fortifications that defined the frontier between Muslim and Christian territories for more than two centuries in the Middle Ages, alongside craft industries (e.g., ceramics) that vary from city to city in terms of materials and decoration but share similar shapes and domestic functions.

However, both the social structure and the urban landscape have suffered, in keeping with growth in the economic system, from an erosion of their main values which seriously affect the sustainability of their cultural heritage and identity (Fernández, 2007). Thus, social, economic and demographic development—although having had a positive influence on some aspects of the equilibrium in small Andalusian cities—has adversely affected others, especially in the fields of heritage and culture.

Next, we embark on the quantitative study by analyzing the demographic evolution of the region characterized by the medium-sized cities in central Andalusia. We will focus on the territorial nodes defined by POTAs for which we calculated the percentage variations in populations over four specific points in time:

- 1857, a year for which there is municipality level census information for the entire sample studied and which provides an image before the changes produced in the social and productive fabric in the second half of the 19th century.
- 1970, the year in which the national municipality level census was carried out and which brought about sociopolitical changes in Spain that led to the progressive abandoning of the agrarian world in favour of a service-based economy and the renovation of transport infrastructures.
- 2011, the last year in which an official municipality level census took place in Spain, coinciding with the height of the economic crisis caused by the urban bubble.
- 2021, the last year for which municipal census data is available at the time of writing, which allows us to assess the initiatives developed to enhance the value of cultural heritage in recent decades.

Table 3. Demographic evolution of territorial nodes in the center of Andalusia

Province	District	City	Variation % 1857-1970	Variation % 1970-2011	Variation % 2011-2021
Sevilla	Campiña de Carmona	Carmona	31%	17%	2%
		Arahal	62%	20%	1%
		Morón de la Frontera	90%	-5%	-3%
		Marchena	63%	-6%	-3%
	Comarca de Écija	Écija	26%	13%	-2%
	Sierra Sur de Sevilla	Osuna	23%	-16%	-2%
		Estepa	8%	29%	-1%
Córdoba	Campiña Sur de Córdoba	Puente Genil	173%	14%	-2%
	Campiña de Montilla	Montilla	53%	6%	-5%
	Campiña de Baena	Baena	51%	5%	-10%
	La Subbética	Cabra	61%	2%	-4%
		Lucena	64%	52%	0%
		Priego de Córdoba	52%	9%	-5%
Jaén	Sierra Sur de Jaén	Alcalá la Real	55%	3%	-5%
Málaga	Comarca de Antequera	Antequera	51%	1%	-1%
Granada	Comarca de Loja	Loja	28%	-1%	-5%

Source: Prepared by the author according to the databases from the 1857 Spanish census “Censo de la Población de España”; 1970 Spanish census “Censo de la Población de España—Tomo II—Volúmenes Provinciales”; the 2011 Spanish census “Censo de Población y Viviendas 2011”; and the 2021 Spanish municipal register “Padrón municipal 2021”. Instituto Nacional de Estadística de España. <http://www.ine.es>

As Table 3 details, demographic trends varied in the first period, ranging from 8% in Estepa to 173% in Puente Genil and 90% in Morón de la Frontera. However, a generalized tendency to growth of between 50% and 60% prevailed in most municipalities.

From the 1970s, the growth trends shifted and new municipalities appeared and grew strongly. For example, Estepa and Lucena are two cities marked by the development of strong industrial sectors that developed, precisely, between the end of the 20th century and in the early years of the 21st century. On the contrary, a particularly negative situation in terms of relative population loss comes with Osuna, impacted by still having the agricultural sector as the key output of the local production system.

Over the last decade, most municipalities experienced relative population losses of between 1% and 5%. There are a few exceptions such as Carmona, which expanded by 2%, Arahal, by 1%, and Lucena, which retains practically the same population. More significant is the case of Baena, which lost almost 10% of its population over the last ten years.

In the following table, we collate quantitative data on the facets constituting the cultural heritage of the municipalities chosen. This incorporates both the number of protected heritage assets (included in the General Catalogue of the Cultural Heritage of Andalusia) and the number of immovable or built assets and activities of immaterial cultural heritage registered in the Digital Guide to the Cultural Heritage of Andalusia. Both instruments, the Catalogue for protected features and the Digital Guide as a simple register or inventory, have undergone development by the entity competent for matters relating to the historical heritage of Andalusia, specifically the Protection Service and the Andalusian Institute of Historical Heritage. Movable cultural assets have not been considered for the study as both their protection and registration are subject to particularities in Andalusia that prevent any homogeneous analysis in quantitative terms.

Table 4. Cultural heritage resources registered and protected by regional institutions in territorial nodes in the center of Andalusia

Province	District	City	Protected heritage assets	Registered built assets	Registered immaterial assets	Percentage of protected assets
Sevilla	Campiña de Carmona	Carmona	22	594	9	4%
		Arahal	24	65	2	36%
		Morón de la Frontera	43	128	7	32%
		Marchena	4	273	10	1%
	Comarca de Écija	Écija	17	196	7	8%
	Sierra Sur de Sevilla	Osuna	7	181	6	4%
		Estepa	47	96	6	46%
Córdoba	Campiña Sur de Córdoba	Puente Genil	6	94	9	6%
	Campiña de Montilla	Montilla	7	74	8	9%
	Campiña de Baena	Baena	9	222	6	4%
	La Subbética	Cabra	11	106	12	9%
		Lucena	7	56	7	11%
	Priego de Córdoba	42	293	10	14%	
Jaén	Sierra Sur de Jaén	Alcalá la Real	13	159	10	8%
Málaga	Comarca de Antequera	Antequera	30	236	14	12%
Granada	Comarca de Loja	Loja	24	56	5	39%

Source: Own elaboration according to the databases run by Guía Digital del Patrimonio Cultural de Andalucía (<https://guiadigital.iaph.es/>) and Catálogo General del Patrimonio Histórico de Andalucía (<https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/organismos/culturaypatrimoniohistorico/areas/bienes-culturales/catalogo-pha/consulta.html>).

As Table 4 sets out, the differences in the recognition and protection of heritage assets are abundant in the case of these medium-sized cities. Some municipalities stand out in terms of the number of protected cultural assets, such as Morón de la Frontera, Estepa, Priego de Córdoba and Antequera. These data do not necessarily coincide with the municipalities with the most immovable assets registered, as is the case of Marchena or Baena, although they do in Priego de Córdoba and Antequera. As for the immaterial heritage activities recorded, the figures are much more homogeneous, although the result is slightly higher (more than ten records) in Marchena, Cabra, Priego de Córdoba, Alcalá la Real, and Antequera.

Finally, we calculated the percentages of protected assets as compared to those registered. In this aspect, cities with few registered properties stand out, as is the case of Arahál or Loja but also with two cities registering an intermediate level of immovable heritage registration, such as Morón de la Frontera and Estepa.

We subsequently weighted the number of protected cultural heritage assets according to the area of the municipality to obtain a parameter of the local heritage density (Table 5). The density of protected elements per square kilometer is, in general, below 0.05, except for two municipalities that stand out from the rest: Estepa, at 0.25, and Priego de Córdoba, at 0.15. In both cases, these are localities with a large number of protected properties and, simultaneously, a medium or low municipal surface area hosting the sample.

Table 5. Density of cultural heritage resources protected by regional institutions in territorial nodes in central Andalusia

Province	District	City	Protected heritage assets	Area of the municipality (km ²)	Density of protected assets/km ²
Sevilla	Campiña de Carmona	Carmona	22	922.6	0.02
		Arahál	24	201.2	0.12
		Morón de la Frontera	43	432.1	0.10
		Marchena	4	378.7	0.01
	Comarca de Écija	Écija	17	978.5	0.02
	Sierra Sur de Sevilla	Osuna	7	592.3	0.01
		Estepa	47	189.9	0.25
Córdoba	Campiña Sur de Córdoba	Puente Genil	6	171.0	0.04
	Campiña de Montilla	Montilla	7	169.0	0.04
	Campiña de Baena	Baena	9	362.2	0.02
	La Subbética	Cabra	11	229.1	0.05
		Lucena	7	351.9	0.02
		Priego de Córdoba	42	288.1	0.15
Jaén	Sierra Sur de Jaén	Alcalá la Real	13	261.2	0.05
Málaga	Comarca de Antequera	Antequera	30	749.2	0.04
Granada	Comarca de Loja	Loja	24	447.3	0.05

Source: Own elaboration according to the Catálogo General del Patrimonio Histórico de Andalucía (<https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/organismos/culturaypatrimoniohistorico/areas/bienes-culturales/catalogo-pha/consulta.html>) and Sistema de Información Multiterritorial de Andalucía databases (<https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/institutodeestadisticaycartografia/sima/index2.htm>).

The inland area of Huelva province, which POTA defines as a single set of rural characters in its model, constitutes a reality composed of two large areas in terms of its territorial, socio-cultural, and productive definition. On the one hand, there is the mountainous region of Sierra de Huelva and, on the other, there are the administrative regions of Andévalo and Cuenca Minera with hilly topographies providing a smooth transition zone prior to the Condado de Huelva plain and the coast.

The Sierra de Huelva is an area that fits in perfectly with the general vision of the rural world of the southern Iberian Peninsula: with an economy fundamentally based on agricultural activities, a large majority of human settlements only very small in size, with the occasional presence of small towns that function as timid secondary centers. Following a period of depopulation due to the low profitability of traditional agriculture in the last decades of the 20th century and a lack of industrialization (Moreno Alonso, 1982), its demographic dynamism thus remains very limited. Some municipalities, such as Aracena, Cortegana, Aroche, or Jabugo, account for exceptions courtesy of their geographic proximity to a road connecting Seville with the southern Portuguese Alentejo region. They have developed a productive fabric based on rural tourism, gastronomy, and second homes for the inhabitants of nearby cities. This panorama contrasts with the second chain of towns that, to the north and very close to the Extremadura region, have remained practically isolated and have experienced very high rates of depopulation.

Regarding the characteristics of its heritage and landscape, two cultural processes mark out this mountain range (Fernández Cacho *et al.*, op. cit.). On the one hand, its privileged, elevated position in the border region with Portugal has marked the physiognomy of its villages with a valuable and wide legacy of some of the best-preserved castles in Andalusia. On the other hand, one of the characteristics attributed to this area in the collective imagination is its agricultural and livestock activities, which have been ongoing continuously ever since Roman times. Nevertheless, presently, the core activity is the traditional preparation and export of meat products, among which the Iberian smoked ham particularly stands out. In addition, the Sierra de Huelva experienced the impact of the mining boom of Andévalo in the late nineteenth century, receiving part of the population employed in this sector and with several small mining operations in the south and east. Finally, it is worth mentioning the good preservation of its traditional houses, as an area especially dense in officially declared Historic Sites, and with the existence of several sites with valuable megalithic heritage remains as well as the profusion of festive rituals that enrich its intangible cultural heritage.

In turn, Andévalo is a region recognized as one of the most vulnerable in Andalusia from a socio-economic point of view. The reasons for its decline, especially severe in the late twentieth century, derive from its peripheral character, isolated from the mainland communication routes of the region. We must also add the difficulties of the traditional agricultural sector in adapting to the new production systems. Furthermore, especially in its eastern sector, linked to the pyritic belt, the late nineteenth century crisis in the mining sector triggered a great demographic and economic convulsion across the region (Senra González, 2020). In this context, the only exception is Valverde del Camino, a city that developed a strong footwear and furniture industry, which has reflected in its maintaining and increasing its population.

As stated above, two productive activities have marked its history and, therefore, correspondingly also shape its landscape and a significant proportion of its built heritage and traditions (Fernández Cacho *et al.*, op. cit.). On the one hand, agricultural exploitation, more often of an agro-livestock nature, is occasionally complemented by forestry operations. In general, the landscape is dominated by pasture and scrubland with livestock for sheep, goats, and pigs, as well as forestry in some areas. On the other hand, it is undeniable how the mining industry has marked both demographically and culturally the area, especially the eastern and central zones. The exploitation of the pyritic belt, although with evidence of this activity dating back to Protohistory, accelerated and deepened in the mid-nineteenth century with the emergence of two large mining centers (Tharsis and Ríotinto) and numerous smaller mining concessions throughout the Andévalo. In addition to the mining activity itself, there was the industrial and transport activities resulting from the railway lines that crossed the entire region in order to distribute the metal ores.

This process left a legacy that still shapes the landscape, with an extensive industrial heritage of both buildings and infrastructure. Other facets that characterize the heritage and landscape of this area are the megaliths, as described in the case of Sierra de Huelva, the defensive architecture linked to the border with Portugal, the abundant flour windmills, many of which are still in good condition, and popular architecture, well-preserved thanks to the lack of economic and demographic dynamism. Finally, the area shares with the Sierra de Huelva the richness and variety of its intangible cultural heritage, especially in terms of festive rituals.

After describing the main cultural features of the territory, we now advance with the quantitative study of demographic and cultural heritage data on the territorial nodes that POTA defines for this set of rural settlements.

Table 6. Demographic evolution of territorial nodes in the inland districts of Huelva

Province	District	City	Variation % 1857-1970	Variation % 1970-2011	Variation % 2011-2021
Huelva	Sierra de Huelva	Aracena	40%	12%	6%
		Cortegana	107%	-40%	-5%
	El Andévalo	Alosno	22%	-36%	-7%
		Calañas	191%	-49%	-35%
		Puebla de Guzmán	20%	-31%	0%
		Valverde del Camino	98%	18%	0%
	Cuenca Minera	Minas de Riotinto	367%	-48%	-8%
		Nerva	76%	-49%	-10%
		Zalamea laReal	0%	-35%	-9%

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of databases from the 1857 Spanish census “Censo de la Población de España”; 1970 Spanish census “Censo de la Población de España–Tomo II–Volúmenes Provinciales”; the 2011 Spanish census “Censo de Población y Viviendas 2011”; and the 2021 Spanish municipal register “Padrón municipal 2021”. Instituto Nacional de Estadística de España. <http://www.ine.es>

In terms of demographic trends (Table 6), significant differences emerge among the respective municipalities. In the first period analyzed, data from municipalities with limited or even no growth contrast with others where the population doubled (Cortegana and Valverde del Camino), tripled (Calañas), or even quadrupled (Minas de Riotinto). In the last two cases, the growth stemmed from the acquisition of the mines in the area by the Rio Tinto Company Limited in 1873. Afterwards, they began to be exploited on a large scale while various chemical industries and an important railway network underwent simultaneous development, which led to substantial population growth.

During the second recorded period, the population variation turns significantly negative with generalized decreases of between 30% and 50% in every municipality except for two cases: Aracena, which grew by 12%, and Valverde del Camino, the only city in this area with a strong industrial production network, with an 18% population increase. As demonstrated, the evolution of production systems, the industrialization and tertiarization of Andalusia, and the decline of traditional production techniques as well as the boom in rapid transport infrastructures in the late 20th century, have driven very serious effects for depopulation in this rural area, even in its territorial nodes.

In the last decade, the trend toward depopulation is also generalized, with most municipalities experiencing a loss of population of between 5% and 10%. By a long margin, Calañas is the town suffering the most from advancing depopulation, with the loss of 35% of its inhabitants in a trend continuing from the previous period, while two municipalities maintained their population (Puebla de Guzmán and Valverde del Camino) and in the case of Aracena, the number of inhabitants even rose slightly, up 6%. Regarding the registration and protection of cultural heritage assets by the competent administrative authority (Table 7), we observe a generally low number of protected assets per municipality, in comparison with the average for the towns studied above, without any case attaining a total of ten assets.

Table 7. Cultural heritage resources registered and protected by regional institutions in territorial nodes in the inland districts of Huelva

Province	District	City	Protected heritage assets	Registered built assets	Registered immaterial assets	Percentage of protected assets
Huelva	Sierra de Huelva	Aracena	7	123	9	5%
		Cortegana	6	48	5	11%
	El Andévalo	Alosno	4	82	12	3%
		Calañas	5	79	2	6%
		Puebla de Guzmán	4	27	6	12%
		Valverde del Camino	4	34	9	9%
	Cuenca Minera	Minas de Riotinto	4	133	3	3%
		Nerva	1	69	2	1%
		Zalamea la Real	5	55	5	8%

Source: Own elaboration according to the Guía Digital del Patrimonio Cultural de Andalucía (<https://guiadigital.iaph.es/>) and Catálogo General del Patrimonio Histórico de Andalucía databases (<https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/organismos/culturaypatrimoniohistorico/areas/bienes-culturales/catalogo-pha/consulta.html>).

The same does not occur with registered built assets which, as a general rule, are abundant. The figures are even higher than the previous area in many cases and especially high in Aracena, one of the two most populous towns in this area, alongside Valverde del Camino, as well as in Minas de Riotinto, where a large number of properties derive from the meticulous registration of the industrial heritage structures inherited from the large mining presence.

As for intangible cultural heritage, there is a generalized homogeneity, with less than ten records in all cases except for Alosno, which stands out slightly above the rest with 12 recorded activities, mostly related to various popular festivals.

The proportion of protected cultural heritage assets in terms of the total in these municipalities also does not present particularly notable differences, even though slightly higher than the rest (around 10%) in the cases of Cortegana, Puebla de Guzmán, Valverde del Camino, and Zalamea la Real.

Table 8. Density of cultural heritage resources protected by regional institutions in the inland districts of Huelva

Province	District	City	Protected heritage assets	Area of the municipality (km ²)	Density of protected assets/km ²
Huelva	Sierra de Huelva	Aracena	7	184.7	0.04
		Cortegana	6	173.4	0.03
	El Andévalo	Alosno	4	191.5	0.02
		Calañas	5	238.3	0.02
		Puebla de Guzmán	4	337.2	0.01
		Valverde del Camino	4	219.1	0.02
	Cuenca Minera	Minas de Riotinto	4	23.4	0.17
		Nerva	1	55.5	0.02
		Zalamea laReal	5	239.3	0.02

Source: Own elaboration according to the Catálogo General del Patrimonio Histórico de Andalucía (<https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/organismos/culturaypatrimoniohistorico/areas/bienes-culturales/catalogo-pha/consulta.html>) and Sistema de Información Multiterritorial de Andalucía databases (<https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/institutodeestadisticaycartografia/sima/index2.htm>).

Finally, there are no significant differences in terms of the density of protected heritage assets per square kilometer, except in the case of Minas de Riotinto, where this attains 0.17 simply because the municipality spans a particularly small surface area.

3.3 *The influence of innovative cultural heritage actions on territorial dynamism and balance*

In the previous section, we analysed how heritage is passively sustainable: how its handing on to future generations has been guaranteed through its knowledge and protection by the competent entities in the field of cultural heritage.

The following seeks to discourse on the findings from the data obtained as well as considering a new dimension to the analysis: in the two Andalusian territorial areas analysed, the initiatives and projects developed in which cultural heritage has been deployed innovatively as a resource for local sustainable development.

In the case of the territorial nodes of central Andalusia, we observe notable growth between the mid-19th century and the 1970s (Table 3). This period coincides with the loss of the traditional agrarian sector in many cases and the appearance of extensive and mechanized agriculture as well as the introduction of freight transport routes, such as railroads and industrialization. In particular, Puente Genil was the medium-sized city that grew by far the most during this period, which attracted industries linked to hydraulic motive power (electricity or flour) alongside an important railway station for the transport of goods. The other city experiencing notable growth over this period, Morón de la Frontera, also benefitted from the arrival of the railroad in conjunction with the installation of an American military base in the 1940s.

The situation changed in the following period of study. Then, growth was also generalized except in the case of Osuna (an average city marked by its strong agricultural character) and especially high in the cases of Lucena and Estepa, two cities already industrialized by the end of the twentieth century. Both also display strong olive oil production bases and extensive olive groves, which reinforce the character of their agricultural and intangible heritage.

In the last decade, however, the growth of these cities has stagnated and, in most cases, has turned slightly negative due to the economic crises following the real estate bubble bursting and COVID-19. The population loss is especially severe in Baena, a town with strong intangible heritage of ritual drumming, which in 2018 was included on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (UNESCO, 2018), and with a consolidated tradition in olive grove cultivation and olive oil production. The only medium-sized towns experiencing expansion have been Carmona and Arahál while Lucena maintained its population.

If we compare these trends with the presence of recognized or protected heritage elements (Table 4), as well as with the heritage density according to the municipality surface area (Table 5), we can detect a certain correlation between the territorial nodes with a greater presence of heritage, and/or better protected, and greater demographic dynamism.

This represents the case of Carmona, with many recognized immovable heritage assets, Arahál, Morón de la Frontera and Estepa, where there are a high percentage of protected heritage assets. The density of heritage assets in Estepa is also particularly high. However, this influence of cultural heritage on demographic data does not occur in other cases, such as Baena, Marchena, Priego de Córdoba, Antequera or Loja.

Regarding the implementation of cultural heritage based innovative initiatives for the territorial development of this area, it should be noted how recent years have seen the common heritage of several of these cities become the driver of an urban-territorial network. Thus, we have cases of routes dedicated to religious heritage, such as *Caminos de Pasión* (2022) - to which Alcalá la Real, Baena, Carmona, Écija, Lucena, Osuna, Priego de Córdoba, Puente Genil and Utrera belong.

We must also mention the *Rutas del Legado Andalusi* (2022), among which the Washington Irving and Caliphate routes stand out. However, the most notable initiative is the network known as *Ciudades Medias del Centro de Andalucía* (2021) - Medium-sized Cities in Central Andalusia -, a public-private foundation in which seven local governments work together to enhance cultural tourism: Alcalá la Real, Antequera, Écija, Estepa, Loja, Lucena and Puente Genil. Among them, apart from Loja, they have created the highly successful *Tu Historia* tourist program (2017), with a multitude of activities based mostly on experiences that interpret different periods of the history of these cities and specific features of their heritage. Thus, we may note that both the presence and adequate protection of cultural heritage and, especially, its treatment through innovative initiatives with a strong territorial cooperation component, have contributed favourably to local development based on the prevailing demographic trends.

Regarding the latter, the results significantly differ from the prior situations in the case of the inland regions of Huelva (Table 6). In this sense, there is a contrast between the dynamism of an area marked by a system of medium-sized cities, where population growth is practically constant, and a second area with a markedly rural character, where the trend is very different. In the first period analysed, there was very strong growth in most of the towns analysed, notably higher than in the previous cases. Particularly striking is the case of Minas de Riotinto, which quintuples its population in little more than a century due to the opening of a large mining operation. Also notable, for similar reasons, are the cases of Cortegana, Calañas, and Valverde del Camino, which practically doubled their populations: in Calañas, due to the presence of small mining operations, while in Cortegana industrialization took place following the arrival of the railroad.

The situation then changed drastically in the following period of analysis, which coincided with two issues that marked the productive and social profiles of this area. On the one hand, the decline of traditional agricultural systems, which did not generate high returns, by intensive agriculture or livestock systems due to the characteristics of the territory. On the other hand, the cessation of mining production activities, which had strongly conditioned employment in both regions and, in many cases, also led to the closure of the railways. Thus, population losses ranged between 30% and 50%, except in two cases, Aracena, located at the head of the mountain chain, and Valverde del Camino, which continues to grow thanks to its industrial activities.

In the last decade, however, the population loss has slowed in these rural towns, with figures similar to those of central Andalusia, except in very particular cases such as Calañas. Furthermore, there has even been population growth in the case of Aracena. In this case, the correlation with the protection and inventory of heritage assets is not so evident (Tables 7 and 8). Nevertheless, this holds for some municipalities, such as Aracena and Minas de Riotinto, with many recognized immovable assets, Valverde del Camino and Cortegana, both with a high percentage of protected heritage elements, and Minas de Riotinto itself, with a high heritage density corresponding to its small municipal area. Therefore, it is important to also contrast the innovative and sustainable initiatives carried out based on their cultural heritage.

As regards the Sierra municipalities, it is necessary to remember that most are located within the Sierra de Aracena and Picos de Aroche Natural Park, which has its own program of cultural heritage-based activities and initiatives (Agenda Cultural de Andalucía, 2022). Thus, in the municipalities of Aracena, Aroche, Cortegana and Almonaster la Real, activities abound around the natural, archaeological, religious, and defensive heritage. They also extend to the intangible heritage related to gastronomy, especially with acorn-fed Iberian smoked ham, which has its own museum in Aracena in addition to an annual fair that attracts a large influx of public. In smaller municipalities, such as Aroche, local cultural heritage development-based initiatives have been developed, such as the Heritage Project, an integrated heritage management model developed by the Aroche Town Council which integrates all the links in the heritage value chain: research, conservation, restoration, dissemination and the socialization of heritage (Instituto Andaluz del Patrimonio Histórico: 2018).

In the Andévalo region, the activation of rural heritage takes on a less comprehensive or territorial character and with its most notable initiatives based on the activation of industrial and landscape heritage following the large mining operations being taken out of service (Romero & Santiago, 2010). This would explain the slowing in the depopulation process in the municipalities hosting significant mining heritage, with particularly relevant initiatives including the founding of the Minero de Riotinto Park (2022), which includes particularly innovative activities that incorporate new technologies as well as creative discourses that reinvent the industrial past. In both cases, the actions of the so-called Rural Development Groups (GDR), such as the GDR Sierra de Aracena and Picos de Aroche (2022) or the Asociación para el Desarrollo Rural del Andévalo Occidental (2020) have played fundamental roles. Both entities, of public origin, promote activities and funding for the development of rural areas, many of which are based on cultural heritage.

4. Conclusions

Population decline has become one of Europe's biggest challenges in recent decades. Not only is the population disappearing from those areas subject to depopulation, the left-behind regions, but also as are all the traditions and customs (such as animal husbandry, crafts, folk traditions, etc.) that were previously characteristic of these areas. As populations disappear or are replaced, the protection of cultural heritage takes on a new level of relevance; preservation has become not only an economic or local value but also a national-cultural value.

To achieve dynamic and sustainable domestic economic growth, the priority is to make foreign trade and international financial relations more proportionate to existing and new economic relations. This requires monitoring globalization processes and the new and still unfolding but already visible trends (economic and financial shocks, changing urban-rural relations) and rapidly adapting to them in keeping with the country's specific characteristics and economic objectives. Within this process, the basic precondition for economic growth in Hungary arises from the dynamic development of innovation, knowledge and an economy producing high-value-added goods and services, the deploying of the existing natural and cultural heritage as resources in line with international practices, the laying of sustainable foundations for this entire framework coupled with a high level of management of market and state-influenced processes.

The data analyzed in the case of Andalusia (Spain) led to examining the extent to which the urban-territorial balance changes the way we think about a region's cultural heritage. We correspondingly studied two similarly sized areas; the Andalusian region is far better characterised by a polycentric urban network than Hungary or any of the small Central-European states. The central role of larger cities is also reflected in cultural terms, with invisible cultural heritage features tending to be more common in small and medium-sized cities. We conveyed how cultural heritage may provide a key factor not only in rural spaces but also in small and medium-sized towns. The territories described (Central and Eastern Europe, including Hungary and Spain, including the Andalusian region) contain strong historical heritage, in terms of both the traditions and the landscapes of urban centres as well as the remnants of built heritage.

Historical processes have conditioned not only demographic changes but also the characterization of the heritage and landscape of these territories. This becomes particularly visible in the ways of working and exploiting the land. Furthermore, there is a clear correlation between the protection and identification of immovable and intangible heritage features and positive trends in the demographic data, or at least a not-so-negative decrease in populations. In other cases, however, the data on the identification and protection of heritage features fall short of underpinning any such demographic trends.

In addition, innovative and sustainable initiatives, especially cooperation initiatives in territorial networks, seem to have made the greatest contribution towards reducing territorial vulnerability in terms of depopulation. Cultural heritage is a non-renewable resource and thus deserves prominent attention as supported by the literature review in the first chapter.

The application of terms and the identification of cultural heritage features are very similar in the two case studies that we chose. In Hungary, the new development plans also state the protection and maintenance of cultural heritage as an objective in itself and not just for tourism purposes. The Andalusian case study illustrates areas where values still survive due to the work of collections and heritage libraries. In both regions, advanced digitalization is helping to make cultural heritage data more accessible.

This focuses mostly on built heritage, archaeological heritage, heritage collections and tourist destinations. In Hungary, a mapping of non-visible heritage elements is currently underway (national gastronomy, reconstruction of villages alongside road construction sites, etc.). Similarly, in the case of cities, whenever linked to an internationally valuable factor (e.g., ECOC or World Heritage site), they join the list of priority tourist destinations. In this case, the respective factor becomes a developmental attraction and a competitive advantage. Nevertheless, we see that territorial levels display different ways of thinking about cultural heritage. The Spanish cases account for cases of joined-up thinking, with protection and conservation as the priority. The Hungarian case conveys how, while for the local citizens this provides a break-out point, for the government, it becomes more of a marketing tool and a means of strengthening the national consciousness.

To conclude, cultural heritage is a fundamental pillar of Europe's identity, with extremely rich and wide-ranging contents (especially under the shadow of another war). They include the architectural monuments of towns and villages, the values of cultural landscapes, the historic centers of large cities, etcetera, which form the context of everyday life and enrich the lives of the population. Thus, creative management of this heritage emerges as a key facet for the model to adopt as an important factor in Europe's global competitiveness. Most development documents value cultural heritage as a development asset, a special resource, and often included in development priorities, objectives, programs, and policies. Indeed, at the highest level, cultural heritage features in the 'European territorial development perspectives', one of the three development principles. Natural and cultural heritage is thus emphasized as one of the principles of territorial development. Consequently, it requires consideration as a firm foundation for development and its protection, maintenance, and development should be priority.

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Authorship

Both authors have been involved in the design, data collection and processing, writing and revising the work. Réka Horeczki was responsible for the case study in Hungary. Blanca del Espino was responsible for the case study in Spain.

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