Historical pathways as promoters and protectors of the cultural landscape: Tourism and the *Camí de Ronda* on the Costa Brava

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Abstract: This article reflects on the growing trend of cultural landscape appreciation and connecting landscapes with their broader heritage surroundings. It focuses on historical trails and their adjacent cultural and natural heritage as a holistic cultural landscape with a particular case from the Costa Brava. The paper links the concepts of natural scenery, identity, authenticity, coastal and cultural heritage, trails, routes and cultural tourism as the basis for understanding cultural landscapes in a heritage tourism context. This paper provides perspectives on how a coastal trail and its surrounding heritage can connect and be experienced as a cultural landscape, which includes architecture, art, literature and archaeology. The findings suggest five themes that connect the historical path with the region's heritage landscape: the role of tangible and intangible heritage, the development of a heritage discourse, promoting a heritage route, the division of the route into three sections and their connections to tourism, and the acknowledgement of a unique cultural landscape. The totality of the heritage landscape with all its components complements, and is an integral part of, the coastal landscape that appeals to many tourists in the Costa Brava.

Keywords: Cultural landscapes; Heritage; Tourism trails; Coastal paths; Costa Brava; Catalonia.

Los Caminos Históricos como promotores y protectores del Paisaje Cultural: turismo y el Camí de Ronda en la Costa Brava

Resumen: Este artículo reflexiona sobre la creciente tendencia a valorar el paisaje cultural y a conectar los paisajes con su entorno patrimonial más amplio. Se centra en los caminos históricos y su patrimonio cultural y natural adyacente como paisaje cultural holístico con un caso particular de la Costa Brava. Vincula los conceptos de paisaje natural, identidad, autenticidad, patrimonio costero y cultural, senderos, rutas y turismo cultural como base para entender los paisajes culturales en un contexto de turismo patrimonial. Este trabajo ofrece perspectivas sobre cómo un sendero costero y el patrimonio que lo rodea pueden conectarse y experimentarse como un paisaje cultural, que incluye arquitectura, arte, literatura y arqueología. Los resultados sugieren cinco temas que conectan el sendero histórico con el paisaje patrimonial de la región: el papel del patrimonio material e inmaterial, el desarrollo de un discurso patrimonial, la promoción de una ruta patrimonial, la división de la ruta en tres tramos y sus conexiones con el turismo, y el reconocimiento de un paisaje cultural único.

Palabras Clave: Paisajes culturales; Patrimonio; Rutas turísticas; Senderos costeros; Costa Brava; Cataluña.

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1. Introduction

For many years, tourism on the northeastern coast of the Iberian Peninsula, the Costa Brava, has been oriented overwhelmingly towards seasonal sun, sea and sand (SSS) tourism, almost to the exclusion of the region's wealth of cultural and natural resources. This article argues for a different perspective—that Costa Brava's cultural and natural landscapes together form a valued heritagescape that can be better emphasized for tourism development, especially by utilizing an ancient coastal pathway as its main axis and central feature.

Considering that "cultural landscapes have been highlighted for their importance in rebuilding a society that is in better harmony with nature" (Campolo, Bombino & Meduri, 2016: 577), the Costa Brava is a prime location to measure in these terms. As Vernet (2017) highlights, human interaction with nature and other humans is a key element of land becoming a landscape, or a physical manifestation that expresses the identity of a region and its inhabitants. History and human activities have formed the identity of the Costa Brava region, an area where historical pathways and coastal villages have grown together, maintaining and evolving their relationship over centuries. Over time, the region's heritagescape has gained importance through its architecture, art, archaeology, literature, gastronomy, and cultural traditions. Nogué (2017) advocates for a greater understanding of this heritagescape as a means of creating a holistic regional perspective. As most cultural heritage is found in natural surroundings, it makes sense to elucidate a narrative that focuses on both culture and nature to reveal a common story.

The much-discussed cultural landscape paradigm adds an extra layer of discourse to the Costa Brava area, with its traditional SSS-oriented tourism product. This article explores how this traditional coastal destination might be rebranded, partially at least, as a cultural landscape/heritagescape through an interpretation of its natural, cultural, and historical features and stronger potential tourism destination. To achieve this goal, the paper considers a historical coastal pathway (Camí de Ronda) and its parallel heritagescape as a narrative framework that provides a more holistic understanding of regionally connected heritage corridors.

2. The Concept of Landscape

According to Antrop (2005), landscapes link cultural and natural elements into a holistic form where society evolves and leaves its footprint. The landscape manifestations of the crossover between cultural behaviors and nature are often referred to as biocultural landscapes (Hong, Bogaert, & Min, 2014). A landscape may be considered a metaphor of symbols and signs that reveal stories of human struggles and successes (Duncan, 1995; Meinig, 1979). In a much broader sense, a landscape may also be where historical routes and ancient tourism took place, where pilgrims, merchants, soldiers, aristocrats and even peasants met and developed and expanded their activities.

Antrop (2005) identifies three historical stages through which today's European landscapes have evolved. First, traditional landscapes are the collectors and guardians of memories and events that existed before the nineteenth century. Second, landscapes of the 'revolution age' came about through the industrialization process and conflicts of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Finally, 'post-modern new landscapes' reveal stories of today's globalization, mobilities and displacement. The evolution of landscapes largely depends on the actions of powerful actors who rule and dictate what landscape elements should be modified, protected and preserved (Van der Valk, Bloemers, Kars & Wijnen 2010). On that note, Timothy (2021) argues that heritage landscapes traditionally emphasized the wealthy, royal, religious, and colonialist players who determined that castles, fortresses, mansions and elite gardens should dominate the heritage milieu. Opposite this opulent view, and in pursuit of a humbler heritage, a "closer…connection to the past leads many people to seek out the ordinary and simpler elements of life in the past" (Timothy, 2021: 388).

Landscapes are not static entities but rather living organisms in a constant process of becoming (Tilley, 2006). Nogué (2008: 10) argues that "a landscape can also be understood as the cultural expression of a society in a specific region and can be observed from two intertwined dimensions: a physical one—materialistic and objective—and a perceived one—cultural and subjective" (authors' translation). Such cultural expressions, according to Tilley (2006: 26), are not limited by location or geography, because "landscapes reside in mountains and hills, rivers and forests, roads and paths, people and activities and events, monuments and memorials, interpretations and reinterpretations". Even individuals who reside and work within a landscape are by default part of the place and its stories (Van der Valk et al., 2010). The evolving meanings of landscapes signify that today's lands-

capes differ from those created by their first inhabitants. With subsequent generations, including newcomers and conquerors, as well as a loss of societies and cultures through time, human values and priorities change. Thus, landscape residents also experience an evolution (Van der Valk et al., 2010). Consequently, the world's complexity can be seen in many forms in today's landscapes as they represent humankind's values (Mata Olmos, 2008).

Landscapes have been appreciated and valued for many reasons, but in 1984 the French Ministry of the Environment argued that changes were needed in UNESCO's World Heritage operational guidelines to help clarify the meanings and values of landscapes beyond pure biotic ecosystems. Landscapes modified by humans (cultural landscapes) and expressing an aesthetic value needed to be acknowledged as such (Gfeller, 2013). While acknowledging the value of human-modified landscapes, it became obvious that the concept of landscape needed an amendment to reflect a different phase in its own history. The fact that nowadays the character of a specific region can be expressed through its landscape, which manifests the relationships between its inhabitants and its natural environment (Mata Olmo, 2008), is critical. Today, UNESCO's definition of landscape is the "combined works of nature and of man" and cultural landscape specifically as "the interaction between humankind and its natural environment… [and is] illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of the physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces" (UNESCO, 2021: n.p.). Likewise, as part of its efforts to help identify, protect and promote a common pan-European heritage, the Council of Europe identified landscapes as areas "as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors" (Council of Europe, 2000: 2). In short, landscapes are a manifestation of human heritage in all its forms and functions.

3. Experiencing Heritage

The concept of heritage denotes the contemporary valorization and consumption of the past. Heritage can be tangible (e.g., buildings, archaeological sites, physical landscapes) or intangible (e.g., music, folklore and traditions, faith, and culinary traditions), located in rural or urban environments, extraordinary or ordinary, or ancient or of more recent vintage (Timothy, 2021). Although nature and culture have long been classified in separate realms, the *heritagization* process each one undergoes is similar (Roigé & Frigolé i Reixach, 2010). Even natural resources are a cultural construct, understood as a "process of cultural production by which cultural or natural elements are selected and reworked for new social uses" (Jamal, 2005: 12). Nonetheless, for a place to be experienced through the lens of heritage, it must be considered holistically, including its history, culture, and physiography, into a combined heritage space that is valued by residents and tourists. To that extent, not everyone prioritizes a destination utilizing the same heritage measures. Some people may visit with the goal of expanding their knowledge on a specific topic; others may be active visitors wishing to interact physically with relics of the past. Still, other visitors may visit a locality only because it is part of a package or because they were advised to do so (Timothy, 2021). Thus, the degree of involvement with heritage varies and depends on personal interests.

This process of applying heritage principles in an area means that the area will be connected to a narrative that defines it or redefines it based on its history and connectivity as a distinct region. Jamal (2005) argues the importance of interrelating history, people, and sites to tell a place's story, with the summit of this process being the creation of a symbol, brand, or image (Roigé & Frigolé i Reixach, 2010). The biocultural landscape thus is an abstraction capable of representing feelings and provoking social bonding because of its heritage value. A region lacking a supportive (hi)story is less likely to be valued for heritage since that heritage must be manufactured around a project, a person or a site (Roigé & Frigolé i Reixach, 2010).

Coastal zones are often designated as heritage corridors or regions because they represent a bounded space with common historical elements and narratives, such as maritime travel and exploration, fishing, the juxtaposition of land and sea, historic settlements, dunes and rocky outcrops, and windswept vegetation (Dunne, Sprince & Griffin, 2021; Egberts & Hundstad, 2019; Hanrahan, Maguire & Boyd, 2017). According to Khakzad et al. (2015: 110), "maritime and coastal cultural heritage, encompassing land and sea, and underwater, is an important part of our cultural resources and requires a proper valorization…to promote people's sense of identity and place attachment". Hence, inland areas and their cultural assets, as well as the sea and its economic resources, folklore, seaviews, and tales of disaster create regional bonds as they embody an identity for inhabitants and an attractive narrative

for visitors. Thus, in addition to maritime waters, coastal heritage is another important resource for tourism development. Landscapes near the seaside portray a strong sense of cultural heritage, as noted by Khakzad et al. (2015: 117): "the natural, cultural and social aspects of seascape and landscape help planners, managers, and the cultural heritage specialists to understand the links among sea, land and people better".

3.1. *Trails and Cultural Routes*

Timothy and Boyd (2015: 3) define a trail or route as a "linear pathway of many varieties, which is evident on the ground and which may have at its roots an original and historical linear transport or travel function". Many of today's tourism trails developed originally as transport corridors between towns and villages (e.g., coach lines, railways), trade routes, hunting areas, or were migratory routes. Many tourist trails today developed organically through this process. Others were purposely planned as recreational resources with an established corridor that links together similar nodes or attractions into a linear route that can be followed by foot, bicycle, horseback or automobile. Cheese routes in the Swiss Alps and wine routes in Portugal and South Africa are examples of purposely planned tourist trails. In either case, trails can provide alternative access into destination communities or individual attractions (i.e., nodes) (Hayes & Macleod, 2008). In rural areas especially, trails are frequently utilized as "salient tool[s] for conserving rural landscapes via policy directions and building awareness and appreciation through interpretation and experience among the general public" (Timothy & Boyd, 2015: 14). However, large-scale trails can sometimes be difficult to manage because of their increasing complexity (i.e., large distances between nodes, the need to mark and interpret the trails, and the inclusion of many different land uses and property ownerships) (Hayes & Macleod, 2008), such as pilgrimages, outdoor recreation, and education. In addition, trails can satisfy two main objectives when approached from a planning and development angle: welcoming visitors to access natural and cultural resources and, at the same time, acting as guardians of those same resources through conservation measures (Timothy & Boyd, 2015).

Consequently, both organic and purposive routes should be understood from a broader and more contemporary view that they comprise an essential part of the cultural landscape. Although routes and trails have been used for different purposes for millennia, the widespread recognition of their use as a keeper and promoter of culture is a relatively new concept (Božić & Tomić, 2016; Council of Europe, 2021). Routes should provide venues for symbiosis between places, landscapes and living cultures, "based on a modern-day conceptualization and designation of a circuit or course that links similar natural or cultural features together into a thematic linear corridor" (Timothy & Boyd, 2015: 3). Routes are often created as a means of keeping alive and enhancing a region's heritage and become popular cultural attractions (Campolo et al., 2016). Through the process of trail/route creation, marking, maintenance and marketing, historic entities, such as trade routes, explorer paths, and greenways remain in use as recreational or tourism corridors (Timothy & Boyd, 2015). Even UNESCO, for many years and mainly in the European context, has been using routes as a tool to achieve its goals in the educational, social and cultural fields (Moulin & Boniface, 2001).

By linking individual sites together into a linear corridor, long-distance routes and trails are valuable economic resources with the potential to attract tourists, keep them in the destination longer, and cause them to spend more (Božić & Tomić, 2016; Timothy, 2018). Trails may also continue to develop and expand as new features, localities, or nodes are added. Besides becoming a pull factor, routes can also be tools for democratizing economic benefits by spreading revenue to a wider area among a greater number of nodes and receiving destinations (Timothy, 2018). Moulin and Boniface (2001) argue that tourism corridors can be most advantageous in areas with limited assets and resources, because they can be a valuable planning tool to draw people into a region they would not normally go to see an individual attraction but might if individual sites are linked together into a themed corridor (Timothy & Boyd, 2015). The idea of themed trails embraces diverse places and landscapes that complement one another and strengthen their collective appeal. Likewise, trails are useful for opening less accessible areas, dispersing visitor crowds, and educating the public through interpretive displays (Hayes & Macleod, 2008).

The adjacent surroundings of a route are as important as the route itself since this is where the beneficiaries of route-based tourism and recreation are located (e.g., local authorities, businesses and entrepreneurs, and organizations) (Hayes & Macleod, 2008). However, for a route to be successful and sustained for years to come, the enterprises that rely on it and are part of it must act according to

the route's mission and maintain the established network. Otherwise the project is condemned to fail. The creation of purposive routes and their linkages offer opportunities to position communities on the tourist map and involve their inhabitants as active stakeholders in the initiative (Moulin & Boniface, 2001). Consequently, the route can become a meeting point where nature and culture merge to define a place in a way that creates a deeper understanding of place that is shared by residents and visitors alike (Hayes & Macleod, 2008). In this process, a reciprocal and constructive relationship develops in which tourism becomes a vector for empowering communities and constructing a sense of place as they gain a greater appreciation of the region they inhabit (Campolo et al., 2016).

3.2. *The Cultural Landscape as a Tourism Product*

In the 1972 World Heritage Convention, UNESCO recognized the value of nature and culture as critical heritage to be valued and protected (Gfeller, 2013). This was a major step in encouraging the global recognition of the importance of cultural heritage. In 1992, UNESCO officially recognized the importance cultural landscapes, rather than singular monuments or localities, in a broader show of understanding heritage processes. The 1992 convention highlighted how nature and culture interact to create cultural landscapes and viewed humankind's heritage in a broader and more holistic context (Gfeller, 2013). According to UNESCO (2021, n.p.), cultural landscapes represent the "combined works of nature and of man" and "are illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of the physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment and successive social, economic and cultural forces, both external and internal". Due to human modifications (e.g., agriculture, settlements, hunting and fishing) or humankind's policies that designate natural areas, all landscapes, even uninhabited ones, are cultural by default (Nogué, 2008). Cultural landscapes have evolved over millennia as peasants, ordinary folks, social elites, and adventurous travelers anonymously altered the natural landscapes into the cultural landscapes of today.

Because of their curatorial role as cultural archives, landscapes can enhance local and regional identities and act as heritage attractions and resources (Mata Olmo, 2008). They reflect the life of the community, nature and the history of the place. As such, landscapes should be valued and protected, especially since they are constantly evolving, and "the rate of evolution in current and future times could lead to the elimination of their character, leading to a greater degree of unification and subsequent loss of diversity" (Van der Valk et al., 2010: 565). Cultural and biocultural landscapes provide the foundations of tourism in many destinations because of their heritage and natural values that relate to place meaning and place identity. For example, the mixed rural, religious and agricultural landscapes of Bali are one of the island's biggest tourist draws (Adhika & Putra, 2020). The same is true in many parts of Asia and Europe, where the biocultural landscapes of agriculture, village life, and daily living have come to form the essential foundations of tourists' interest in visiting (Santoro, Venturi & Agnoletti, 2020; Wang & Graburn, 2020).

4. Methods

4.1. *Study context*

Since 1965, the rugged coast of the northeast corner of Spain, in Catalonia, has been referred to as the Costa Brava (Figure 1). Costa Brava as a popular vacation destination offering sun, sea and sand-based tourism as its main selling point (Prats, Guia & Molina, 2008; Vidal-Casellas & Crous-Costa, 2012), although this is somewhat recent with cultural heritage being the area's main asset previously. There are approximately 130 km of coastal paths in the region. The use of coastal paths in the area has been documented since medieval times for military functions and defense, surveillance (it borders France in the north), economic development by connecting coastal towns and villages for trade and commerce, rescuing castaways from shipwrecks, and mitigating pirate attacks (Martí i Llambrich, 2016). In the early and mid-twentieth century, the path became notorious for smuggling and was used by the Spanish police to quell smuggling operations. Recently, with the cross-Mediterranean migration crisis, this same coastal corridor was used by border police for patrolling and monitoring illegal movements between the sea and the seashore. Coinciding with the decline of maritime security patrols and the rise of tourism in the 1960s, the coastal path took on an increasingly touristic role and shed much of its military functions (Donaire, Fraguell & Mundet, 1997; Martí i Llambrich, 2016). The trail has evolved considerably during the past several decades, with increasing emphasis on the coastline's natural and cultural heritage attributes. Today, the *Camí de Ronda*'s main function is sightseeing and leisure activities.

Figure 1: The Costa Brava area in Spain

Source: Modified from Google Maps

For this study, the *Camí de Ronda* (coastal path) on Catalonia's Costa Brava was delineated into north, central, and south portions to understand the region better and to provide collective subregions where common elements define the identity of the area (Figure 2). The combination of natural and cultural features, as well as tangible and intangible elements of culture, were considered in this structuring. The north section, Portbou (just south of the French border) to L'Escala, is dominated by two main heritage themes. The first theme is art and is based on the life and works of the famous artist Salvador Dalí. This part of the Costa Brava was his home area, where he spent much of his life and which inspired much of his work. Currently, his house and studio are located on the coast. The second heritage theme in the northern area is archaeology. One of the most impressive ruins of successive Greek and Roman cities in the western Mediterranean are located at Empúries in L'Escala. The central section, L'Escala to Palamós, is dominated by literary heritage, with the literary landscape comprising several coastal villages related to the writings of Josep Pla. The landscape elements of the southern portion of the *Camí de Ronda*, Palamós to Blanes, is dominated by architectural uniqueness.

Figure 2: Themed sections of the Costa Brava's Camí de Ronda (Coastal Path)
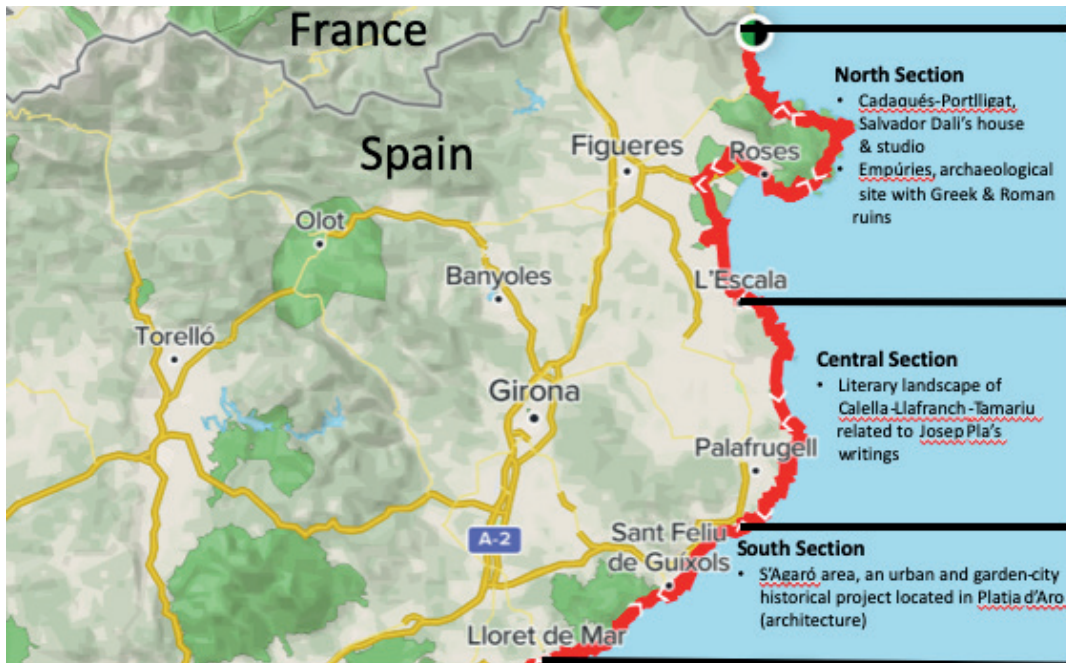
Source: Adapted base map from alltrails.com

4.2. *Data collection*

To understand the cultural landscape and heritage value of the coastal path, a few techniques were utilized to gather data. First, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 8 representative stakeholders, including directors of cultural establishments and attractions, tourism planners, tour guides, and entrepreneurs in the destination (Table 1 and Table 2). These interviewees were selected through initial contacts the authors had with key stakeholders, followed by a snowball sampling approach. All contacted stakeholders agreed to participate. Some interviews were scheduled face to face, lasting an average of 30 minutes each. Others took place virtually. Key informants were interviewed using semi-structured questions, which enabled them to elucidate their feelings and experiences. Specifically, they were asked about the heritage landscapes of the destination and the value of the trail for tourism development; the management of the trail and its specific nodes; and the users (locals and tourists) of the route. To complement the eight formal interviews, informal discussions took place with four addition informants (entrepreneur, manager and domestic and international visitors on the coastal path). The informal conversations were based on happenstance meetings; they were not specifically targeted to be interviewed. All these people consented to be interviewed. No formal set of questions was used in conversations, but written notes and recordings were used with permission. The sociodemographic characteristics are shown in Table 3. Participants' willingness to share their perspectives about the destination was the main element to start and maintain a fruitful conversation.

Table 1: Semi-structured interviews and Informal discussions (N= 12)

Coastal path area	Number of participants	Positions and entities
North	3	Museums managers Municipal employees Tourist information office staff
Central	3	Museums director Municipal managers Tourist information office staff
South	3	Museum director Tourist information office staff Local guide
Encompassing all segments	3	DMO - Marketing director Tourism office manager Private company manager President of an association

Table 2: Informants' Profiles

	Gender	Position	Type of participant
Interviewee 1	Male	Manager	Semi-structured
Interviewee 2	Female	Politician	Semi-structured
Interviewee 3	Male	Technician	Semi-structured
Interviewee 4	Female	Director	Semi-structured
Interviewee 5	Male	Entrepreneur	Informal discussion
Interviewee 6	Female	Manager	Informal discussion
Interviewee 7	Male	Director	Semi-structured
Interviewee 8	Male	International visitor	Informal discussion
Interviewee 9	Female	Tour guide	Informal discussion
Interviewee 10	Female	Director	Semi-structured
Interviewee 11	Male	Domestic visitor	Semi-structured
Interviewee 12	Female	Domestic visitor	Semi-structured

Table 3: Sociodemographic characteristics

	Profile	Number of visitors
Gender	Male	6
	Female	6
Age group	18 – 30	2
	31 – 50	6
	51 – 70	4
Origins	Domestic	11
	International	1

To complement these interviews, direct observations in the field were used as a source of supplementary information about the destination and the coastal path. These included observing trail users, taking photos as visual and documentary support, web surfing, and random chats with tourists and local recreationists on the path were useful information sources for this purpose. A research journal was created where personal notes and observations were recorded, and photographs of the destination were evaluated and recorded. Field investigations and all 12 key informant interviews took place between January and June 2017.

4.3. *Data analysis*

Saldaña's (2015) advice on coding and tagging important features commonly encountered in semi-structured interviews and informal discussions was followed. Identifying frequent ideas, repeated concepts, and the repetitious use of similar words was done using a thematic analysis of the interviews, field observations, field notes, photographs, and websites. This process is described by Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2012) as helping to interpret the regularities of words and sentences when developing codes and identifying themes. This exercise allowed the researchers to pack, re-pack, and label the content obtained from the transcribed interviews and fieldwork journal. By tagging ideas, concepts, discourses and resources, the data were transformed into themes and findings, which address the objective of the paper—to understand better the heritagescapes of this part of Catalonia as an interconnected cultural landscape and potential tourism corridor. In addition, a long process of filtering and narrowing data into groups and later categories took place, which resulted in the identification of five themed as noted below.

5. Results

From the analysis, five themes connecting the coastal path and heritage landscapes were ascertained:
1) The role of tangible and intangible heritage in the landscape.
2) The development of a heritage discourse along the coastal path.
3) The promotion of a heritage route.
4) The connecting of the three segments with tourism and the cultural tourist.
5) Acknowledging a unique cultural landscape(s).

Not all of these categories can be considered with the same intensity; some manifest stronger attributes in certain ways than others and vice versa. Dividing the Costa Brava into the three sections (north, central, and south) enabled the region to be analyzed and observed based on geographic and cultural themes more systematically. Each segment thematically represents a particular area of the coastal trail and serves as the basis for organizing and analyzing the findings according to the five themes above.

5.1. *Tangible and Intangible Heritage within the Landscape*

Both tangible and intangible cultural elements of the region are important in understanding the connection between landscape and heritage. Understandably, according to several interviews, intangible heritage is the most challenging feature to capture and more effort is required by trail users to appreciate the abstract elements of intangible heritage. As Interviewee 4 notes, this is the case in the central section, where literary heritage is the main connection with the landscape associated with the local writer Josep Pla and his descriptions of the coastal landscape in his writings.

A different experience occurs when visiting environments where heritage assets are tangible and can be physically experienced as part of the landscape. That is the case along the entire coastal path, which offers a three-dimensional, material understanding of the heritage-landscape relationship. The tangibility of the heritagescape helps establish a cultural narrative. For instance, Interviewee 7 highlighted the importance of the purposely-design connection between architecture and the natural landscape, which took place early on in the southern sector of the Costa Brava. The owner of the coastal property, Josep Ensesa, and the first architect to develop the area physically, Rafael Masó, envisioned the project together in the early twentieth century (Falgàs, 2014). The natural landscape and the local architecture were considered together in the intentional aesthetic design of the ensembled coastline (Ensesa Montsalvatge, 2015). Interviewee 8 noted that the connection between natural landscape and

built heritage is unique to the south part of the coastal path and has been declared a Cultural Item of National Interest (*Bé Cultural d'Interés Nacional*).

A similar situation exists in the northern section, an area where the landscape is intrinsically and tangibly interwoven with the artistic heritage of Salvador Dalí, one of the world's most renowned surrealist artists of the twentieth century. According to Interviewee 1, visitors to this area are usually surprised by the "landscape effect" of nature and the artistic heritage of Dalí. Foreign tourists often visit the Mediterranean landscape and are impressed by the uniqueness of this environment, which is often described as an exotic and charming. The town of Cadaqués, the centre of the region and Dalí's hometown, is adorned with images of Dalí's paintings and interpretive panels to indicate the localities that inspired his work. This physical manifestation of markers and artwork connect the landscape to the artist.

The tangibility of the heritage in the northern section has evolved from its origins. Although the archaeological ruins in Empúries are substantial and tangible, a physical fence separating the historical site from the coastal path and the rest of the landscape has been erected. Before the *heritagization* of this segment of the coast, massive sand dunes were the main physical features until 19th century, when two local rivers were intentionally diverted, causing the dunes to disappear. Efforts to protect the remaining dunes began later in the nineteenth century, and a local road was built to enable forestry agents to manage the natural site (Interviewee 10). Soon after the dunes disappeared, the massive Greek and Roman ruins of Empúries were discovered. Hence, today's heritagescape is in large part a result of this physical transformation, which includes the course of the coastal path alongside the archaeological site. The path also connects the two towns of L'Escala and Sant Martí d'Empúries.

The connection between intangible heritage and tourism is not well researched in the academy (Timothy, 2021; Vidal González, 2008). This is especially relevant where Urry (2009) emphasizes that not all tourists come to 'gaze'. Instead, some arrive at a destination to 'feel'. In introducing the new category of cultural landscapes, UNESCO acknowledged that intangible assets are in important part of landscapes, including gastronomy, music, literature, and folklore (Gfeller, 2013).

5.2. *The Development of a Heritage Discourse*

There are many connections associated with the development of a cultural heritage discourse along the coastal path. For instance, in the north section, the area of Cadaqués and Portlligat is already a successful tourist destination. Many visitors come to Cadaqués to more deeply explore the life and work of Salvador Dalí (Turisme de Cadaqués, 2021). The municipality publishes brochures and self-guided itineraries that steer visitors between Dalinian locations in the area. This route connects some of the sites Dalí used as settings for his artwork. Private tours are also available to help visitors understand the artistic connections between local history and landscape as Dalí would have seen them (Axial, 2021).

Also located in the northern sector, Empúries has followed a different course. Although an exceptional part of the cultural landscape, the Greco-Roman ruins raise a challenge to organizing a unified discourse and itinerary, because access to the ruins is granted only by paying an entrance fee. Moreover, there are no interpretive signs outside the fences to enable passersby to engage even tangentially with the ruins from a distance. Hence, in this area, the path primarily satisfies the exercise needs of trail users. However, there are a few information panels about the former sand dunes. Due to a lack of connectivity, trail users must decide between visiting the archaeological site or enjoying the seaviews, as they are distinctly separate activities in this area.

The central section engages visitors differently. There the intangible heritage of literature is the primary emphasis and determines how the route relates to the coastal path. The initial idea of creating a route originated "because the local tourism office was constantly receiving petitions about what can be seen related to Josep Pla (a local writer) in the area (Interviewee 4). The *Fundació Josep Pla* is the entity responsible for maintaining and interpreting this part of the route. According to Interviewee 4, today, there are ten locations marked and interpreted to highlight localities referenced in Pla's novels, essays and biographies. The literary elements of the route were initiated in 1993, when literary routes were essentially nonexistent and at a time when few associations were made between literature and landscape in Europe.

In the south section, represented by S'Agaró village, the interpretive panels only explain the geological characteristics of the area. Interviewee 7 admitted that it would be a good idea to complement these

panels with information about the cultural environment as well. The responsibility of installing these items lies with the municipality, but the *Fundació Rafael Masó* expressed its willingness to help in developing the interpretive content further. To compensate for the lack of on-site printed information, the municipality offers guided tours on request where the historical and architectural information is explained to visitors (Interviewee 9).

From the private sector perspective, the services offered by the company Camí de Ronda are a good example of how heritage and nature are complementary parts of the same product. Camí de Ronda uses the coastal path as the basis for its business. Its products include GPS services, accommodations, private guides, transfers, restaurants, and other services connected with hiking, the coastal landscape, history, and heritage (Cami de Ronda, 2017). The cultural linkages in each segment differ from one another; some are more intertwined with the destination, while others remain more distant and lack associative discourses. Hence, as During (2011) notes, heritage discourses should consider manifestations of cultural diversity and the broad richness of cultural expression rather than its individual parts.

5.3. *Promoting the Heritage Route*

Promotion is crucial for the development of tourism and recreation on the trail and to connect the natural and culture themes. As previously noted, the central section promotes the literary elements of the route, with *Fundació Josep Pla* offering themed guided tours publicized at the tourist office and on the foundation's website. Other platforms and media associated with literature and literary heritage publicize the literary tours. This section of the route is particularly popular during the summer months. During the rest of the year, the literary tours are offered only once a month or as requested (Fundació Josep Pla, 2018).

In the northern sector, promotion is somewhat different. According to Interviewee 2, the coastal path in the Dalí area has increased in popularity in recent years. Salvador Dalí himself was extremely proficient at promoting his home region during his lifetime. Stakeholders believe there is a lot of potential for year-round tourism owing to the mild Mediterranean climate of Costa Brava and the unseasonal appeal of Dalí's life.

In the southern sector, the coastal path is promoted by the municipality of S'Agaró through its tourist office and website. In common with the other segments, this portion benefits from being in a region where tourism is already well developed. Many people use the coastal trail in this area not because of its intrinsic heritage value but because it is easily accessible and a well demarcated promenade-style path. The cultural component of the route requires promotion since its cultural value is not well communicated. The pathway and its seaviews make this a gratifying leisure experience, but the region's cultural story needs to be told more holistically.

Empúries in the north sector is home to a well-regarded modern coastal path commonly used for outdoor leisure by locals, and its location near the tourist town of L'Escala appeals to tourists. The nearby archaeological site only promotes visit to the ruins, its museum and the activities within its gates (Museu d'arqueologia de Catalunya, 2021). Under the auspices of the Catalonian Department of Culture, the Empúries ruins are managed by the Archaeology Museum of Catalonia in Barcelona (Interviewee 12). Thus, promotional efforts at Empúries relate only to the archaeological site, and its connections to its surroundings, including the trail, are very limited. Non-European visitors tend to be unfamiliar with the Mediterranean's Greek and Roman past. As a result, a lack of holistic promotion and interpretive media on the path has meant that many opportunities have been missed to promote the region together (Interviewee 8).

The *Patronat Costa Brava-Pirineus* regional DMO markets the entire Costa Brava and is aware that the growth potential of the region relies on more holistic promotional approach. At present, press trips, familiarization tours, journalists, and bloggers are targeted because of their global influence and their mass outreach to potential markets (Patronat de Turisme Costa Brava, 2020). Such trips are organized using the coastal path as the spine of the destination which can provide a solid overview of the region. Interviewee 5 stresses that the best promotion comes through efforts to highlight the area's unique product. When hiring Camí de Ronda's tour services, each customer receives literature and a detailed explanation of the history of the coastal path. The experience is rated as excellent.

In summary, the northern segment (the Dalí area) is successful at promoting a route that effectively connects landscape and art, while the central sector continues to face challenges about how to promote the intangibility of literary heritage with its surroundings. Interviewees and stakeholders in the area

of Empúries (in the north) and S'Agaró (south) admit that there is room for improvement in integrating the cultural heritage of the region into the route and linking their assets with local tourism services, including restaurants and lodging, as well as the local community.

This study focuses only on certain segments of the entire coastal path, but there is an urgent need to understand and promote the route in its totality from a cultural perspective. There are many potential ways to integrate the cultural elements along the path, and hence other means of promotion can be explored. According to Timothy and Boyd (2006), connecting the disparate cultural and natural elements of the path will help create a strong destination that is economically, socially, culturally, ecologically, and politically more balanced.

5.4. *Connection the Segments with Tourism and the Cultural Tourist*

As noted in the literature, the deepest heritage tourism experiences take place when site visits and knowledge acquisition are merged with one's personal experience or personal heritage (Jamal, 2005; Poria, Butler & Airey, 2003; Timothy, 1997). In this regard, the Dalí area reflects the best example of best practices. There, heritage tourism succeeds thanks to a comprehensive product that can be consumed in different ways: contemplating the landscape, following the Dalínian route, or visiting landmarks such as the Salvador Dalí House Museum (Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, 2021). According to the Cadaqués tourist office, the number of people visiting the information center in 2016 was 32,389. The main reasons for visiting Cadaqués were to see the historic town (27.13%), visit the Salvador Dalí House Museum (16.79%), and hiking the coastal route (10.43%) (Interviewee 3). These three main motivations indicate the importance of Cadaqués as a mixed cultural and natural destination. According to the *Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí*, that the house museum received a total of 149,363 visitors in 2017, the most recent data available. Almost half of the visits occur during the summer months of July, August and September (Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, 2018).

A different sense is conveyed on the central section of the route. The pure cultural tourist is one of the main targets here, and he or she will have read and know about the literary heritage in advance. To be part of this itinerary means to be knowledgeable about the region's literary landscape, and the visitor might want to grasp the full meaning of the writer's description of the inspiring landscape. Due to the lack of interpretive panels related to the area's literary heritage, tourists are limited to using either the formal guided tour option, following the ceramic tiles (no text included) that mark the pathway, or downloading the basic mobile app and reading the texts connected with the landscape from a handheld device. Because traversing this part of the route requires extra effort, users who utilize the coastal path only for exercise will not be cognizant of the local author. Even people who recognize themselves as voracious cultural consumers admit that the coastal path lacks clear explanations about Josep Pla and the places that inspired his writings (Interviewee 12).

The south section expresses yet another way in which the landscape interacts with tourism and the cultural tourist. Although the uniqueness of the landscape here is quite self-explanatory, the cultural context is not explicitly explained to users, nor is the purpose of the route project explained (interviewee 11). Visually, the path is an architectural landmark, but no additional information is available. Trail users must self-inform about the destination.

Empúries in the north section was planned as a destination in the 1990s. The cultural elements of this segment are exemplified by the archaeological site, but there is significant potential to connect the ruins with other local businesses to enhance the visitor experience. Even though more cultural nodes can be structured around the archaeological park, cultural tourists are satisfied with this part of the trail since it focuses on a major heritage site.

The company *Cami de Ronda* has designed a product for guests of all ages and people from around the world (Interviewee 5), including international hikers (35%) and locals (65%), who know little about their immediate surroundings. In this area, there is a solid mix of cultural tourism and sporting activities, as one of the trail's main uses is exercise, hiking, and running.

5.5. *Acknowledging a Unique Cultural Landscape*

The trail segments analyzed here provide fodder for discourse where nature and cultural heritage are merged as indivisible parts of a holistic landscape. Interviews provided encouraging answers related to how to promote the destination better to encourage and establish better dialogue with the immediate environment. For instance, a joint project was recently initiated where two counties in the area shared common ideas about how to organize, locate and transform the destination into an inclusive

hiking space. This collaboration marks the beginning of how future collaborations might appear. Today, the area's brochures are largely oriented toward hiking, but regional DMOs are considering one that deals more specifically with the cultural landscape. Little by little, more sections of the coastal path are being recovered and marked, and heritage is becoming an increasingly important asset to explore. Websites can extend information not given in a brochure or interpretive sign, and there is room for expanding content online.

The Friends of UNESCO organization in Girona aims to persuade local leaders to recognize the coastal path as a cultural landscape and vital heritage asset for both the historical role of the Camí and the cultural landscape it traverses. The organization's goal is for the coastal path to be recognized eventually as a UNESCO Cultural Landscape. As such, activities to broaden public knowledge and support are frequently organized to support the cause. Interviewee 6 noted that the "cultural landscape of the Costa Brava's coastal path already exists" and is an important asset in the region. Human intervention has been a permanent feature of the coastal path from its historical roots and later interventions with regard to access, safety, nature protection, and limited interpretation. Thus, the cultural landscape already exists; it just needs to be recognized as a salient heritage element in the region. Tieskens et al. (2017) note that several cultural landscapes on the site need to be highlighted to prevent the loss of any phase of history. Mata Olmo (2008) argues that merging all the regional characteristics holistically will enrich and promote local and regional identity, attracting tourists, and develop a resourceful cultural landscape.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

Owing to the multifaceted character of landscapes, to determine and decide how to evaluate and delineate one within a given region is a complex task. Nonetheless, as this research indicates, historical trails that organically evolve and envelop different natural and cultural heritages can serve as frameworks to identify cultural and biocultural landscapes. As a case in point, Camí de Ronda confirms that trails imbued with history and surrounded by different elements of culture are key crucibles of heritage, place identity, local authenticity, and cultural landscapes. The mere existence of the path may be the driving force for articulating the cultural landscape idea. Moreover, in this case, the location of the path next to the seaside deepens the landscape as seaviews are an integral part of the cultural landscape, and coastal lives an important part of the region's heritage.

By framing the Camí de Ronda as a cultural landscape, or biocultural landscape, we acknowledge its diverse natural and cultural setting. Valuing and managing the route in its totality is important, for one area is not historically more significant that the others. Thus, the entire coastal path must be managed holistically and collaboratively and in a way that highlights its uniqueness. A collaborative discourse is needed to articulate the heritage value of the region and must involve public administrators, private businesses, and communities. As Gfeller (2013) notes, a much more holistic and aesthetic perspective is required to revise and present cultural and natural features as complementary to each other. Thus, as this research indicates, a frequent challenge that multifaceted destinations face is how best to manage a region holistically and comprehensively.

The path examined here shows that smaller-scale landscapes are important to preserve for their unique characteristic and meanings (Tieskens et al., 2017). While some people use the coastal path for outdoor leisure purposes, others prefer to see its cultural heritage values. Thus, even smaller landscapes can satisfy different users' needs. However, from a promotional perspective, it is important to emphasize the natural-cultural hybrid nature of the trail not only to tell the whole story but also to cater to the needs of different markets. This holistic approach may help ensure that the path will be perceived by users, regional decision makers, and international institutions through the lens of cultural landscapes.

Understanding the 'local tourist' as a year-round visitor is a challenge that needs to be addressed. Since the Costa Brava is typically perceived as a sun, sea and sand destination, little attention has been devoted by researchers or destination marketers to how residents relate with their immediate landscape resources. Such a perspective would broaden our understanding of the widespread uses of cultural landscapes as assets for both tourists and destination residents.

In summary, coastal regions in many places can be better considered connected, intertwined, and inclusive living cultural landscapes rather than simply representing sun, sea and sand offerings. Considering the overlap of cultural and natural assets that make coastal areas unique adds diversity and balance to the regional tourism product, and an organic or purposively developed route can be a

key instrument for uniting landscape elements into a cohesive product that is unique from other areas of the globe. Such a recognition can help create a strong sense of identity among residents, create jobs as comparable attractions and landscape elements are connected into a linear spatial layout that is conducive to tourism development, and provides a clearer understanding of an area's management implications and needs (Khakzad et al., 2015).

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