

RURITAGE
Heritage for Rural Regeneration

Thinking beyond the COVID-19 crisis:
heritage-based opportunities for
tourism in rural areas

Simona Tondelli,
Alma Mater Studiorum – University of Bologna

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1


Outline of the presentation

1. RURITAGE in a nutshell
2. RURITAGE initiatives linked to COVID-19 pandemic
 - Call for actions
 - Consortium brainstorming
 - Vision paper
3. COVID-19 effects on tourism: Challenges, opportunities and recommendations
4. Suggested actions at EU, National and Local level

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2

RURITAGE in a nutshell


- RURITAGE is a project funded by H2020 programme, call "SC5-21-2016-2017: cultural heritage as a driver for sustainable growth" – rural regeneration (2017)
- June 2018-May/August 2022
- 38 partners from 19 countries around the world
- Unique EU project funded on the topic of *rural regeneration*



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Rural regeneration



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4

RURITAGE paradigm

Improve the position of rural areas by mobilizing **local resources**, increasing their **resilience**, reinventing **business models and governance framework** and employing **policy tools** able to foster indigenous social and economic development.

Attract and retain young people, develop new business, and increase biodiversity **benefiting from CNH** in myriad ways: from the restoration of historical **buildings**, to the holistic usage of rural **landscapes** and **biodiversity** assets, including the revitalization of ancient **traditions, arts, and crafts**.

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RURITAGE Systemic Innovation Areas (SIAs)



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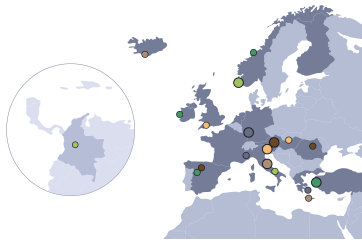
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6

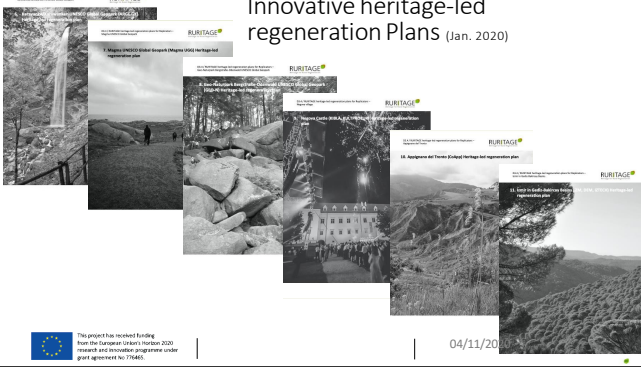
Consortium

- 13 Role Models in Europe and beyond
- 6 Replicators where RURITAGE supports the co-creation and implementation of heritage-led regeneration strategies
- 15 Knowledge Facilitator Partners



7

Innovative heritage-led regeneration Plans (Jan. 2020)



8

RMs' Enhancement plans

RMs are working within their RHHs to foster local knowledge and ownership of Cultural and Natural Heritage and to enhance their regeneration strategies learning from other SIAS and other RMs



8

COVID-19 and rural areas regeneration



COVID opened two main issues related with RURITAGE

- At implementation level: delay in day-to-day project activities
- At strategic level:
 - What's the impact of this crisis on the rural communities we are working with?
 - What are rural communities around the world doing?

10

RURITAGE's answer to the pandemic



- *Short term:* offer a help to rural territories to cope with the pandemic, increasing their social resilience
- *Longer term:* turn this challenge into an opportunity for rural territories, enhancing their sustainable growth

11

RURITAGE initiatives linked to COVID-19 pandemic

➤ Open call for action (April-May 2020)


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 Rural Resilience Actions in times of COVID-19

The RURITAGE project invites you to share innovative actions in the midst of the global pandemic crisis to increase and strengthen resilience in rural communities.

In a time like this, not only society, politics and economics as a whole is challenged but thousands of individuals and their communities are disrupted. Within the RURITAGE project, the Coronavirus has not only halted a critical development phase for our rural communities in the Resilience and Role Models territories but also generated a real-life test for human and community resilience.

Arguably, rural areas are as affected as urban areas by the crisis, facing challenges exacerbated by less available resources and greater isolation issues. Rural communities themselves can struggle in finding tailored solutions for their already fragile environments.

At the same time, rural communities all around the world are also enhancing the value of local resources, cultural and natural heritage and human capital through mutual support, reinforced networks, better collaboration, cooperation and solidarity for reinforced resilience, as we claim throughout.



The RURITAGE community gathered in the Resilience Replicator Appignano del Tronto in 2019

The Call for Rural Resilience Actions

Actions received
66

Variation of countries
17

SIAs covered
6/6

● 10+ actions
● 6-9 actions
● 3-5 actions
● 1-2 actions

- Pilgrimage (18.03%)
- Local Food (30.3%)
- Migration (4.53%)
- Art & Festivals (10.61%)
- Landscape (24.85%)
- Landscape management (16.67%)

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RURITAGE initiatives linked to COVID-19 pandemic

➤ Brainstorming workshops among RURITAGE partners (General Assembly, 27 May 2020)

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14

Brainstorming workshop

- 1) Which are the main **challenges and opportunities** presented by the actual crisis in rural with respect to the identified SIAs?
- 2) What are the main **challenges and needs** of your local **stakeholders**? How can we support them within RURITAGE?
- 3) Which **ideas** you have in mind?

PILEGRIMAGE

LANDSCAPE

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RURITAGE initiatives linked to COVID-19 pandemic

Public Webinar on 08/07/2020

Host
Professor Simona Tondelli
Project Coordinator, RURITAGE

Speakers
Helen Williams, Berta Di Federico
DG AGRI
Jakobina Kornbroun
Council of Europe
Giulia Facelli
DG RTD
Marley Hoffman
DG AGRI

Which opportunities for the future of rural areas after the COVID-19? How to turn challenges into opportunities to enhance permanent social resilience in rural areas?

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16

RURITAGE initiatives linked to COVID-19 pandemic

Vision paper

Vision Paper
October 2020

Thinking beyond the COVID-19 crisis: heritage-based opportunities for the regeneration of rural areas

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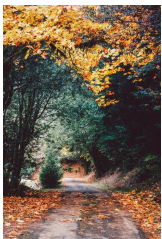
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17

COVID-19 effects on tourism – challenges



- **travel restrictions**
- intrinsic **cross-border** nature of some religious pilgrimage routes and events
- **small hotels**, business working in the food and beverage sectors could struggle in adapting to the current safety measures imposed by local governments.
- most of the less known pilgrimage and hiking routes have **limited financial resources**

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18

COVID-19 effects on tourism – challenges



- shared fear that **funds** dedicated to rural development and environmental protection may be reduced in the following years and reallocated to more urgent public sectors (i.e health, education, etc.).
- This would further exacerbate existing **unemployment**, forcing even more rural inhabitant to move to urban areas.

Digital tours in Psiloritis Geopark

Creta, Greece

In Psiloritis Geopark, digital touring has become available by providing the opportunity to tour the geopark from a distance. Local, as well as non-local, can now visit the visit even the most distant parts of the geopark, directly from their home. Local food and craft producers have also gained promotion through this initiative. The geopark has developed an interactive map presenting all the natural and cultural features of the geopark together with local products and activities. The online tool includes also a storytelling map that offers routes and information of the geopark through videos and traditional songs.

Learn more here: https://www.ruritage.eu/resilience-actions/digital_touring/

19

COVID-19 effects on tourism: Challenges



- performances and concerts have been cancelled
- theatres, museums, and cinemas have been closed.
- **Cultural sector SMEs are largely affected by the COVID-19**
- The fear of disease transmission can pose for more vulnerable groups both physical and psychological problems that that could exacerbate vulnerability and exclusion.



20

Heritage-based opportunities for tourism in rural areas



- redirect the targets towards family and domestic tourists (**staycation**) and claim for the re-discovering of local cultural and natural heritage
- **Farm to fork strategy**
- **connect to other nature-related activities** – i.e. open-air sports, fishing, etc. – that will support market diversification
- **Limitations to big mass events** and crowded hotspots, are calling for a spread tourist offer that could be boosted organizing **small events** along the pilgrimage and hiking routes, such as small concert, open air movies, theatre representations.

Remote spiritual guidance

Harghita, Romania

Through providing remote spiritual guidance services for individuals and entire regions, the aim is to promote mental health protection and emotional development in rural areas. One activity is the online pastoral work where people can continue to join the masses without leaving their house. During holidays they provide practical information for home-visitation including viticulture, wine, and food activities. Another important relation is spiritual guidance, both via telephone and online services with relatives.

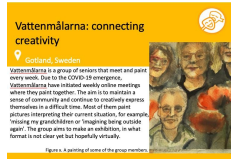
Learn more here: https://www.ruritage.eu/resilience-actions/spiritual_guidance_offline/

21

Heritage-based opportunities for tourism in rural areas



- **virtual access to approach culture**
 - libraries have made their collections available online and some have even provided videos of librarians reading out loud directly to children.
 - Some rural-based festivals will manifest themselves virtually.
 - smaller art groups, study circles or networks continue meeting virtually while performing and executing their art.
- **small events in presence, such as small concert, open air movies, theatre representations.**



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22

Heritage-based opportunities for tourism in rural areas



- the **values of the natural and cultural capitals** of rural territory have not been altered, and this offers good opportunity to offer **safe and beautiful tourist and work destination**.
- **rethink tourism in a more sustainable way** and to work on the peculiar characteristics on their areas.
- Working on an integrated management of the landscape and heritage to support regions and rural territories to find their **local distinctiveness and identity**
- **create or reinforced existing networks** to build a community response around a common purpose.



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23

COVID-19 effects on tourism: Recommendations



- If properly planned and managed, pilgrimage and hiking routes can be considered amongst the **safest tourism destinations** in the current COVID-19 crisis (social distancing, open-air natural environment)
- To this aim, a **great coordination among all involved and interested stakeholders** is needed, from regional to local authorities to local businesses involved in the activities
- The spread tourist offer could be boosted and **sustainably maintained through time by involving and engaging with the creative sectors' local stakeholders**



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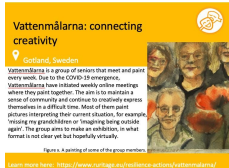


24

COVID-19 effects on tourism: Recommendations



- online activities should be addressed as mainly **complimentary means**.
- Support other types of events and gatherings: spread offer of **open-air events with smaller audiences**
- more **frequent opportunities** for artists to perform and for locals to take part in performances.
- develop more flexible "menus" of art and festivals for communities, **adapting to local needs, conditions and practices**



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25

COVID-19 effects on tourism: Recommendations



- as mentioned in the recently released **EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030** (European Commission, 2020b) 'the recent COVID-19 pandemic makes the need to protect and restore nature all the more urgent. The pandemic is raising awareness of the **links between our own health and the health of ecosystems**'.

Investing in green infrastructure, wellness corridor, and slow mobility infrastructure can on the one side improve and restore natural ecosystem, but at the same time creating options for **sustainable tourism**.



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26

Suggested actions at EU, national and Local level

A **better integration** of all the involved sectors is needed:

- **Agriculture** and natural services and capital enhancement and protection
- **Culture** - spread initiatives
- **Education and training** – overcome the digital and enterpreneurial knowledge divide
- **Support local SMEs** in rural areas (dedicated instruments)
- **Improve accessibility** – both digital and physical
- **Guarantee access to basic services** in rural areas (health, education)
- Promote **diversification** of opportunities
- Enhance the role of local authorities to properly **plan** the future development of the areas, to repopulate ageing and uninhabited rural areas **avoiding unplanned gentrification issues** – tourism, second home, and staycations can contribute to rural regeneration but should be properly planned
- Include **participatory processes** to integrate local stakeholders' insights in the strategies and to take into account the inhabitants' needs and expectations.

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Useful resources

- RURITAGE deliverables and Vision Paper (available soon)
<https://www.ruritage.eu/resources/publications/>
- RURITAGE call for actions «Resilience in practice»
https://www.ruritage.eu/resources/resilience_actions/
- Paper: De Luca, Tondelli, Åberg (2020) *The Covid-19 pandemic effects in rural areas. Turning challenges into opportunities for rural regeneration*. Tema Special Issue *Covid-19 vs City-20*
<https://doi.org/10.6092/1970-9870/6844>

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28

Thank you for the attention!



ALMA MATER STUDIORUM
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA
CENTRO INTERDEPARTAMENTALE DI RICERCA INDUSTRIALE
EDILIZIA E COSTRUZIONI
almatona@unibo.it

www.ruritage.eu

#Ruritage

www.facebook.com/ruritage

www.twitter.com/ruritage

www.instagram.com/ruritage

info@ruritage.eu

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29
