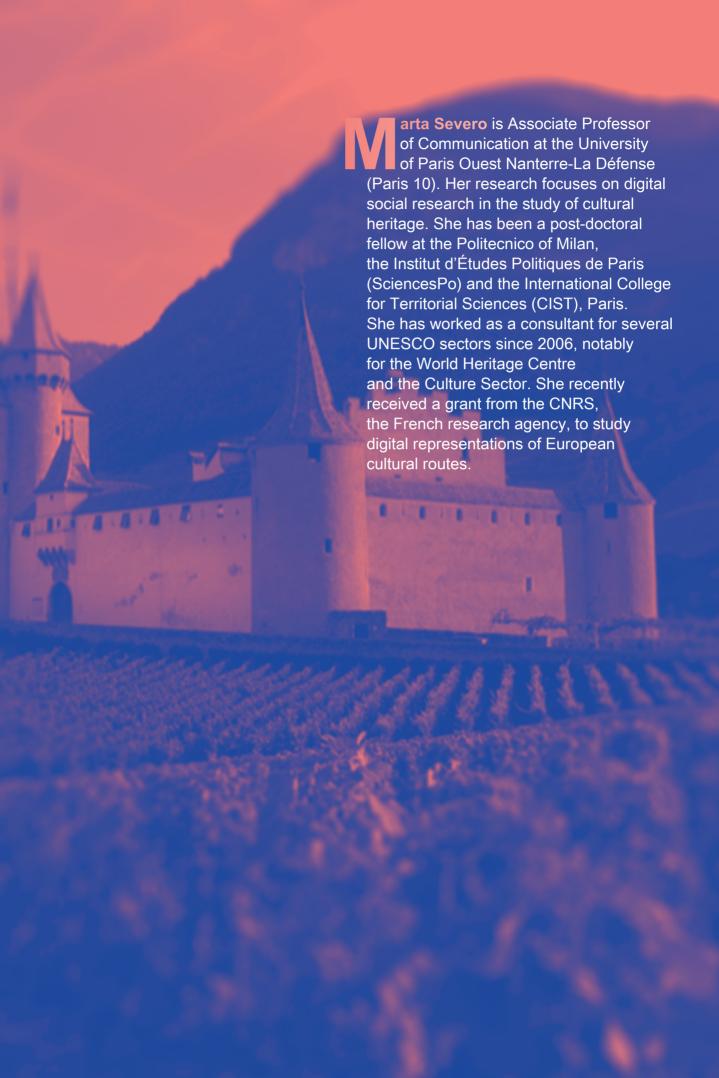
European Cultural Routes: Building a Multi-Actor Approach

by Marta Severo



outes and trails have played a key role in the history of humanity. From routes of commerce to pilgrimage paths, from natural trails to urban pathways, this phenomenon has taken different forms across the centuries and revealed its multifaceted nature—social, political, geographic, economic, religious, and cultural. Recently, routes have also become important tourist destinations. More and more travellers are choosing these complex tourist options, which allow a combination of not only several locations but also different experiences within a unique trip. People are increasingly attracted by the Routes of Santiago de Compostela, the Silk Road, the Inca Road or the Via Francigena rather than a traditional, stationary vacation at the seaside. As an example, the Via Francigena, an 1800 km itinerary stretching from Canterbury to Rome across Italy, Switzerland, France and UK, was taken by about 50,000 walkers in 2016, five times more than in 2013 (Fig. 1). People are attracted by the interesting combination of culture, spirituality, nature and taste that the trail offers.

In fact, the discovery of routes as a tourist destination has its roots in the *Grand Tour*. From the 18th century onwards, upper-class young men took long trips around Europe, notably Italy, in order to enrich their cultural and artistic education. Such an experience not only affected the life of the individual travellers, but more importantly, a kind of synergy between those places encountered over the course of the trip was generated through that same mobility. From their origins, there are two features shared by these routes taken for pleasure rather than necessity: (1) the fact that they generate movements of people across national boundaries, thus facilitating the sharing of values and intercultural dialogue; and (11) the fact that the shared values are strictly related to the tangible and intangible cultural heritage present along the route. During their journeys, travellers visit new places and observe new landscapes, but also encounter new people, and converse with inhabitants.

As a consequence, such routes become tools for sharing 'values as a common heritage that goes beyond national borders' (ICOMOS 2008). Indeed, besides their wide-ranging nature, the routes are attractive mainly because they are *cultural* routes. Cultural routes today constitute 'a new framework for interpreting heritage' (Berti 2015). What makes this new heritage truly interesting is its complexity: 'the concept of Cultural Route implies a value as a whole, which is greater than the sum of its parts and gives the Route its meaning' (ICOMOS 2008). Moreover, such complexity is enriched by the fact that many different people, mainly walkers and inhabitants, participate in the everyday redefinition of the symbolic heritage represented by these itineraries, and that everyone participates by bringing their own personal interpretation of their cultural, social and spiritual background (Fig. 1).

Yet, the complexity of the object makes it equally difficult to theoretically grasp this concept (in relation to pre-existing concepts of cultural heritage), and to practically administer the concerned cultural properties by treating them as a whole. So far, studies on cultural routes have been generally disciplinary. Some focus on the religious aspects, notably related to pilgrimage; others focus on the specific cultural and natural heritage of individual cultural routes, analysed from the viewpoint of art history, history or geography. More recently, scholars in economics and tourism studies have shown an interest in cultural routes through analysis of their potential and actual impact on tourism.

Cultural routes constitute
'a new framework for
interpreting heritage'
(Berti 2015).



Fig. 1. The castle of Aigle on the Via Francigena. © AEVF Archive

his article will contribute to the study of cultural routes by proposing a more interdisciplinary perspective. Considering its brevity, I will focus our analysis on the necessity of investigating the relationship between the concept of cultural route and other concepts already used in cultural heritage studies to a greater extent. Indeed, the recent interest in cultural routes has generated a flourishing grey and scientific literature that considers them a new type of cultural heritage. Without disregarding the novelty of this object, I argue herein that there is much to be gained by rediscovering the similarity between cultural routes and other existing frameworks for considering cultural heritage. In particular, I will focus on two concepts: (1) that of cultural landscape and (II) the theory of actor-network (ANT).

The text is organised into three parts. I will first describe the legal framework that has allowed the acknowledgement of cultural routes as a new type of cultural heritage. Thus, the main features related to this concept will be defined. In the second part, I will focus on the relationship between the concept of cultural route and the concept of cultural landscape. Analysis of such a link will induce us to consider the role of landscapes for cultural routes more generally. The third part will investigate a more delicate aspect of cultural routes: their administration. Here, I will argue for the necessity of adopting a multi-actor approach, and we will demonstrate the advantages of interpreting cultural routes as networks of actors. The article will be mainly based on the experience of the European Cultural Routes, a category that will be explained in the next paragraph.

The 'heritagisation' of cultural routes

The recent success of cultural routes has prompted several international bodies to define a legal framework in order to manage and protect them. The main actors in this field are the International Committee on Cultural Routes (CIIC) and the European Institute of Cultural Routes.

he CIIC, a scientific committee of ICOMOS, protects cultural routes through the International Charter on Cultural Routes (2008). This document, which is the result of several re-workings, defines cultural routes as: [A]ny route of communication, be it land, water, or some other type, which is physically delimited and is also characterized by having its own specific dynamic and historic functionality, which must fulfil the following conditions: it must arise from and reflect interactive movements of people as well as multi-dimensional, continuous, and reciprocal exchanges of goods, ideas, knowledge and values between peoples, countries, regions or continents over significant periods of time. It must have thereby promoted a cross-fertilisation of the affected cultures in space and time, as reflected both in their tangible and intangible heritage.

s defined in the Charter, the Committee—created in 1998—aims to protect and study cultural routes, especially 'in connection with the protection, maintenance and conservation of their monuments, groups of buildings, archaeological remains, cultural landscapes and sites, as they are connected through cultural values and historical links.' This definition is thus fairly operational, and clearly emphasises the connection between cultural routes and cultural heritage by pointing out how the preservation of the latter is a prerequisite for the protection of the former. It is, in fact, worth noting that the action of the CIIC is relatively limited since this committee meets periodically and does not carry out direct actions, but rather delegates to national committees.1 Consequently, the implementation of the Charter can be very irregular worldwide.

ultural routes have acquired par-✓ ticular importance at the European level. Indeed, during the process of the creation of the European Union following World War II, cultural routes became a main means of enhancing social cohesion. European cultural routes were created by the Council of Europe with the aim of translating the principles expressed in the European Cultural Convention (1954) into concrete actions. In particular, they were intended as tools to promote and preserve Europeans' shared and diverse cultural identities. A first programme devoted to the 'cultural routes of the Council of Europe' was officially created in 1987 in order to protect the Camino de Santiago, which was considered the first example of a European Cultural Route. In the following years, the programme was enlarged to include other trails. Since 1998, it has been managed by an executive agency of the Council of Europe in Luxembourg, the European Institute of Cultural Routes. In 2010, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe established an Enlarged Partial Agreement (EPA) to enable closer cooperation between states particularly interested in the development of cultural routes. The EPA reinforces the function of cultural routes as tools for international cooperation. Indeed, according to the EPA, European Cultural Routes are defined as: [A] cultural, educational heritage and tourism cooperation project aiming at the development and promotion of an itinerary or a series of itineraries based on a historic route, a cultural concept, figure or phenomenon with a transnational importance and significance for the understanding and respect of common European values (art.1, Council of Europe, 2010).

As a technical agency, the European Institute of Cultural Routes is highly active and carries out several actions at an international level. So far, 33 itineraries have been awarded this European label (the Via Francigena, the Viking Route, the Via Regia, the Routes of the Olive Tree, etc.) and several others are currently applying for a similar certification (Longobard Ways across Europe or the Chocolate Way).

he two definitions are quite similar. Both consider cultural routes as a new type of heritage whose existence is ensured by movements of people and the consequent sharing of values among them. Yet, while ICOMOS's definition clearly recognises the value of the cultural route in the cultural heritage items located within the geographic area of the trail, that of the Council of Europe, identifies the significance of a cultural route within the more complex definition of 'European values.' Although the European programme provides a definition of such European values (human rights, cultural democracy and diversity, mutual understanding and exchanges across boundaries), such values are more difficult to operationalise and administer than the monuments and buildings identified by the ICOMOS Charter.2 I do not wish to state that cultural heritage along the routes is not relevant according to the European vision, but that this vision is strictly concerned with cultural heritage related to the identity and history of Europe, and that it is very difficult to distinguish cultural from other types of heritage.

onsidering all that has been discussed so far, the role of cultural heritage in relation to cultural routes should be investigated. In doing so, the next section will consider another international treaty, the UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972), and the connection that this text establishes between the concepts of cultural routes, cultural landscape and, more generally, cultural heritage.

Cultural routes as cultural landscapes

he World Heritage Convention of UNESCO (1972) constitutes another important framework for the protection of cultural routes. Indeed, today several cultural routes are inscribed on the World Heritage representative list, including the Silk Roads, the Routes Network of Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor, the Routes of the Camino de Santiago in France and Spain, Qhapaq Ñan, the Andean Road System in South America and the Incense Route-Desert Cities in the Negev in Israel. Others are on the tentative list, such as the Bavay-Köln Roman Route in Belgium. The Convention does not, in fact, specifically focus on cultural routes (which are not mentioned in the official text), but cultural routes are protected under the category of 'cultural landscape', or more generally, as 'serial properties.' Interestingly, the use of the two concepts—'cultural landscape' and 'serial properties'-in defining cultural routes is controversial.

ultural landscapes, have been ac-ticle of the Convention as the 'combined works of nature and of man' (UNESCO 1972, Article 1). The Operational Guidelines for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention (2015) provide a more extensive definition, describing cultural landscapes as '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, both external and internal' (UNESCO 2015).

nnex 3 of the Guidelines, which specifies more precise recommendations regarding the inclusion of cultural landscapes, also introduces the concept of 'heritage routes.' The annex insists on two points: (I) the connection between the concept of heritage route and that of cultural landscape ('a heritage route may be considered as a specific, dynamic type of cultural landscape, just as recent debates have led to their acceptance within the Operational Guidelines'); and (II) the strong ties between the value of the route and its tangible heritage

('a heritage route is composed of tangible elements of which the cultural significance comes from exchanges and a multi-dimensional dialogue across countries or regions, and that illustrate the interaction of movement, along the route, in space and time').

n the other hand, the definition provided here echoes the concept of the European Cultural Routes in its highlighting of the importance of this framework for 'mutual understanding' and 'exchange and dialogue between countries or between regions.' The concept of 'serial properties' is defined in the Operational Guidelines as follows: 'serial properties will include two or more component parts related by clearly defined links: component parts should reflect cultural, social or functional links over time that provide, where relevant, landscape, ecological, evolutionary or habitat connectivity [...] it is the series as a whole-and not necessarily the individual parts of it—which are of Outstanding Universal Value.' This concept has the operational function of protecting multiple objects such as towns, monuments or landscapes within a single nomination.

Theoretical difficulties

The revelance of these two categories for cultural routes is not generally acknowleged. For 'cultural landscape', the main criticism is that all landscapes are cultural and so the concept *per se* is arguably a tautology. For 'serial properties', the problem lies in the fact that this definition is suitable for protecting the tangible heritage along a route but not the route itself with its global symbolic value.

An interesting example may be provided by the nomination file of the UNESCO site Routes of Santiago de Compostela in France, which justifies its inclusion on the World Heritage list as follows: 'The Pilgrimage Route of Santiago de Compostela played a key role in religious and cultural exchange and development during the later Middle Ages, and this is admirably illustrated by the carefully selected monuments on the routes followed by pilgrims in France.'

issatisfaction related to the definition of cultural landscapes is also evident when the actions of the international bodies related to cultural routes are considered. The ICCI has a separate committee for cultural landscapes; at the Council of Europe, staff members generally insist on the ordinary character of landscapes along cultural routes as opposed to the Outstanding Universal Value required for World Heritage cultural landscapes.

Such controversy invites us to further investigate the relationship between the concepts of cultural route and landscape. The connection is in fact very strong. According to Eleonora Berti, who has managed European Cultural Routes for several years, the landscape of cultural routes lies at their core. In particular, the European Programme of Cultural Routes is strongly influenced by the European Landscape Convention (adopted in Florence in 2000 and which came into force in 2004), which defines landscape as 'an area, as perceived by the people who live in it, whose character is

the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.' Whereas the UNESCO definition of cultural landscape is more restrictive, here every landscape is cultural because the existence of a landscape depends on the presence of the observer. Each landscape is the result of a cultural process related to the cultural background of the observers. There is no such thing as a purely natural landscape. Where there are people, there is a landscape, and all landscapes represent cultural values. Consequently, all ordinary landscapes are significant for the people who see them and live around them.

uch criticisms are surely consistent. The insistence on the ordinary character of the landscape is a condition sine qua non for a programme that is meant to intervene in the lesser-known and lesser-developed regions of Europe. However, today the concept of cultural landscapes has been widely used beyond the limits of the World Heritage Convention and without a connection to the idea of Outstanding Universal Value. It can be useful to consider the analysis of Martorell-Carreño of the ICOMOS Committee, who emphasises how cultural routes and cultural landscapes can be used to define the same object, while highlighting different aspects. In particular, he observes that 'although both concepts are equally important, cultural landscapes are ideal to explain the relationship between man and nature. Cultural routes are important to understand the relationships, exchanges and inter-influences between two or more cultural groups linked by an established cultural route. From the point of view of the understanding of cultural heritage that has shared roots and influences, it is a key term' (Martorell-Carreño 2003).

onsidering this, the concept of cultural landscape can be fruitful for the study and administration of cultural routes for two reasons. Firstly, it underlines the connection between the value of the route and the tangible and intangible heritage along it. Thanks to this concept, it may be easier to build a framework of protection of the 'common European heritage', or more generally,

of the global value of a cultural route. Without neglecting that the route is a whole, its decomposition into parts and the rediscovery of the heritage items along it would allow more pertinent safeguarding actions to be developed, and similarities with other routes to be identified. Secondly, while we may agree with the fact that 'cultural landscape' is tautology, the use of the term 'cultural' instead of simply 'landscape' may help to underline the role of the different social actors involved in the creation and life of a cultural route. As explained in the next paragraph, this is the precondition for building an effective management system.

Cultural consumption measurement tools

Recognising the cultural route as a new type of cultural heritage calls for a management system suitable to administer it. The European Institute of Cultural Routes is highly active in this field. In 2011, it carried out a report on the role of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the development of cultural routes (Council of Europe 2011). Interestingly, this report proposes a strategy to produce a longer-term impact and to ensure increased economic and cultural benefits from cultural routes based on strong partnerships between SMEs and different stakeholders related to cultural routes at the international, national and local levels. In 2015, the Institute published Cultural Routes Management: From Theory to Practice, a book that identifies some key challenges related to the management of these complex objects. Therein, Alessandra Mariotti wrote an interesting piece on the role of cultural districts in tourism development along the routes. Also of note is Yoel Mansfeld's article concerning the integration of local communities in the process of route planning.

n 2016, the European Programme also launched a task force to build a European Tourism Indicators System (ETIS) for Cultural Routes. Its main goal is to develop a quality control tool to ensure measurement of the economic, sociocultural and environmental sustainability of the Cultural Routes, using a standard methodology recognised at the European level. Several scholars participated in this reflection: in particular, Majdoub (2010) highlights the importance of building a multidimensional perspective that considers not only geographical aspects and economic effects, but also takes into account the touristic forms of cultural consumption. Timothy and Boyd (2015) attempt to develop a model for studying all aspects of every kind of route and trail, interesting in that at the core of such a nested conceptual model we find the experiential dimension of tourists.

hat becomes evident is that current management studies focus on the touristic exploitation of cultural routes. Surely the priority is to make this cultural heritage profitable for its geographical area, especially for lesser-known regions. Yet, the exclusive attention of managers and researchers on tourists may have the effect of ignoring other categories of social actors related to the trails and the added value that these actors can convey. In this sense, as already observed, the concept of landscape may be very useful. The centrality of the concept of landscape—and notably of cultural landscape—has two important consequences

for the management of cultural routes. Firstly, people are not only observers, but producers, and should thus be continuously involved in landscape planning. Just as the Convention of Florence established that landscapes should become a common political concern, similarly, cultural routes management should be based on community participation. Secondly, the concept of landscape invites us to explore the notion of community, and in particular, to consider that cultural routes are not only an added value for tourists, but also a resource for residents. Also, the WH Operational Guidelines specify that cultural landscape nominations should 'be prepared in collaboration with and have the full approval of local communities.'

owever, in light of the above considerations, it should be recognised that such a vision of the landscape accentuates the opposition between two types of social actors: outsiders, the external observers who cross the landscapes (travellers and tourists); and insiders, the internal actors (residents) who administer the landscape. Based on such a distinction, we risk addressing management actions that pertain exclusively to the first category, which appears to be a more solid source of economic benefits.

Cultural routes as actor-networks

n order to avoid this and take all categories of involved actors into appropriate consideration, the concept of network can be very useful, and has already been used widely in literature related to cultural routes. Eleonora Berti (2012) employs it to distinguish the geographical structure of cultural routes. She identifies three types of structure: territorial, linear and reticular routes. Yet, such a focus on geographical form risks moderating the utility of the concept of network, which can be useful in understanding every type of cultural route independently of its morphological form. More interestingly, the 2011 report on SMEs refers to networks as useful structures for building partnerships and commercial connections in the context of cultural tourism. The authors underline the necessity of increasing networking between producers as well as profiting from increasingly networked consumers. Similarly, Timothy and Boyd (2015), in their extremely wide-ranging book about routes and trails, employ the concept of networks to explain marketing and governance dynamics related to the routes: 'the collaborative affiliations, partnerships and interdependence within a broader tourism system are what constitute the notion of networks.' Finally, more recently, Eleonora Berti (Council of Europe, 2015) stated: 'Cultural Routes, in accordance with their shapes and themes, stimulate the establishment of different relational systems: these systems are produced by the relations between routes and their environment, between landscapes and routes, routes and populations, insiders and outsiders.' What is important to note is that these studies show two limitations: (1) they insist on the role of formal networks, that is to say partnerships and connections built between (mainly economic) stakeholders; (II) they do not fill the gap between internal and external actors.

n the present article, I argue that the concept of network should be used in a wider context to analyse the relational structures between all kinds of items related to cultural routes and to give them equal importance. To do so, I would suggest to use the Actor-Network Theory (ANT) introduced by several authors in socio-philosophical studies. This approach attempts to understand complex social situations by paying attention to relational elements (Latour 1987; Latour 2005). The social is 'nothing other than patterned networks of heterogeneous materials' (Law 1992). The main advantages of actor-network theory are: (1) to consider all actors at the same level of importance and (II) to take into account not only human actors but also non-human (such as media and information, road signs, tangible and intangible heritage items, etc.). 'Under ANT, these heterogeneous elements are attributed equal importance and are seen as part of dynamic and never definitive networks, in which the essence for understanding sociological phenomena lies in the associations among them' (Arnaboldi & Spiller 2011).

an der Duim has profitably used this approach in tourism studies. He develops the concept of tourismscape to indicate tourism systems that 'are actor-networks connecting, within and across different societies and regions, transport-systems, accommodation and facilities, resources, environments, technologies, and people and organisations (van der Duim 2007 and 2012). Tourismscapes consist of relations between people and things dispersed in time-space-specific patterns' (van der Duim 2007). Similarly, Arnaboldi and Spiller (2011) propose an interesting study based on ANT. They use this framework in an action research approach to analyse a cultural district of northern Italy. As shown by the authors, ANT helps to identify the 'largely disregarded microlevel dynamics that regulate networks and collaborations within the context of tourism/cultural planning?

here can be no doubt that analysing cultural routes as actor-networks will facilitate observation of the role of all actors (especially local communities)—those related not only to cultural tourism, but also to other kinds of social, political, economic or religious phenomena. Thanks to the actor-network approach, cultural routes can be interpreted as social spaces that cannot be predetermined but that are the result of ongoing associations among actors. By following these human and non-human actors, the social phenomena can be understood and administered. As suggested by van der Duim (2007) for tourismscapes, from the empirical viewpoint, cultural routes 'should be inspected in a topological way': ongoing dynamic relations should be followed and privileged over spatial relations. With this in mind, interpreting cultural routes as actor-networks has two main consequences. Firstly, their social complexity can be more easily understood: cultural routes are not a predetermined sequence of geographical stops, but changing interconnections of human and non-human actors. Secondly, since all actors have the same importance, actions should not address tourists exclusively, but people more generally by rejecting the distinction between insiders and outsiders.

his article aims to contribute to the understanding of cultural routes. This new type of cultural heritage has recently obtained substantial attention, yet studies have mainly focused on its success as a tourist destination. Defined internationally as a complex and multifaceted social object, today it is administrated almost exclusively as a touristic product. Moreover, even if scholars and managers insist on the involvement of residents, initiatives related to cultural routes predominantly consider tourists. According to the existing definitions (of ICOMOS, UNESCO and the Council of Europe), a cultural route is more than that because it principally fulfils a social and political function by facilitating intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding between countries through the movements of people that it generates. I would argue here that a more interdisciplinary and multi-actor approach should be built in order to study and administer cultural routes.

y primary argument is based on a series of reflections already introduced scholars and managers concerning cultural routes via a unique approach. Today, it is necessary to reflect on the meaning of cultural routes beyond the definitions contained in conventions and charters. Firstly, we should consider the advancements already made in other fields related to cultural heritage and benefit from the experience related to other concepts. Secondly, cultural routes should not be treated as abstract objects but as social phenomena; their study and management should thus be based on the social reality specific to each cultural route with all its micro dynamics.

o conclude, I would like to highlight the limits of this study, which are meant to show the insufficiency of current research on cultural routes and propose a new multi-actor viewpoint for further study. It should be acknowleged that cultural routes are a relatively recent discovery and much remains to be undertaken. In particular, further studies are requided to show the empirical interest of this multi-actor approach.

Bearing this in mind, this paper proposes to consider of cultural routes using two concepts, cultural landscapes and actor-network. The first notion, that of cultural landscape, has already been considered in previous studies.

Yet, I argue that the relationship between cultural landscape and cultural route has been generally misunderstood and that its reconsideration can have positive effects on the administration of this new object. Indeed, considering cultural routes as cultural landscapes will allow us to: (I) underline the central role of tangible and intangible cultural heritage in defining the value of cultural routes; and (II) rediscover the important role of people in cultural route planning.

s regards the involvement of people, A lave observed that the solutions for administering cultural routes are quite weak on this point because they are based on the distinction between internal and external actors and they mainly address one category of social actor: tourists. Considering this, I have demonstrated the interest of adopting an actor-network approach. Through this, cultural routes can be interpreted as dynamic systems of relations where all actors (resident and tourists, but also non-human actors) have equal importance. Based on the experience of Arnaboldi and Spiller (2011), it is my contention that ANT could be fruitfully used to administer cultural routes.

Note

1 See for example the action of the
Australian ICOMOS Committee on Cultural
Landscapes and Cultural Routes.
Available at: http://australia.icomos.org/
get-involved/national-scientific-committees/
nsc-cultural-landscapes-routes/.
2 This list is available on the official website
of the Programme: http://culture-routes.net/
3 The text is the result of the Expert Meeting
on 'Routes as part of Our Cultural Heritage'
(Madrid, 24-25 November 1994) discussed
by the World Heritage Committee at its 19th
session (Berlin, 1995) (see documents WHC-94/
CONF.003/INF.13; WHC-95/CONF.203/16).

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