

CORONA VERDE PROJECT AS A TOOL FOR PERI-URBAN CULTURAL TOURISM

Extended abstract

Introduction

This article explores the potential of nature-based solutions (NBS) as a key element for peri-urban cultural tourism, with a specific focus on the Corona Verde project in Turin, Italy. The project, which integrates green areas, real residences, river networks and cultivated fields, offers unique opportunities for cultural tourism. The following sections describe the concepts of nature-based solutions and peri-urban cultural tourism, information on the Corona Verde project, study aim, methods and expected results.

Nature-based solutions

Nature-based solutions (NBS) are defined "*actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems, that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits*" (IUCN, 2016; Cohen-Shacham et al., 2016). In this sense, NBS are actions that use nature to address societal challenges, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, urbanisation and health problems, while providing multiple benefits for human well-being and the environment (IUCN, 2016).

NBS have gained increasing attention from researchers, practitioners and policy makers as a way to promote sustainable development and resilience in various contexts, including tourism and hospitality (Giachino et al., 2021; Giachino et al., 2022). Tourism and hospitality depend on natural resources and ecosystems, generating significant environmental and social impacts, such as greenhouse gas emissions, water consumption, waste generation, land degradation and cultural erosion (UNWTO, 2019). Therefore, there is a need for more sustainable and regenerative approaches that can balance the economic, environmental and social dimensions of tourism and hospitality while improving the quality of life of local communities and visitors.

NBS offer such approaches, integrating natural and cultural heritage and involving multiple stakeholders in the co-design and implementation of solutions adapted to the local context and needs (Mandić, 2019). NBS can also provide multiple benefits to tourism and hospitality, such as:

- improving the attractiveness and competitiveness of destinations by preserving and restoring natural and cultural assets and creating new products and experiences that appeal to different market segments and niches (Kabisch et al., 2016);
- increasing the environmental performance and efficiency of tourism and hospitality operations by reducing resource consumption, emissions and waste and increasing the use of renewable energy sources and green infrastructure (Faivre et al., 2017);
- fostering the social inclusion and empowerment of local communities, creating new jobs and income opportunities, strengthening the participation and collaboration of different actors and promoting the recognition and enhancement of local identity and culture (Panno et al., 2017).

Different examples of NBS applied to tourism and hospitality can be found in different contexts, such as urban, mountain, rural and disadvantaged areas.

In urban areas, NBS can help create more liveable and attractive spaces for residents and tourists by increasing the availability and accessibility of green and blue areas, such as parks, gardens, rivers and lakes (Kabisch et al., 2016).

In mountain areas, NBS can help safeguard and restore biodiversity and ecosystem services that support tourism activities, such as hiking and wildlife watching, while mitigating the risks of natural hazards, such as landslides, floods and avalanches (Eggermont et al., 2015).

In rural and disadvantaged areas, NBS can help diversify and revitalise the local economy by supporting the development of new forms of tourism, such as agrotourism, ecotourism and cultural tourism, and by strengthening links between tourism and other sectors, such as agriculture, forestry and handicrafts (Mandić, 2019).

Peri-urban cultural tourism

Peri-urban cultural tourism is a form of tourism that involves visiting cultural attractions and heritage sites located on the outskirts of urban areas, often in rural or natural settings. Peri-urban cultural tourism can offer numerous benefits to tourists, local communities and the environment, such as improving appreciation and awareness of local culture and history, diversifying tourism supply and demand, promoting inclusion and cohesion social, supporting rural development and regeneration, preserving and restoring natural and cultural resources (Cuccia and Rizzo, 2011; Della Lucia et al., 2019).

The integration of NBS is one of the emerging opportunities for peri-urban cultural tourism in the planning and management of peri-urban areas. Indeed, NBS can contribute to peri-urban cultural tourism by creating attractive and accessible green spaces, enhancing the quality and diversity of cultural landscapes, enhancing the resilience and sustainability of cultural heritage and promoting the participation and empowerment of local stakeholders in co-creation and co-management of peri-urban areas (Frantzeskaki et al., 2020; Raymond et al., 2017). NBS can therefore offer a holistic and innovative approach to peri-urban cultural tourism, capable of addressing the interconnected challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss and sustainable development (Seddon et al., 2020).

Corona Verde project

A relevant case study of peri-urban cultural tourism integrated with NBS is the Corona Verde project in Turin, Italy. Corona Verde is a large green belt surrounding Turin with green areas, royal residences and castles, river networks and cultivated fields. Corona Verde is the result of a long-term vision and collaboration between various institutions, actors and sectors, aimed at enhancing the natural, historical and cultural heritage of the Turin metropolitan area, through the creation of a network of ecological, cycle corridors and hiking trails, peri-urban agriculture and reduction of land consumption (Piedmont Region).

One of the main cultural attractions of Corona Verde is the possibility of visiting the historic residences of the Savoy dynasty, the royal family that ruled Piedmont and Italy for centuries. These residences, ranging from medieval castles to baroque villas, were declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1997, for their architectural, artistic and landscape value (Corona Verde). This type of experience, through visits to royal residences, allows you to travel through the history of Piedmont and Italy, discovering aspects and customs of court life, art, politics and culture at the time of the Savoy royal family (Corona Verde).

Study aim and expected results

In this context, this work focuses on a specific case of NBS applied to tourism and hospitality in the peri-urban context of Turin, Italy. Specifically, it identifies the case of the Corona Verde project that aims to create a green belt around the city, connecting natural, historical, and cultural sites, such as parks, rivers, royal residences, and agricultural areas, and offering various opportunities for cultural visits, including those to historic homes of the Savoy dynasty.

The study is on a field investigation into how university students in Turin may use and perceive peri-urban cultural tourism linked to the Corona Verde project. To this end, a survey was planned. The design of the questionnaire involved several stages. First the topic was discussed in some classrooms and then the results obtained from the discussion allowed a first draft of the questionnaire to be

drawn up; It was then administered in a test phase in small groups; Finally, the results of this administration were used to draw up the final questionnaire.

The extensive administration of the questionnaire took place via a centralised university communication system and the expected results account for the perception of the Corona Verde project in terms of knowledge and use by university students in Turin. In thematic terms, opportunities for tourism and leisure time use were considered, especially from a cultural point of view referring to the area's natural riches and linked to historical tradition, as in the case of the possibility of visiting the Savoy residences. The study also made it possible to compare different target subgroups identifiable by gender and age group.

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