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# A Practical Vision of Heritage Tourism in Low-Population-Density Areas. The Spanish Mediterranean as a Case Study

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Abstract: Heritage tourism bases its definition on searching for different, authentic, and somewhat unexplored places. Recent literature speaks of the growth of new forms of tourism based on the tradition that seeks to surprise visitors with popular culture, traditional activities, or actions that bring traditional culture closer to tourists. However, the reality is that the influx of tourists to small mountain villages is marked by the most "monumental" historical and architectural values, leaving aside some other minor attributes. This article uses the historical centres of rural villages to place inhabitants' knowledge at the centre of tourism initiatives. The aim of the study was to develop cohesive and inclusive tourism activities in historic centres by analysing the built environment's attributes and values. A participatory methodology marks the cultural change to enhance collaboration through transparent and ethical foundations and respect these places' distinctive character. The study of values helped to conduct an in-depth analysis of local realities to document and map historical centres' tangible attributes through crafts, traditional culture, and local heritage forms.

**Keywords:** heritage tourism; depopulated villages; low density; historic environment; authentic experience; GIS



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# 1. Introduction

Heritage tourism concerns the motivation to experience various items, representing past and present periods, at a tourist destination [1]. Recent studies have used heritage tourism as a vector for different experiences [2–6]. Historically, heritage tourism is perhaps one of the oldest and most dominant forms of tourism [7]. However, as Santa and Tiatcov [8] explain, the use of cultural heritage, due to its vulnerability, can be controversial when it is monetised for the benefit of tourism. In this regard, Park et al. [1] discuss how authenticity affects intrinsic authenticity and tourist satisfaction. On the other hand, today, heritage-tourism-based activities may represent one of the alternatives to mass tourism or leisure activities linked to coastal areas [9].

Stebbins [10] defined heritage tourism as a type of special interest tourism based on the search for and participation in new and profound cultural experiences, whether aesthetic, intellectual, emotional, or psychological. Today's cultural tourism focuses on integrating production and consumption while increasing the links between suppliers and consumers [11]. Instead of passive consumption, the cultural tourist exercises a proactive approach to meeting and respecting needs and actively participating in creating experiences during visits [12]. This sometimes requires the commodification of cultural heritage, which reveals a "real" experience defined as authentic, original and local.

There is growing concern among visitors about the authenticity of ecological and cultural tourism practices when assessing intellectually, culturally, and environmentally remote regions [13]. Quality tourism, which is supposed to be sustainable and durable, tends to shy away from mediocre, damaged, and homogenised landscapes, seeking original, authentic, aesthetically pleasing, and cared-for landscapes [14].

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In this sense, tourism has found in rural areas a new scenario to discover. Decades of abandonment and forced depopulation [15] have resulted in rural areas retaining their essence, customs, and intrinsic values of popular culture [16]. The beginning of the 1990s marked a period of transformation in tourism, which found a new development opportunity by targeting more specific neglected markets [17,18].

This trend has led to some small mountain villages offering alternatives through new forms of cultural appreciation. The new strategies have followed entrepreneurship's path in virtually forgotten traditional activities that, re-enacted today, serve as a tourism vector [19]. Activities involve trades related to buildings' crafts, gastronomy, or nature. In other cases, the tourism sector has diversified towards new perspectives such as dark tourism, pilgrimages, and industrial heritage tourism [20–22]. However, these are not the only strategies. As Knight and Cottrell [23] state, there are strategies such as local empowerment through volunteerism. This management style uses local people as heritage actors who showcase their local customs and traditions.

According to these movements and their potential increase [24–26], there is a concern on how rural villages can manage this change and be resilient while keeping and enhancing their attributes and values [27].

In this sense, historic villages in rural areas face critical challenges because tourism greatly influences conservation decision-making. Therefore, minor initiatives for knowledge transmission [28] and heritage education [29,30] may open new opportunities for rural areas where resiliency speaks of a whole tangle of attributes and values that are continuously negotiated. Knowledge and temporality build cultural attributes and values [31,32] that, if properly addressed, can generate heritage sustainability-based benefits [33].

With the contemporary interest of tourism in rural areas, keeping historic urban cores alive and preserving their architectural, historical, and cultural values has become a pressing challenge from the social and cultural realm [34]. There is also a concern about historic urban cores' saturation [35–37] as well as gentrification and uberisation [38–40].

In this context, it is vital to address culture-based activities properly in rural destinations, and it requires a new paradigm where communities understand and manage the character of the location towards cohesive and inclusive tourism development [41].

In many rural villages, social and cultural imbalances have provoked the abandonment, underuse or incompatible uses in the built environment [42]. Historical areas of villages and towns are part of the memory and are meaningful due to their essential elements linked to tradition [43]. As Ruda [44] explains, in this realm, attention must be paid to specific techniques, materials and architectural details characteristic of the historical environment, being, at the same time, symbols of identity and evidence of knowledge about the technologies of the past that speak of previous forms of life.

These premises served as a stimulus to develop a research project in 10 villages of Valencia and Aragon's rural area (Spain) (Figure 1). The project studies plans and develops tourism activities in rural villages based on locals' participation. The project's main objective is to monitor and manage those activities and other initiatives linked to heritage attributes and valorisation of values. Through the analysis, the current situation of tourism in the area is discussed, and the potential of these villages is presented to enhance their attributes by engaging locals' knowledge and tourists' curiosity. In this sense, the following hypotheses were put forward:

- The personal emotion and the direct link with a heritage site directly relate to the visitor's experience.
- It is possible to enhance the most fragile heritage value if cohesion and a tangible link between the different heritage actors exist.
- There is a heritage without monumental value that can attract visitors.
- It is possible to revalue the hidden intangible heritage through citizen participation.
- The visitors can understand the life and relationship with the heritage of mountain villages through visits.

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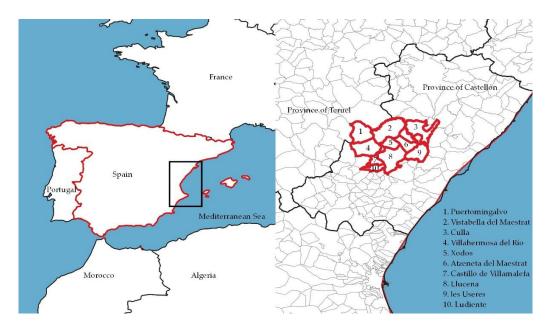


Figure 1. The area under study is located in Castellón and Teruel, Spain.

The following section explains the methodology used to carry out an initiative that creates synergies between academic, local and visiting visions of this particular region. Finally, the results expose each step of the process, discuss the main findings, and conclude the research.

# 2. Materials and Methods

## 2.1. Study Area

Historically, the territory under study has had two potentially attractive heritage resources for tourism: the historical centres and the cultural landscape. In the first case, the historical centres have a tourist demand based on their scenic attributes and their monumental architecture, leaving aside some other minor characteristics of great sociocultural value. In the second case, at the beginning of the 20th century, the study area had a strong tourist attraction due to its natural values; they did not escape the interests of hikers, botanists, biologists, and geologists. Those activities evolved towards new forms of leisure and sports as a primary tourist vector by activities such as hiking, climbing, cycling, and even new scientific analysis forms, perhaps more focused on ethnography, anthropology, and architecture (Figure 2).

However, these villages keep their morphology practically intact. Most of the villages were founded in the Muslim era as small settlements. Later, they adapted to medieval times by building churches, often under the protection of a castle or on a hill that oversees the surrounding territory. This location gives rise to a similar street structure in most municipalities. Streets are either concentric or parallel to each other and converge in a radial direction. Historic urban structures grew more or less organically, adapted to the terrain and the pre-existing planning; this has shaped and provided these built environments with a singular local character (Figure 3).

These historic villages still contain traditional construction using local materials and building techniques inherited from the 16th and 17th centuries. At that time, the villages' surroundings provided them with building materials. The settlements were built on rock, with masonry walls and small openings that have evolved to larger dimensions. Wooden balustrades, hand-forged balconies, and wooden or ceramic eaves with ceramic tiles frame the urban landscape. Lime and sand-based mortars, whitewashed and occasionally coloured with blue, ochre or green tones, render most of the facades. The primary raw material for joinery and frameworks is pine wood, lately substituted by iron in trellises and balconies.

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Figure 2. A group of people in one of the mountain races in the study area.



Figure 3. Example of a historic village in the area of study. Puertomingalvo (2018).

The majority of the villages have their own subsidiary rules to regulate the historic environment's interventions. Although the contemporary nature of recent interventions is manifested as a "natural" and sometimes "raw" response to current needs, it is essential to observe the issue under the lens of historical–local narratives and knowledge to properly understand why historical and contemporary transformations take place. Therefore, today these rural settlements are no longer what they once were; they are now the result of continuous transformation, physical and intellectual, based on appropriation, interpretation, and adaptation. In this sense, attributes are studied to encourage changes that will lead to a new paradigm for heritage tourism and the conservation of active settlements.

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The location under study is a low-population-density territory for the following reasons (See Table 1).

<b>Table 1.</b> The population in the study villages in 1910 (historical maximum recorded) and 2020 (latest
available data). Source: National Institute of Statistics (Spain).

Villages	Villages Km <sup>2</sup> 1910 2020 1910–2017	1910	2020	1910–2017	Density (Inhabitants/Km²)	
			1910	2020		
Atzeneta del Maestrat	71.2	3223	1304	-1919	45.27	18.31
Castillo de Villamalefa	37.7	1455	101	-1354	38.59	2.68
Xodos	44.3	954	106	-848	21.53	2.39
Culla	116.3	3079	481	-2598	26.47	4.14
Llucena	137	4446	1315	-3131	32.45	9.60
Ludiente	31.4	1220	149	-1071	38.85	4.75
Puertomingalvo	103.6	1272	117	-1155	12.28	1.13
les Useres	80.7	3464	959	-2505	42.92	11.88
Villahermosa del Río	108.9	2741	484	-2257	25.17	4.44
Vistabella del Maestrat	151	2541	333	-2208	16.83	2.21
Total	882.1	24,395	5349	-19,046	27.66	6.06

Table 1 shows the depopulation process in the area. The total density has gone from 27.66 inhabitants per square kilometre to 6.06 in 100 years. All the towns exhibit a markedly negative trend, losing more than 2000 inhabitants. In the most extreme cases, the loss is almost 80% of the population.

Our study seeks the possibility for local actors themselves to be the primary reference for local heritage. It comes with the theoretical knowledge of the area and the will to put the historic centres at the service of tourism approaches that foster cohesion and inclusion. The research departs from the assumption that atypical and non-monumental heritage has an intrinsic interest as well when appropriately experienced, which is by knowing and learning the local character together with locals.

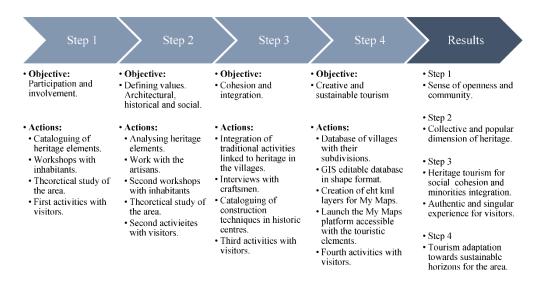
#### 2.2. Methodology

This research results from data collection and analysis of activities such as those proposed by Kneubühler [45] in his guide to Heritage Days in Europe. To raise awareness of cultural richness and diversity, this research focuses on cohesive and inclusive tourism activities through which heritage values and attributes create higher tolerance towards the local community. In this case, Kneubühler's [45] premises were adapted to the context and gave the researchers an orientation to develop the methodology.

This research's methodological process consisted of four steps or phases that started with a specific objective and a series of activities. Once a result was reached, it was then used as a starting point for the next one. The aim was to consolidate the activities and make heritage attributes and values available through a GIS platform for management purposes (Figure 4).

Nomura et al. [46] already studied the spatial structure of traditional dwellings, their characteristic elements, and their tourist interest. Nonetheless, one of the historic centres' main characteristics is the mutability in terms of the continuous reconfiguration of values. In this sense, Ferreti et al. [47], Yildirim [48], and Ruiz et al. [49], among others, have devised methodologies for cataloguing attributes in heritage buildings of different types and epochs. They focus their work on identifying and classifying typologies of attributes and the values they transmit. Present research includes the context of active historical centres and the people inhabiting them.

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**Figure 4.** Methodology to develop cohesive and inclusive activities related to historic villages' attributes and values.

## Step 1. Participation and involvement.

This step is the background of the research. At the beginning of this work, from a previous documentation period and preliminary workshop sessions, the area's inhabitants' most representative values were identified [33]. Since this is a new project for both the researchers and the local population, meetings were held to gather all the heritage stakeholders' opinions and knowledge. Preliminary documentation involved historical and current cartography, cadastral plans, and bibliography. The neighbours of the area explained their experience with the territory and the most representative values.

Step 2. Defining vectors. Architectural, historical, and social.

After evaluating the positive and negative aspects of actions in step 1, it was decided to continue working with locals to determine what form of knowledge they considered fundamental to preserving the historic environment. The research was divided into two main phases. The theoretical work introduced the researchers to the local tradition, its architecture, and the particular elements that comprise the urban scenery. Based on the theoretical approach, neighbours were involved in a series of photo-opportunity workshops. They consisted of quantitatively assessing the responses to a series of photographs representing the classification of values from the first workshops. This work revealed a special interest in historical, cultural, and architectural values.

# Step 3. Cohesion and integration.

Artisans and their workshops were an important part of the process as necessary attributes and values of the historic centre. By conducting semi-structured interviews with artisans who already participated in the initial meetings and with others that afterwards decided to join the initiative, a total of 20 craftsmen, carpenters, blacksmiths, bricklayers, stonemasons, and painters participated. Interviewers asked them about details of their trades, particularly about the links they had with other artisans and curiosities that provide character to the built environment's configuration. Once recorded and transcribed, the information retrieved in the form of minor, popular, and even forgotten architectural details that each village's artisans had reported were digitally catalogued.

## Step 4. Creative and sustainable tourism.

Data collection over four years enabled a transitional analysis of attributes and values and their integration into a database. Following the work of Blanco et al. [50], based on cadastral cartography, each property was abstracted as a geometric surface structure shape to which the fieldwork attributes were uploaded to the QGIS software. A set of fields associated with each spatial entity was established to build the table of attributes (Table 2). Parameters were homogenised by creating common points that did not discard significant

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variables. The transposition of information was a painstaking task because an inadequate transfer of data would ruin the information surveyed during fieldwork. Hence, the map was spatially organised according to lines and points that explicitly referred to each area's subtle particularities. These fields were openings, balconies, carpentry, eaves, coatings, and stairs, among others. The column entitled "Other signs" refers to the alternative uses and understandings of heritage highlighted by interviewees.

**Table 2.** Description of the construction of the database for the QGIS software from Blanco et al. [50] and García-Esparza and Altaba [51].

Field Name	Description	Field Type	Example	
Name	Identifies the municipality, street and building number.	Alphanumeric	RFVH011033	
Openings		Alphabetic	Curved arch of masonry	
Balconies	_	Alphabetic	Not applicable	
Carpentry	Express the heritage typology of each construction element	Alphabetic	Two horizontal wooden doors	
Eaves	selected, grouped, and catalogued previously.	Alphabetic	Decorated ceramic brick	
Stairs		Alphabetic	Not applicable	
Coatings		Alphabetic	Lime and sand mortar	
Other signs	Indicates the less visible values extracted from the interviews through numerical coding.	Alphanumeric	1, 2, 4, 6	

#### 3. Results

## 3.1. Step-by-Step Results

Step 1. Participation and involvement.

The first results reflected two main heritage assets that attracted shared interest among stakeholders: the historic centres and the surrounding landscape. Accordingly, attributes and values were classified as social, architectural, cultural, historical, religious, natural, and productive.

By analysing these categories and through further discussion with stakeholders and unanimous support to include some of them in tourism-based activities, researchers decided to carry out what was initially called the "Historic Centres and Cultural Routes' Meetings" in 2016. In these meetings, inhabitants themselves, led by an expert in local history and culture, explained to visitors the town's architecture by accessing homes. Owners themselves explained the details of dwellings, the construction methods, and some peculiarities related to the past use of spaces. On the same day, visitors could walk through the historic centre of villages and, after enjoying a traditional meal, stroll by the surrounding landscape with a local guide (Figure 5).

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**Figure 5.** First Meetings. Visit to the town hall in Atzeneta del Maestrat and visit to the restoration of a hermitage in Villahermosa del Río.

## Step 2. Defining vectors. Architectural, historical, and social.

As a result of previous work, for the second Meetings on Historic Centres (2017), the activities were devoted to interviewing and visiting artisans linked to building-related trades and extending to those who have experienced transition change between traditional and modern forms of building (Figure 6). With a similar design to the previous year, residents and visitors strode through the historic centres. Later, the artisans provided access to the workshops, still preserved today as they were left the last working day several decades ago. The artisans themselves explained the past trade and the processual changes towards modernisation. Locals and visitors enjoyed the experience of narratives and spaces with exquisite details, piles of tools, and dusty machinery that mesmerised experts and non-experts. Hence, workshops and narratives served as preliminary actions to provide an understanding of the historic urban core's scenery.



**Figure 6.** Interviews and visits to local artisans' workshops. Vistabella del Maestrat and Llucena (2017).

#### Step 3. Cohesion and integration.

In the third Meetings on Historic Centres (2018), the aim was to give a global vision of these municipalities' current life without neglecting the heritage aspect. Local guides had the support of researchers and artisans in highlighting the peculiarities of the village. In addition, there was a connection between these cultural assets with other forms of cultural production such as gastronomy, ethnography, vernacular dwellings, and other pieces of evidence of past forms of life with which inhabitants today cohabit the space.

In this case, visitors could experience an entire day in a rural environment joining in with liminal scenarios, past and present, real, disordered, and dusty but cosy and old. Workshops with machinery and utensils belonging to a vernacular past life that is not musealised make them resemble villages' intimate secrets. Tourists engaged in the traditional; there were explanations about past and contemporary uses of space and some

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particular details of the buildings. Although these experiences were enriching and truly authentic for both visitors and owners, as depicted in Figure 7, the most attractive aspect for visitors was the in-person approach of humble and sincere people who selflessly explained their experiences with pride and emotion. This helped create a robust local—visitor link beyond the mere recreation of past activities.



Figure 7. Third Meetings. Samples of local gastronomy in Les Useres and Xodos.

Step 4. Creative and sustainable tourism.

Through QGIS software and My Maps, an open tool from Google (Figure 8), tangible and intangible details and symbols such as finishes and textures of wood, the remains of old street lighting, and samples of whitewashing in different shades were retrieved and stored in a coded manner to organise a set of attributes in the urban fabric. This form of analysis serves as a handy tool for the inexperienced visitor to identify curiosities that otherwise would have gone unnoticed. Furthermore, the tool serves to put conservation issues at the centre of the debate and allows stakeholders to bear them in mind when heritage management controversies are at stake. Accordingly, this step's activities included explaining management and decision-making possibilities with these types of resources.



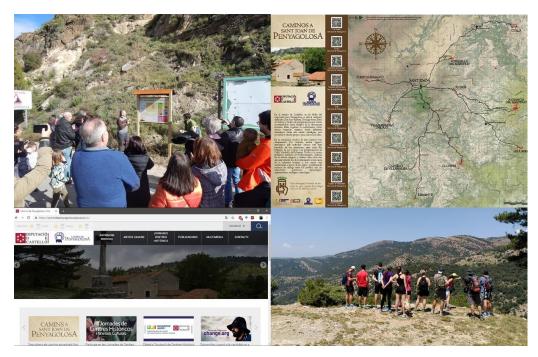
**Figure 8.** GIS system that shows data retrieval and interpretation. Data are related to attributes and values form fieldwork, meetings, and interviews.

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#### 3.2. General Results

The fieldwork provided the research team with another significant output: retrieval and storage of common knowledge. The output's importance relies on organising the information and making it available. Results can be analysed and implemented online through a range of open-access resources, from audio retrieved from the interviews to images, videos, panels, routes, and songs. The GIS support allowed routes to be tracked and changed depending on the availability of neighbours, as well as shortened, merged, and enlarged. The method could also connect the historic centre to alternative routes with complementary cultural sources of the surrounding landscape or other complementary activities.

This form of management may help sustain a moderate form of tourism-based activities. In this regard, maps and linked datasets allow all types of data storage regarding events, people attendance, and other supplementary information. Linking the map to social media information available online helps municipalities assess the most popular places or tours and thus prevent mass attendance or even plan alternative activities to diversify the public range (Figure 9).



**Figure 9.** Presentation of the signposting which was developed through the data obtained in the meetings and the cataloguing. Tourist map (in physical and digital format) with explanations of the study area. Project website. Scientific meeting with university students in the study area.

One of the most valuable findings of the project was the intellectual reconstruction of the built environment. It helped locals re-enact the urban fabric as a valuable "object" to others and subsequently for themselves. The reading of traces, symbols, and signs has enriched attachment and proudness reflected in participation. The history of each municipality, legends, and gossip provided a unique atmosphere combined with ancestral knowledge. Activities found a way to accommodate experiences for authentic and meaningful visitors. The analysis of the urban landscape involved reading contemporary transformations as well, as the result of a continuous sociocultural layering.

The whole process helped the researchers to anchor this experimental study in a joint knowledge-based initiative as a unique approach that allows these villages to manage tourism influences through the appropriation, integration, and cohesion of cultural assets.

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#### 4. Discussion

According to Tilden [52], the research moved quickly from the theoretical framework to the interpretation and analysis of a heritage reality by understanding the location's sociocultural outlook. According to the study, the success of tourism activities in historic centres depends mostly on the social perspective that complements the onsite attributes and activities to value them. Olwig [53] already stated that this does not depend on the accurate reconstruction, fossilisation, or idealised reinterpretation of attributes but rather on placing value on identity and culture in communities' collective context. As implied in the results, one of this study's main contributions was stakeholders' implication through a phenomenon that was rich 'both emotionally and symbolically'. The methodologies implemented today by large entities aim to seek out perceptions and experiences that link people to heritage environments. On the one hand, the purpose of the UNESCO approach championed on the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) recommendation [54] is to provide a set of tools for an integrated values-based analysis for the management of cultural heritage. On the other, the Historic Area Assessment (HAA) tool [55] aims to determine the historical character accurately, interpret its meaning, and highlight concepts and sources that can change the character of heritage. However, this is difficult to apply rigidly in a low-population-density cultural environment.

Through the association of values [31,56], researchers found that the historic environment, even the degraded one, could provide many attractive and remarkable new factors for stakeholders. Thus, visitors recognised the importance of everyday practices and the relevance of values and attributes integral to the historic environment as the local character's identifiers. People must understand and assess attributes and values [57] to achieve the ultimate goal: to retrieve and manage architectural and social values of interest for the different social groups in tourism management and heritage conservation [58,59]. In Vik's writing [60], the processes of this approach may help create a large pool of cultural assets through which heritage is democratised, transversal, and comprehensible. Visitors particularly valued the proximity of locals, their stories' crudity, the sensitivity and passion of their explanations, the truth demonstrated by a past-lived experience, and their trades and lives.

A potential conflictive context such as the one described by Almeida et al. [61], Zhang et al. [62], and Landhorf [63] on policies, power, restrictions, interests, information, values, and relationships reinforces the idea of the study as a joint plan that unifies decisions in which everyone can look for a shared and broader objective for the good of the community. Ruiz-Ballesteros and Cáceres-Feria [64] bring forward the term community-based tourism (CBT), and it is a polysemic concept based on fundamental principles: local participation, development, management, and the benefits of tourism [65,66]. In this sense, a final remark is that the local population reacted positively to these forms of tourism-based activities. As Costa and Carneiro [67] discuss, few empirical studies offer a perspective on the impact of interpretation on learning or creating architectural heritage images.

Another question that emerges is the tourism possibilities of cases such as the one under study. The tourism viability and the temporary feasibility of this type of action depend on people's will and municipalities' resources once the research ends. On the one hand, this work serves to propose the management of a quotidian and uncatalogued heritage. On the other hand, with a view towards sustainable tourism management, links are to be created with more extensive administration to provide local stakeholders with mechanisms for organising tourism actions following low rates and flows of visitors.

However, being able to mix main heritage assets, local culture, and everyday life experiences can be understood as the most positive way of carrying out tourism activities related to the historic centres of small mountain villages. In addition to enhancing both tangible and intangible heritage, this practical application of a methodology based on local participation, academic research, and dissemination reflects and serves as an example because it demonstrates that slow, inclusive, and cohesive tourism is possible.

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#### 5. Conclusions

The aim of this study was to determine the importance of attributes and values enhanced through the resident/tourist interaction. According to the study, activities based on cohesive and inclusive tourism in rural villages have emotional and symbolic meanings that emanate from the physical ordering of the location and its inhabitants' intangible associations, elucidating the placemaking rather than many historical elements and other spatial vectors.

This approach based on heritage tourism has demonstrated the prevalence of what tends to be relegated to the second level of importance, the intangible construction of a region. Through tourism-based activities, residents have emphasised the vulnerable, hidden and intangible forms of alternative heritage. This approach led visitors and the local population to value the urban landscape and the traditional activities associated with it, just as the consequence of the sociocultural and socioeconomic reality that has dwarfed these places for decades. The analysis demonstrates that both inhabitants and spaces come together as testimonies that host the built environment's local culture through time. These activities provoked an attitudinal drift in the intellectual appropriation of space. On the one hand, they contributed to transmitting authentic and genuine life experiences. On the other, they understood the other's attributes and values, the local.

The study results stress that only through a participatory process that is transparent and ethical can initiatives of this kind be carried out. Communication between heritage agents is the key to understanding the general importance of these tourism forms and their role in rural communities. Strengthening the association of tangible and intangible values has proven to be the catalyst for experiences where knowledge transmission is paramount for inhabitants and outsiders.

The use of the GIS system needs to be highlighted as well. This work involved managing and organising cultural resources and, in turn, helping villages gain information about cultural demands, appreciation, and neglect. This GIS-supported study opens up many possibilities for planning alternative and complementary activities and making them sustainable. Finally, it should be noted that the academic institution acting as coordinator of these tourism-based experiences has helped to visualise rural settings.

Previous research on the integration of tourists' expectations, locals' experience and vision, and experts' willingness in rural villages is scarce at an academic level. According to this research, the population size and stakeholders' direct interactions are crucial factors. This means that areas with higher population volumes can face experimental constraints, and therefore, this type of study would be unfeasible. However, from the perspective of this research, highlighting these small and vulnerable areas means making the paradigm shift towards the democratisation of heritage tourism and be the starting point for more extensive actions.

To conclude, the paradigm change in depopulated rural areas has commenced the democratisation of the heritage of minor rural settlements. This means recognising that the historic environment is a common product linked to popular culture and humble contemporary minorities. Therefore, connecting visitors to this reality has created authentic and meaningful experiences in which tangible and intangible heritage acts to unify interests and expectancies.

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