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Posted Date: 20 March 2024

doi: 10.20944/preprints202403.1165.v1

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*Article*

# Tourism Development and Urban Landscape Conservation in Rural Areas: Opportunities and Ambivalences in Local Regulations

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes local level normative regulations aimed at directly or indirectly conserving the urban landscape in rural areas. Using a discursive analysis methodology on regulatory documents being enforced in a series of localities assigned to a tourism promotion program, evidence suggests that promotional activity retroactively influences the phraseology of these municipal regulations. The results obtained point to the existence of perpetuating historicist approaches within the current regulations, which appear to largely derive from the search for success in the tourism market and the resulting benefits to the local economy.

**Keywords:** heritage; tourism; urban landscape; local regulations; rural context; Spain

## 1. Introduction

The present analysis attempts to contribute to the scope of current approaches for conserving urban landscapes in the normative regulations being elaborated at local levels of government by exploring the influence that tourist activity exerts back onto these same regulations. With this intent, special attention is given to environments that are considered to be of high heritage fragility, as is the case in the rural world. This has become an essential task in recent years as the consolidation of cultural and natural heritage becomes an ever-growing resource for attracting visitors in an increasingly competitive global tourism market. This phenomenon is largely due to the finding that heritage assets come to represent the key elements of differentiation capable of attracting visitors, and consequently, of contributing to local development through the configuration of a particular image and a unique proposition for each locality [1,2].

In recent decades, with the emergence and subsequent intensification of tourism segments linked to the enjoyment of nature and the rural world, the recognition of heritage has started to extend beyond cultural aspects to include certain economic practices [3,4] which makes them a consumable product in postmodern society. This is especially notable in the countries of southern Europe, where continuous agrarian crises, together with the processes of industrialization and the precariousness of rural employment, favored mass migratory movements from the countryside to the city during the second half of the 20th century [5]. These socio-territorial processes saw public authorities undertaking significant efforts to force the development of alternative activities to agriculture in regions that were scarcely competitive, thereby seeking productive diversification that became largely linked to tourism [6–8]. Together with the undeniable maturity of the coastal tourism model throughout Mediterranean Europe, this helped strengthen the status of heritage assets as they became productive assets in the rural context at the end of the last century. This, in turn, favored the development of economic activity and the generation of employment in territories of notable heritage value that were located far from the usual industrial nodes and coastal spaces. In the end, the proliferation of this phenomenon resulted in legitimizing the links between heritage and development at the academic and institutional levels [9–12], and effectively promulgated a major shift in the world tourism system within its framework of neoliberal globalization.

Upon considering landscape as an essential tourist resource, the connection between urban landscape and tourist activity becomes paramount. The appreciation and aesthetic enjoyment of environments that differ from the settings of everyday life represent one of the fundamental motivations for tourist travel [13]. Tourism thus conceived by public administrations has been imposed as a priority instrument for conditioning the use of heritage assets and spaces in rural areas. However, despite also contributing to social awareness and investments into its conservation, the introduction of heritage into the market brings with it a significant change in the very use of these assets [14–16]. And this, due to the fact that from the moment they are conceived as productive resources, the success of these heritage assets are measured by variables related to public acceptance, number of visits or economic profitability. Because tourism is a sector that tends to generate market orientations and reconstructions aligned with its objectives [17], when local services become consumable by tourists, this necessarily implies a change in their functionality [18,19]. Inside this framework then, as public authorities legitimize new ways of conceiving spaces and their symbolism - particularly in those places of great historical significance - the role of tourist activity as a device from which urbanism is conceived and contemporary experience is articulated becomes wholly accentuated [20].

In this context, many programs have been promoted by both the government and private sectors with the aim of promoting territorial development based on the revaluation and recognition of the symbolic values of heritage. These initiatives share a single approach, whereby revaluation incites economic growth and contributes to conserving the heritage of rural territories using strategies that group together small rural enclaves for joint tourism promotion. These enclaves are selected based on the presence of a series of heritage values which make them unique [21,22]. Consequently, the publicity generated from these designations consecrates certain spaces as important sources of wealth. Yet, the imposition of a merely mercantile orientation that supersedes one of conservation in the use of goods and spaces has also been witnessed in recent years. This is because from the predominantly aesthetic viewpoint of the tourist perspective, these resources are being perceived as territorial assets, which emphasizes their exceptional, singular, and distinctive features that respond to external demand [2].

Over the last few years, many academics have conducted studies on the capacity of tourism to promote the conservation of the urban landscape, noting that the relationship between the two -in addition to giving rise to opportunities- also poses a number of threats that must be taken into account. This is mainly because of the direct relationship between the number of tourists arriving at a destination and the economic income this influx is able to generate [23–26]. Additionally, because tourist activity favors the reaffirmation of territorial and cultural identity through the recognition of the traditions and particular characteristics of each place [27], it may well be expected that this heightening of tourist influx comes to exert a notable pressure on heritage assets and spaces [28,29]. This trend usually translates into the generation of conflicts over the use of space [30,31], a rise in housing prices [32,33], the substitution of various economic activities [34], the displacement of residents [34–39], and even, the impetus to symbolically dispossess the location from its sense of place [40,41], which may lead to the museification of a tourist spot.

This process of spatial museification becomes a direct result of the flavor of tourist demand. Mainly, do to their selection, the conservation and monumental representation of a place, which effectively causes the deletion of contextual and historical references and the conversion of places into exotic reminiscences of the past. These then become largely associated with forms that are solely attractive, symbolic or contemplative in nature [42]. Public spaces, where social interactions abound, and where collective memory is generated [34], are relegated to a merely scenographic role [43], also becoming nodes of capitalist consumption, through which they are physically and symbolically altered [44]. And this, both tangibly, through changes in their structural configurations, and intangibly through modifications to their symbolic recognition [45].

The small demographic size and socioeconomic vulnerability of rural territories make them more fragile in response to the dangers of excessive tourism growth and the corresponding transformations and simplifications that spatial reallocations may entail [34,36,43,45]. To circumvent

this, authors such as Troitiño and Troitiño [8], demand that responsible management be carried out, which seeks to improve the quality of life of the local population while contributing to an improved perception of the diversity of towns and cities based on their authenticity and unique identity.

To this end, and in order to guarantee responsible management in the long term, a series of interventions and regulations necessarily need to be imposed by the public administration. In order to achieve more responsible economic and social development and prevent the generation of tensions and conflicts, public authorities must enact regulations that govern the material transformation of heritage and that authorize or prohibit certain practices [20]. In this way, the conflicts caused by intrusive advertising installations, the use of public roads, as well as the visual deterioration of the general landscape may be circumvented, or at least minimized. Globally, a wide range of legal regulations for the treatment of the urban landscape have been approved and applied, seeking to become the formula guaranteeing the achievement of a mutually beneficial and balanced coexistence between tourist activity and heritage conservation. At the local level, these ordinances are administrative provisions of a general nature, drawn up by local authorities in the sphere of their competence and subject to the legal framework in force. Their application and compliance become mandatory for all citizens [46]. These regulations come to constitute a socio-ideological framing of the contemporary experience on heritage [47], because they play a central role in the deactivation of conflicts while guiding developmental practices linked to beautification and re-use.

In this sense, and as stated by Fernández and Santos [13], public management of the relationship between tourism use and conservation of urban spaces cannot be limited to interventions in unique buildings or other types of isolated actions. Instead, they must be based on a more comprehensive management which identifies, enhances and preserves the essential elements that characterize the totality of each urban landscape. Thus, the present work elucidates the idea that local political management must address a series of inherent issues linked to the management of heritage spaces in order to preserve their unique values while procuring social and economic benefits that guarantee local development and conservation inside a distinctly rural context.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The main objective of the present research is to identify to what extent regulations that lead to museification of heritage environments in rural areas jeopardize the preservation of local identity. To this end, a methodology based on discursive analysis techniques, hence by means of systematic, objective and replicable interpretations of textual content [48,49] has been applied to municipal ordinances related to urban landscape conservation being enforced within several case studies. The documents under investigation are general resolutions of obligatory compliance issued by municipalities to regulate those aspects related to the normal development of a municipality.

In this investigation, the regulations analyzed are related to the uses of public space, commercial advertising or telecommunications infrastructures, that generate significant visual impacts and profound aesthetic alterations in the urban landscape. These uses are addressed from the perspective of leisure and consumption activities since, in addition to being linked to tourism, they are also directed towards the local population [34].

A discursive analysis of official documents is carried out in this study, in order to identify the existence of those provisions or clauses of a reductionist nature, which may either lead to the formal or aesthetic trivialization of public space or reduce the values of its components towards more historicist influences, or both. For this purpose, a comparative study of several localities belonging to the "The Most Beautiful Villages of Spain" Association, a non-profit organization founded in 2010 inspired by a network of initiatives such as "Les Plus Beaux Villages de la France" (1982), "Les Plus Beaux Villages de Wallonie" (1994), or "I Borghi Più Belli d'Italia" (2001), and which, as part of the "The Most Beautiful Villages of the Earth" federation (2012), set out in its founding Statutes to endorse the ideals of tourism as an indispensable tool for local development. This Association is of particular importance because it addresses the processes of depopulation through the attribution of new uses to heritage assets [50]. These include, "promoting, disseminating and preserving the cultural, natural and rural heritage; raising awareness and education to respect the values of rural heritage; promoting

cultural tourism; promoting geographical areas with a lower level of industrialization; or reducing territorial and population imbalances while respecting the cultural diversity of different nationalities and their corresponding languages" [51] (p.1). In 2024, a total of 116 localities from across almost all of the autonomous communities of Spain were members of the Association. However, to do so, localities have to meet a series of requirements linked to demographic, heritage and tourism criteria. Mainly, candidate towns must have no more than 15,000 inhabitants, must have "a certified architectural or natural heritage" appreciated for its "urbanistic" and "architectural quality", and must demonstrate, through concrete actions, "a policy of valuation, development, promotion and animation of their own heritage" [52] (p.1).

In this investigation, a comparative study of the ordinances approved in 14 towns is carried out. The analysis sample encompasses 16 ordinances, the comparison of which informs the main conclusions of our study. In addition to being part of the Association, these municipalities are selected because they currently have ordinances aligned with the object of our study.

Table 1. Study localities.

Localities	Municipalities	Region	Geographical location	Inhabitants (2022)
Alcudia	Alcudia	Baleares	Coastal	20.717
Almagro	Almagro	Castilla La Mancha	Inland	8.907
Atienza	Atienza	Castilla La Mancha	Inland	398
Chinchón	Chinchón	Comunidad de Madrid	Inland	5.658
Ciudad Rodrigo	Ciudad Rodrigo	Castilla y León	Inland	11.973
Cudillero	Cudillero	Principado de Asturias	Coastal	4.928
Frigiliana	Frigiliana	Andalucía	Coastal	3.282
Laguardia	Laguardia	País Vasco	Inland	1.483
Medinaceli	Medinaceli	Castilla y León	Inland	658
Bagergue	Naut Aran	Cataluña	Inland	112
Peñíscola	Peñíscola	C. Valenciana	Coastal	8.210
Potes	Potes	Cantabria	Inland	1.330
Teguiise	Teguiise	Canarias	Inland	23.044
Zahara	Zahara	Andalucía	Inland	1.371

<sup>1</sup> Source: own elaboration.

3. Results

3.1. Ordinances Regulating Commercial Advertising

The proliferation of commercial advertising has become one of the main conflicts related to the heritage-tourism duality. This is because the ultimate goal of advertisements is to attract the attention of potential customers, both tourists and residents, through the use of supports that involve substantial alterations to the landscape values of urban environments [13]. The visual impacts generated in tourist environments through the installation identification signs with shapes or colors that do not integrate with the aesthetic values of their context, have become a constant. Most common is the presence of navigational supports with strident tones, luminous effects, or sizes and shapes that are as distasteful as they are eye catching. Perhaps for this reason, many local administrations have begun to promote the drafting and approval of regulatory ordinances that better regulate this type of practice, especially in their most fragile contexts, and where the visual integrity of buildings and sites of reknown cultural significance is to be respected.

Although few regulations include the obligation to adapt existing advertising, in every case analyzed the installation of new commercial advertising is conditioned by an initial application and a subsequent authorization procedure by the local authorities. This reflects the general concern of supervising and controlling the appearance of new aesthetic impacts on the urban landscape. In this vein, several ordinances are in force in the municipalities of our study that include specific guidelines

for the installation of advertising media in spaces and properties catalogued under some form of heritage protection. This can be seen in Ciudad Rodrigo or Potes, where the ordinances only affect the catalogued area declared as a "Historic Complex". This trend demonstrates the need for municipalities to conserve the singular values of properties and spaces in accordance with relevant provisions of national legislation, thus complying with Article 19.3 of Law 16/1985, from June 25, 1985, on Spanish Historical Heritage:

"The placement of commercial advertising and any type of cables, antennas and apparent conduits is prohibited in the Historic Gardens and on the facades and rooves of the Monuments declared of cultural interest. Any construction that alters the character of the properties referred to in this article or disturbs their contemplation is also prohibited" [53].

In other regulations, however, all areas of the municipality are considered equal in relation to the advertising ordinances. This is the case in Naut Aran, for example, where the placement of posters on the facades of buildings, monuments, religious temples, cemeteries, trees or street furniture is strictly prohibited. Other regulations specify the sections of a building onto which commercial advertising may be located. Ciudad Rodrigo, for example, explicitly prohibits advertising on the upper floors of buildings, which ends up relegating commercial signage solely to the ground floor. This avoids the profusion of signs at different heights while restricting the space allocated to them in the urban landscape as a whole.

Notably, most of the ordinances analyzed prohibit the installation of illuminated signs in their areas of application, albeit allowing the illumination of plaques or signs with low-intensity projectors that direct light beams towards the façade itself, as is the case in Potes. Regarding the materials and sizes of the signs, some ordinances, such as those from Ciudad Rodrigo, allow the installation of banners as long as their design was not judged to be "too historicist". In most cases, the need to use noble materials is a requirement, and the state in which they are to be presented is clearly identified. This is the case again in Potes, where ordinances state that signage must be presented "in their natural colors or with a natural, non-glossy metallic finish [...] with a natural finish or varnished in color".

### 3.2. Ordinances Regulating the Occupation of Public Space

Spain's need to regulate the occupation of its public spaces began several decades ago when certain areas of the Mediterranean coast started buckling under tourism pressure as the industry began to take off. Subsequently, with the enforcement of the so-called "anti-smoking law", the hospitality sector's demand for licenses to be able to occupy public spaces experienced a sharp increase. More recently, this was accentuated even more with the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and its resulting changes in social behavior.

In actuality, these circumstances pose significant challenges when attempting to reconcile the entitlement to public space with maintaining the freedom of commercial activity. This is the due diligence which is primarily broached by the regulations created by local councils on the matter. In effect, the emergence of outdoor terraces and lounging areas necessarily lead to the privatization of public space whereby the spatial extent of streets and squares are diminished and their public nature increasingly constrained [44,54]. Recent decades saw public administrations taking careful measures to strike a balance between new commercial opportunities arising from tourist activity and the protection of public thoroughfares, the free movement of citizens, and the proper maintenance of the urban environment.

After a careful analysis of the ordinances being enforced in the various locations being studied in this investigation, it becomes evident that the presence of tax regulations is actually more common than the presence of ordinances regulating the occupation of public thoroughfare. This hints to a hierarchy that may be attributed to the pressing need for financial income by public administrations, given how crucial tax ordinances are as a source of local government funding.

After analyzing the current regulatory norms, it is possible to determine that across the board, municipal authorization is required for the special use of public thoroughfare for which the interested parties submit a prior request to the relevant municipal entities. In addition, it is unanimous that the authorized space and every element of the property is to be maintained in proper conditions of

hygiene, health, safety and ornament. In some cases, there is also the need to collect and store the various elements of the terraces away when the establishment is closed to the public, as is the case in Medinaceli during the off seasons, and even daily in the cases of Ciudad Rodrigo and Atienza. Other sites follow suit by establishing a commitment to help facilitate the work of municipal services by maintaining a strict level of cleanliness to safeguard the overall urban aesthetic quality.

Several of the regulations analyzed also prohibit the installation of screens or wind deflectors. Others, condition their authorization on a case-by-case basis, as in Potes; establish a mandatory typology, as in Medinaceli; or require that these elements be arranged transversally to pedestrian traffic, as in the case of Cudillero. In most of the towns analyzed, the fixing of elements to the ground by means of screws or anchors is prohibited, although some ordinances, such as those of Ciudad Rodrigo, allow fixed installations to be authorized on an exceptional basis, "provided that the nature of the design of the installation is supported by an aesthetic proposal or another reason of interest that justifies it". Other, frequently unauthorized elements include service bars, counters, refrigerators, irons, barbecues, grills, toaster ovens, heaters or vending machines. The same applies to the installation of ambient music, although in this case some regulations allow the possibility of authorization as long as they comply with the latest acoustic regulations and are certified in their technical reports to not produce any environmental impact on dwellings, as is the case in Chinchón, Ciudad Rodrigo and Cudillero.

Although it is not a generalized fact, several of the ordinances analyzed establish a differentiated zoning type according to the "degree of protection that each area of the municipality required, taking into account its uniqueness and conservation needs" for promoting the best development and compliance with these regulations, as is specified in the case of Almagro. This trend facilitates a higher degree of specificity in relation to the furniture on-site and, in turn, favors these for areas with a higher level of heritage protection. For example, specific models of tables, chairs, parasols, separators or heaters are specified to create homogeneous and harmonious environments that align with the surroundings and its urban character.

This aesthetic harmonization is pursued in all the norms from the regulation of the design to the materials and chromatism of the elements used in the occupation of the public space. In some cases, specific materials or colors are established for their authorization, which usually includes wood treated in its natural color, wicker, canvas, aluminum or wrought iron, while plastic in any of its forms is strictly prohibited. The established colors vary according to the territorial character of each place. For example, white, ochre, earth or wenge is authorized in Ciudad Rodrigo; ochre, red, blue, dry green, tiles and white in Cudillero; raw colors in Frigiliana and Atienza; and wood, wrought iron and dark tones in La Guardia. In general, strong or strident colors are not allowed, and a general requirement in almost all the analyzed ordinances is the use of matte tones. Some regulations, such as that of Atienza, obliges areas to be marked with "fences or planters in keeping with the surroundings". The presence of advertising motifs on these elements is strictly prohibited in many of the ordinances analyzed, as is the case in Ciudad Rodrigo, Cudillero, Medinaceli, Potes and Zahara. Albeit in other cases, authorization is sometimes made possible, as it is with Almagro. Finally, in order to favor the generation of a homogeneous and harmonious image and to ensure the contemplation and enjoyment of monuments or unique buildings, some rules even go so far as to regulate the heights of umbrellas.

In stark contrast to the timeline impacts of commercial advertising regulations, most of the ordinances regulating public space establish a period for terrace owners to adapt their spaces to the administration's new requirements.

### *3.3. Regulatory Ordinances for Telecommunication Infrastructures*

The development of telecommunications over the last few decades has incited a series of benefits for the public at large, linked primarily to an increase in general services and connectivity. However, there have also been a number of drawbacks associated with these infrastructures, related in most cases to the influence of electromagnetic radiation on people's health or the saturation and disorder in the urban landscape caused by the visual impact of cell towers as well as high and low voltage

power lines. The objective of municipal telecommunications regulatory ordinances approved by local public administrations in recent years is to establish ideal conditions for the location, installation and operation of telecommunication equipment to produce minimum impact on the spatial and visual urban landscape.

All the regulations analyzed in this study require municipal authorization for the installation of telecommunications infrastructure in municipal areas, thereby subjecting the resulting urban and environmental impacts to the scrutiny of the corresponding licensing regime. Of the regulations studied, this type of ordinance is least commonplace inside the provisions for local urban planning. There are, in fact, very few cases in which an outstanding obligation remains present to adapt previously existing facilities to the newly established guidelines.

A common obligation amongst all the standards analyzed involves employing the construction solution that best minimizes the installation's visual and environmental impact. This would require the intervention to be both compatible with the environment and appropriately integrated architecturally. In order to do so, the standards propose a series of requirements and prohibitions that involve prioritizing underground piping on urban land. Most of the regulations analyzed in this study expressly prohibited the installation of telecommunications elements and infrastructure in historically listed buildings and protected complexes, or those deserving special protection as is the case in Tegui. Thus, in Frigiliana, for example, permission is exceptionally granted for their installations as long as an inexcusable need is proven and as long as measures were incorporated to completely eliminate any visual or environmental impact, subject to a favorable opinion from the competent bodies.

Mandatory camouflage is a common practice in the standards analyzed, which does not only affect facades but specific regulations that are commonplace for rooftop infrastructure as well. This includes requiring a maximum height for masts when antennas are installed on roofs. There are also minimum setbacks for rooftop equipment, to ensure that they remain offset from sightlines when viewed from the public thoroughfare. In Tegui, it is mandatory to paint satellite dishes the same color as their background supporting walls when they are necessarily visible. In this sense, all of the visual impacts that the desired installations would have on the urban landscape must be captured in the technical application project document, with illustrative photomontages demonstrating its invisibility or camouflage as seen from the public thoroughfare. This project document must then receive a favorable opinion by the competent bodies in order to be implemented.

#### 4. Discussion

As explained at the beginning of this work, this investigation aims to shed light on the ways in which tourism activity affects public management in rural areas. In the shadow of its economic gains, there are a number of negative consequences which may even eclipse the sum of its positive benefits. Tourism's great capacity to transform the functionality and symbolism of public spaces is reaffirmed [34], even when driven by the governmental sphere. This occurs when regulations are applied that favor spatial transformation, as their wording is conditioned by the dynamics of the tourist activity itself. As Calle [36] points out, this could lead to a resignification of the pre-existing landscape within a context that constantly creates ephemeral products designed to satisfy the tourist's gaze and the need to evoke images and spaces that consolidate themselves into the global imaginary [55]. This idea is based on the economic theses of Rifkin [56], according to whom products suffer a reduction in their life cycles in the contemporary economy as they adjust themselves to changes in demand and reinvent themselves ongoingly for this purpose. Although this process had been the focus of many studies on the historic centers of urban destinations, there are few texts that consider rural contexts, which are characterized by low demographic size and high socioeconomic vulnerability, and which are made even more fragile by the dangers of excessive tourist growth.

The case studies analyzed in this investigation represent municipalities that enjoy a certain level of equity capital and present a particular commercial infrastructure that is largely aligned with the preferred desires of tourist demand. For this reason, they have been assigned to an initiative promoting rural development through tourism activity at the state level called the "The Most

Beautiful Towns in Spain” Association. Paradoxically, the notable ability of these localities to attract tourists parallel their increased risk of suffering from the typical transformations of uncontrolled tourist development. This forces local administrations to legislate on matters such as the uses of urban space and the ways in which its aesthetics are presented. In this way, regulations are often approved in order to effectively contribute to the resolution of related conflicts.

Amongst these regulations are the ordinances guiding commercial advertising in public spaces, through which the councils attempt to guarantee the aesthetic harmonization of population centers and promote the general decorum of the urban landscape. These are the most frequent type of interventions due to the objectives they fulfill, which are none other than to attract the attention of potential clients, residents and foreigners through the use of supports that sometimes involve a substantial alteration in the landscape values of their surroundings.

Regarding the regulations governing the occupation of public thoroughfare, the ordinances currently in force are also common. This suggests that they are a problem perceived with great intensity by local administrations. Through these regulations, the aim is to combine the right to public space with the freedom of commercial activity, which is what councils have the duty to address. Furthermore, the existence of regulations that attempt to alleviate the multiplicity of telecommunications infrastructures in urban space due to increasing services and connectivity is also notable. However, these are less frequent among the cases analyzed, which may largely have been due to the ever-persistent technological gap between the Spanish rural world and her urban contexts.

Many of the ordinances analyzed include provisions that place special emphasis on minimizing these impacts in historic center environments, for which more restrictive guidelines are presented. Others, however, include the entire population core in their scope of application. Many regulations include the obligation to use certain aesthetics and materials, evidencing the existence of a series of provisions that favor the conservation of the urban landscape from the perspective of the romantic ideal. This in turn questions whether visual stereotypes are being reinforced by the institutions themselves, thereby fostering the clichés and prejudices held about the territories by the tourist issuing centers [45]. These would induce the foreigner to travel not only spatially, but also through time in order to enter into a territory where the authenticity and purity of an exotic and picturesque space prevail.

Given the contributions of tourism to the development of places, it is worth considering whether the legislative profusion that exists inside the rural texts is a response by local authorities to obtain social and economic benefits from the projected notion that smaller municipalities are in fact the ideal places to visit [57]; or if, on the contrary, they are simply trying to limit the transformations that tourist activity naturally entails for the urban landscape and its resignification. A conversion that does not necessarily require the physical presence of the tourist, but only the promise of his arrival as being capable of causing the organizational as well as physical and symbolic restructuring of the space by the locals themselves.

## 5. Conclusions

Tourism has become an important factor in economic and territorial growth and development. This phenomenon has had a special impact on rural territories, where the slowdown of traditional productive sectors as well as demographic decline has forced administrations to promote alternative activities aimed at creating jobs and wealth. In this context, the heritage wealth of territories and the image that it projects constitutes a decisive factor in the trip selection process, while at the same time having an enormous influence on both the perception the visitor has of the destination during their stay and the resulting economic returns. That is essentially why local entities strive to develop strategies and promote regulations which favor territorial developments through tourism.

Local regulations, which are often largely influenced by the tourist perspective, tend to address a myriad of factors that directly affect the adaptation of the space. This study has shown how many regulations approved at the local level perpetuate the historicist aesthetics of urban centers based on provisions and concepts that were largely in line with the aesthetic and romantic idealizations being generated in the field of tourism.

This phenomenon strengthens the theses about the power of abstraction that tourism has over these goods and spaces, their re-functionalization and the simplification of their values. In numerous studies carried out in fundamentally urban contexts, it has been shown that these practices can generate conflicts in the human relationships that develop around spaces for tourist use, some of which are even linked to their own resignification.

In this way, it is possible to verify how there continues to be a preeminence of approaches to protect aesthetics in the heritage conservation of historical places in current local regulations, where guidelines aimed at preventing visual degradation prevail. This formula is ideal for achieving greater success in the tourism market, but also raises a series of questions about the aesthetic considerations of the urban landscape and its control, or the degree to which these considerations take precedence over others linked to technological and commercial development.

Studies on the impact of tourism on public space grapple with a series of limitations, that include the difficulty of delimiting the incidence of tourism itself in a place shared by visitors and residents alike. And although there is no doubt that tourist activity applies a special kind of pressure, particularly on sites of notable heritage wealth, it is necessary to take into account that this said pressure also responds to larger, and more complex processes.

The methodological model can be applied in similar studies on regulations and ordinances on public space in urban or rural contexts. It contributes to the generation of a thematic corpus from which to debate related concepts such as to what extent regulations that lead to museification of heritage environments in rural areas jeopardize the preservation of local identity.

## 6. Patents

This section is not mandatory but may be added if there are patents resulting from the work reported in this manuscript.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

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