

Toward Harmonised Governance of Cultural Routes: Sicilian Industrial Heritage Conservation Without Valorisation

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[Doi:10.19044/esj.2025.v21n43p17](https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2025.v21n43p17)

Submitted: 15 July 2025

Accepted: 26 September 2025

Published: 25 October 2025

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Cite As:

Costanzo, C. & Noto, A. (2025). *Toward Harmonised Governance of Cultural Routes: Sicilian Industrial Heritage Conservation Without Valorisation*. European Scientific Journal, ESJ, 21 (43), 17. <https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2025.v21n43p17>

Abstract

Sicily represents an emblematic case of industrial heritage governance in Italy. Despite the absence of specific legislation, the region holds a historically significant legacy, particularly linked to the sulphur mining industry. In the absence of a unified legal and policy framework, valorisation increasingly depends on local communities and grassroots initiatives. The study adopted a case study approach, selecting Sicily for its complex governance system and long-standing engagement with cultural heritage policies. Therefore, it combined a multilevel review of national and regional legislation with semi-structured interviews conducted through the key informant method at the Sicilian sites of *Trabia-Tallarita* and *Floristella-Grottacalda*. Documentary and interview data have been cross-referenced, highlighting the relationship between European priorities, national policy frameworks and local practices. Findings reveal a misalignment between European valorisation strategies and regional implementation, underscoring the need for cohesive governance, strengthened local capacity, and sustainable funding. Within such a framework, Sicily requires a coordinated national strategy to align local cultural initiatives with European standards and ensure effective heritage valorisation.

Keywords: Industrial heritage, community, decentralization, governance, mining

Introduction

Over the last decade, the concept of landscape, understood as the diachronic sedimentation of human practices interacting with the territorial matrix, has gained central importance in policies for the protection and valorisation of cultural heritage. In 1987, the Council of Europe launched the “European Cultural Routes Programme,” promoting transnational cooperation and local community participation in cultural heritage management and valorisation (CM/Res, 66-67/2013). These routes operate as networks that transcend geographic and temporal boundaries, fostering connections among communities, cultures, and traditions, as well as prompting Member States to implement initiatives aligned with European objectives.

Sicily, with its millennial cultural traditions, provides a rich case study for understanding the complexity of heritage enhancement in the European panorama. Its heritage extends beyond monuments and artifacts, constituting a living narrative that shapes national identity and collective memory. Cultural heritage also plays an educational role, offering tangible encounters with history and facilitating critical engagement with the past. Within this framework, industrial heritage is a crucial yet often overlooked component, requiring scholarly and policy attention due to its historical, architectural, and cultural significance. The interaction between industrial heritage and pre-existing cultural layers is essential for contemporary approaches to heritage interpretation and reuse. A paradigmatic example is São João da Madeira in Portugal, where government initiatives fostered industrial heritage valorisation, earning the “National Tourism Award” and serving as a model of sustainable, networked management within the *European Route of Industrial Heritage* (ERIH).

However, while the EU promotes cross-border cooperation and cultural enhancement, national governments retain wide discretion in policy implementation, resulting in divergences in strategic priorities, funding, and institutional frameworks. Regional initiatives, such as the mining complexes of *Trabia-Tallarita* and *Floristella-Grottacalda* in Sicily, rely heavily on local actors but face challenges in aligning with transnational strategies due to fragmented governance.

This study examines models for industrial heritage valorisation under the European Cultural Routes framework, focusing on Sicily. The methodology combines a critical literature and legislative review with empirical interviews with ERIH management and staff from the Sicilian industrial heritage sites. The final aim is to underline the misalignment between European cultural priorities and local governance systems, while

supporting the need for coordinated policies, transnational cooperation, and sustainable local development. This perspective deepens the debate on industrial heritage, understood as a narrative of a territory's authentic culture. At the same time, it opens the way for reimagining Sicily's heritage and historical identity through its mining and industrial past. This perspective highlights an underexplored dimension with strong potential for both cultural and tourism development.

Literature review

In Italy, the systematic study and valorisation of industrial heritage gained momentum in the 1970s, during a period of deep economic and social transformation, when many historical factories were decommissioned or demolished without regard for their cultural value. Scholars such as Bruno Corti (1991) emphasized industrial sites as vital records of socio-economic and technological evolution, leading to the establishment of the *Italian Association for Industrial Archaeological Heritage*¹ (AIPAI). This network has been crucial for both theoretical and practical developments, promoting the preservation, reinterpretation, and integration of industrial landscapes into contemporary spatial planning and cultural strategies. Italian studies on industrial heritage now face a dual challenge: both completing a comprehensive census and documentation and developing methodological approaches that account for ongoing economic and social transformations (Ferrero *et al.*, 2024). Integrating industrial heritage with tourism offers new valorisation opportunities, requiring management models that combine conservation with economic sustainability and environmental stewardship.

Although Italian legislation supports heritage conservation, valorisation remains fragmented, often dependent on single initiatives by local administrations, professional associations, or heritage communities² (Cammelli, 2017). Coordinated policy and regulatory actions are essential to promote shared cultural strategies, encourage responsible tourism, and support local development. This includes fostering slow tourism, safeguarding local traditions, and revitalizing marginalized areas. Urban and rural regeneration projects that repurpose industrial sites into creative districts exemplify the potential for inclusive and sustainable development.

In this regard, cultural routes have become instrumental in promoting sustainable tourism and local development. The World Tourism Organization identifies cultural routes as among the fastest-growing tourism segments, with annual growth exceeding 15%, generating significant economic benefits for

¹ Official website available at: <https://www.aipaipatrimonioidindustriale.com/>

² “a heritage community consists of people who value specific aspects of cultural heritage which they wish, within the framework of public action, to sustain and transmit to future generations” (art. 2b, Faro Convention, 2005).

the regions they cross (UNWTO, 2018). However, the viability of this model depends on integrated policies that harmonize tourism development with heritage preservation and the protection of local cultural authenticity (Richards, 2018). Achieving this balance requires active collaboration among public institutions, private actors, and civil society under a coherent framework aligned with European cultural policies, ensuring that industrial heritage contributes meaningfully to both cultural and socio-economic development.

Methods

To examine the scope of the complex normative and organizational framework governing cultural routes, the case study method was adopted, as it proves effective in understanding the structure, operational dynamics, and broader implications of the phenomenon. Within this framework, Sicily was selected due to its stratified governance system and long-standing engagement with cultural heritage policies. The research combined a comprehensive review of national and regional legislation, both on cultural routes and industrial heritage, with a set of direct interviews conducted through the *key informant method*. These sources were then cross-analysed and integrated to provide a broader, more in-depth, and balanced perspective.

As a preliminary step, key conceptual categories – such as “cultural route,” “valorisation,” and “industrial heritage” – were defined from both semantic and legal perspectives. Subsequently, a comprehensive review of legislative texts at multiple governance levels was conducted, including both national laws or directives and regional regulations. The legislative instruments were identified and analysed to highlight the main regulatory challenges, both in terms of the relationship between the Italian and European legal frameworks as well as with respect to internal dynamics at national and interregional levels. This multilevel legal analysis aimed to identify structural inconsistencies, gaps in coordination, and points of friction between European policy principles and their implementation within the local context. As a region lacking specific legislative frameworks, yet rich in industrial heritage sites, Sicily exemplifies the tensions between top-down policy objectives and bottom-up practices of heritage valorisation. To deepen the practical effects of Sicily’s ambiguous and uneven legal framework on industrial heritage enhancement via cultural routes, the analysis employed the “key informant” method, a qualitative approach designed to gain insight into local-level dynamics. Three semi-structured interviews were conducted, each lasting approximately 30 minutes. These included two interviews with local staff managing prominent Sicilian mining parks – listed as “places of interest” on the official ERIH website – and one with Francesco Antoniol, the Italian Communication Manager for ERIH. The sampling strategy was purposive,

selecting individuals directly involved in the strategic development and operational management of industrial heritage sites. The interviews with Sicilian local staff were conducted by telephone and structured around five thematic sections: (i) identity and mission of the site; (ii) potential network involvement; (iii) activities and projects currently implemented; (iv) routes, opportunities and current difficulties; and finally, (v) future vision. The ERIH interview was also conducted by phone. The session lasted nearly an hour and was divided into two thematic sections. The first focused on the internal dynamics of the ERIH Association, exploring its origins and organizational structure, while the second examined the external role of local communities in industrial heritage management, their perceptions, levels of involvement and potential for development.

To ensure validity and to provide a comprehensive perspective, the research employed a triangulation strategy. Triangulation here refers to the systematic comparison and integration of secondary sources (in this case, legislative and policy documents) and primary qualitative evidence (semi-structured interviews). The two sets of findings were cross-referenced, with particular attention to potential points of convergence (e.g., alignment between normative objectives and local practices) and divergence (e.g., inconsistencies between formal policy principles and actual implementation). This methodological approach allowed the study not only to validate information across sources but also to reveal critical discrepancies and tensions that would have remained hidden if relying exclusively on legislative review.

Results

Legislative analysis

Starting from the analytical perspective of Italian legislation, cultural routes are composed of cultural and landscape elements that fall within the broader scope of cultural heritage protection, governed primarily at the national level.

The Italian Constitution of 1948 laid the groundwork for this system, emphasizing the promotion of science, culture, and the preservation of landscape and historical heritage. Initially, this framework did not provide for regional autonomy in cultural matters. However, between the 1970s and the 1990s, a process of decentralization was initiated through a series of Presidential Decrees, maintaining the State's control over legal protection and binding regulations, while delegating the responsibilities related to the management and promotion of cultural assets to regional authorities.

The core legislative reference remains the “Codice dei beni culturali e del paesaggio” (Cultural Heritage and Landscape Code, Legislative Decree No. 42/2004 – hereafter “the Code”), which outlines procedures for the recognition and protection of heritage assets (e.g., Arts. 12–13). Nevertheless,

the Code does not define “cultural routes” as a separate legal category. A first, albeit indirect, legal recognition of cultural routes was introduced in 1997 through the so-called “Riforma Bassanini”, which introduced the idea of routes as instruments for heritage enhancement and was later repealed in 2004. Additional references can be found in Law No. 651/1996 and Law No. 270/1997, which allocated resources to the development of pilgrimages and historical routes in preparation of the Jubilee Year 2000. More recently, the 2016 Directive from the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Tourism declared it the “Year of the Paths”, explicitly promoting “cammini” (walkways) as thematic routes inspired by shared values and slow mobility. In 2025, a new legislative titled “Disposizioni per la promozione dei cammini quali itinerari culturali” (Regulations for promoting walkways as cultural itineraries) was introduced, with a focus on non-motorized travel, such as walking or cycling, and the enhancement of cultural, natural, and recreational values.

In the absence of a national legal framework, regional and local authorities in Italy have taken the lead in regulating and promoting cultural routes, particularly as tools for tourism policy development. This decentralization is also evident in the field of industrial heritage, where approaches differ widely across regions, reflecting diverse industrial histories and territorial contexts. Regional laws tend to overcome the purely conservative vision to embrace an integrated enhancement perspective, which considers industrial heritage as a resource for the tourist, cultural and economic development of the territory.

Several regions have adopted legislation aimed at enhancing industrial heritage, either through “organic laws”, which regulate the matter comprehensively, or through “sectoral legislation”, embedding provisions on industrial heritage within broader regulatory frameworks concerning cultural heritage or economic development.

One of the most notable examples is the Apulian Regional Law No. 1/2015, entitled “Enhancement of Industrial Archaeology Heritage”. This regulation has pioneered the way for other Regions, defining industrial archaeology heritage as “the complex of intangible and material assets, no longer used for the production process, which constitute historical testimony of work and industrial culture”. The Apulian law mainly promotes cataloguing activities of assets, their enhancement and protection, establishing a regulatory framework that has inspired other Regions. The operational tools provide for agreements with state administrations, local authorities and other entities for the purpose of reconnaissance, census, cataloguing and enhancement of industrial archaeology heritage. Similarly, Umbria’s Regional Law No. 5/2013, also entitled “Enhancement of Industrial Archaeology Heritage,” adopts an analogous approach, suggesting a coordinated legislative trend among some central-southern regions. The Basilicata Region has also

developed its own bill for the enhancement of industrial heritage, with particular attention to the census of mills, ovens and cellars of the Lucanian region through the POFESR MenSALe Project³. In Northern Italy, Piedmont has developed a more fragmented but no less significant approach, embedding industrial heritage with broader cultural and landscape protection laws, such as Regional Law No. 32/2008. Lombardy has adopted a different systemic approach, integrating the protection of industrial heritage with broader policies of urban and territorial regeneration (Regional Law no. 18/2019), so as to promote significant census and documentation projects.

Sicily presents a particular case in the Italian regional legislative panorama on industrial heritage. Although it lacks a specific legislation on industrial heritage like other regions, its Regional Law No. 80/1977 laid the groundwork for cultural and environmental protection through the creation of a dedicated regional department. Moreover, Regional Law No. 1/1984 regulated industrial development consortia, providing a framework for managing active industrial sites. Sicily's industrial heritage holds extraordinary historical value, mainly linked to the sulphur extraction industry, which made the island a world leader in sulphur trade. Sicilian mines represent unique witnesses of industrial archaeology, as documented in the national (AIPAI) and European (ERIH) censuses.

Empirical analysis

The political and strategic fragmentation among regions is acknowledged by Francesco Antoniol, communication manager for the European Route of Industrial Heritage (ERIH), who notes that

“There are only a couple of Italian regions where a legislative instrument exists that, in some way, supports industrial heritage. [...] However, even in these regions, which deal with a wide array of other priorities, progress remains challenging.”

On the contrary,

“Public administrations should make available appropriate administrative tools or refine their existing rules and regulations, so that the instruments already in place at the European level can be effectively applied at the local level”.

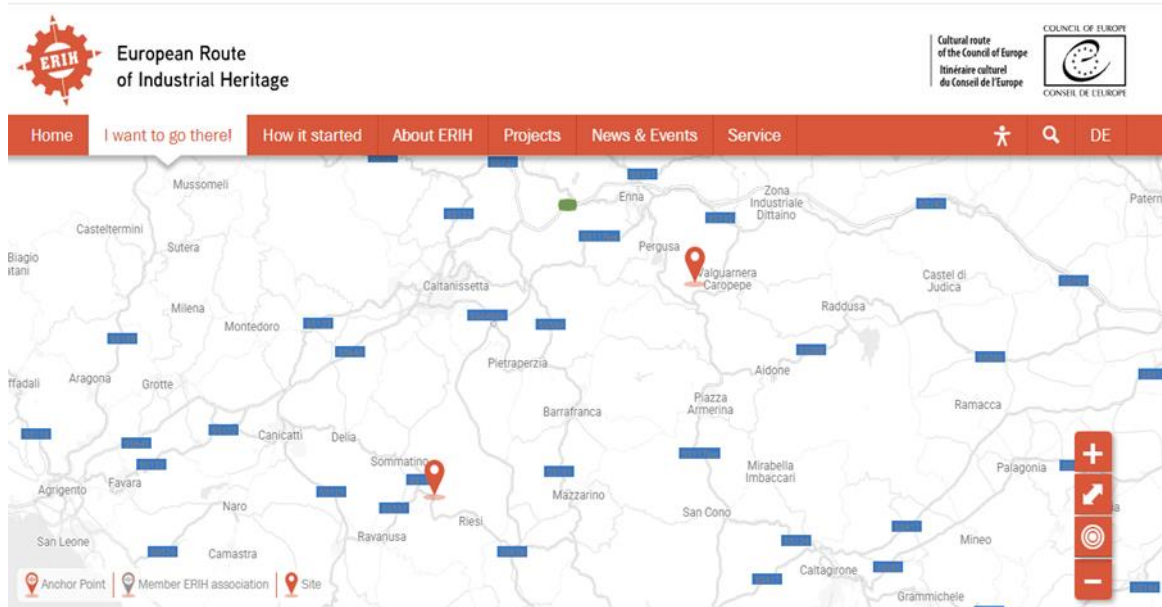
In this context, ERIH serves as a transnational platform that supports networking between member sites and civil society actors. It promotes meetings, the dissemination of local initiatives, the exchange of best practices

³ Available at:

https://europa.regione.basilicata.it/fesr/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/All_1a_PROGETTO-FESR_BEGIN-signed.pdf

in heritage valorisation, and the development of collaborative projects. ERIH also supports the Italian National Mining Day, held annually in May, by offering its patronage and endorsing a wide range of mining sites, including the Sicilian complexes of *Trabia-Tallarita* and *Floristella-Grottacalda*.

Figure 1: ERIH mining census. Sicilian mining sites



On the left, the mining complex of *Trabia-Tallarita*, that stretches between the municipality of Riesi (where there is the “Trabia”) and Sommatino (to which the “Tallarita” belongs), both belonging to the province of Caltanissetta. On the right, the *Floristella-Grottacalda* Mining Park, in the municipality of Valguarnera-Caroape (province of Enna).

Source: <https://www.erih.net/i-want-to-go-there>

The *Trabia-Tallarita* mining complex is part of the Regional Archaeological Park of Gela, since in 2000 it was acquired by the Sicilian Regional Department of Cultural Heritage, which in 2010 inaugurated the first part of the memorial museum. Spanning between Riesi and Sommatino in central Sicily, it stands as one of the richest mining sites in Europe. Notably, between the 19th and 20th centuries, it accounted for approximately 12% of global sulphur production, a figure that underscores its global economic and industrial relevance. It is also known for housing three of the four remaining “Tosi Engines”, the fourth of which was famously installed on the *Titanic*. The strong sense of belonging makes local people cooperate in the management and valorisation of the site, and since public funding becomes scarce, they help in preserving the museum and its goods.

(Park Officer 1): “Everyone here has had a relative or a father who worked in this mine, so we care deeply about this site. We

truly go above and beyond in our efforts to preserve and work for it”

The *Floristella-Grottacalda* Mining Park is part of the Rocca di Cerere Geopark and extends over 400 hectares, encompassing a vast sulphur basin that includes, from east to west, the Gallizzi and Grottacalda mines. The added value of the park lies in the presence of the impressive baronial palace, formerly owned by the Pennisi family, who held ownership of the estate until 1967, year in which the mining concession was revoked from the baron and the Sicilian Mining Authority was established. Restoration of the building was funded through European Structural Funds and coordinated by the regional superintendent.

(Park Officer 2): “We managed to secure over one and a half million euros and, using European funding, we restored all the external structures. This included all three mine shafts... However, after completing the restoration of the shaft, we were unable to qualify in the rankings for several months. From that point on, management has been practically non-existent”

The park promotes not only heritage conservation but also educational, cultural, and tourism-related initiatives.

Despite the historical significance of Sicily’s industrial heritage, particularly in relation to the sulphur mining industry, the regional legislative framework remains fragmented, both in terms of cultural routes and industrial heritage. This has resulted in what can be characterised as “heritage conservation without valorisation”.

Between law and practice

The absence of an explicit legal framework for cultural routes in Italy can be attributed to the country's constitutional division of powers. This institutional fragmentation has hindered the development of coordinated policies and has led to reliance on temporary administrative acts and project-based initiatives. Although the Code remains the central legislative tool for cultural heritage, its silence on cultural routes as a distinct category limits their formal recognition and constrains policy innovation in this area. Despite symbolic efforts such as the 2016 directive and intermittent legislative proposals, a comprehensive integration of Italian cultural routes into the Council of Europe's Cultural Routes Programme has not been achieved. Recent legislative initiatives, such as the 2025 draft law, represent a step forward but remain limited in scope, focusing narrowly on pilgrimage-based or linear paths and failing to account for more complex or networked itineraries. Moreover, these approaches overlook the potential of cultural

routes as instruments of transnational cooperation and intercultural dialogue, as defined by European standards.

The regionalization of cultural route and industrial heritage policy in Italy has led to a heterogeneous legal landscape, where legislative approaches vary significantly depending on regional priorities, political orientations, and historical-industrial identities. While this diversity reflects territorial specificities, it also exposes the lack of coordination and national strategic vision in this sector. Regional laws increasingly move beyond a strictly conservationist logic, embracing a development-oriented approach in which industrial heritage is framed as a driver of tourism, cultural identity, and local economic growth. However, the coexistence of comprehensive laws in some regions and fragmented or embedded provisions in others creates inconsistencies in the level of protection, funding, and visibility afforded to industrial heritage across the country. An important innovation in recent years has been the growing inclusion of participatory mechanisms within regional legislation. Many regions now implement tools for public consultation and stakeholder involvement, marking a shift from top-down governance to more inclusive, community-driven models. This participatory trend recognizes industrial heritage not only as a set of physical structures but also as a repository of collective memory and territorial identity.

Despite these positive developments, challenges remain. The current legislative landscape often fails to address networked or transregional heritage systems, and some regions, such as Sicily, despite having remarkable heritage assets, still lack a dedicated legal framework for industrial heritage enhancement. This undermines the potential for integrated protection, promotion, and international cooperation, especially within the framework of the Council of Europe's Cultural Routes Programme, where such assets could be strategically positioned.

Discussion

The results reveal a critical tension in Sicily's industrial heritage landscape: despite possessing sites of outstanding historical and industrial significance, especially linked to the sulphur mining industry, the region struggles with fragmented legislation and weak institutional management. Unlike other Italian regions with clearer industrial archaeology laws, Sicily relies on broad, sectoral regulations – such as Regional Laws 80/1977 and 1/1984 – which offer an uneven and outdated framework, insufficient for the comprehensive protection and valorisation of industrial heritage. This regulatory fragmentation is emblematic of broader issues in Italian cultural governance, where the absence of clear jurisdictional boundaries and the lack of coordination between national, regional, and local levels hinder policy coherence and implementation (Rech, 2022).

Indeed, the analysis of Italian legislation, both at the national and regional levels, reveals a fragmented and constantly evolving legal framework. This issue has been widely debated in the academic literature (Amorosino, 2000; Areddu, 2020; Vitale, 2024), which has repeatedly stressed the need for greater normative harmonization. Nevertheless, this need remains largely unaddressed. At the national level, legislation retains the features of hard governance, providing a primarily normative framework, despite being unsatisfactory, aimed at safeguarding heritage. Conversely, at the local level, communities often compensate for regional institutional shortcomings through practices of soft governance (namely not through hierarchical impositions, but rather through flexibility, plurality, and horizontal structuring), thus mobilizing resources, social capital, volunteering, and territorial identity (Iaione *at al.*, 2022). While these bottom-up experiences demonstrate the capacity of communities to generate heritage value, they also highlight the fragility of a system that lacks stable multi-level coordination. The result is a hybrid form of governance, capable of producing isolated cases of best practices but lacking a systemic framework for long-term development.

The absence of institutional coordination further fuels mechanisms of path dependence (David, 2007). Territories equipped with advanced legislative tools (such as Umbria and Apulia) progressively consolidate their competitive advantage, whereas regions without specific legislation (such as Sicily) face increasing difficulties in closing the gap. This situation also affects the ability to access and integrate into European networks, where the lack of clear policies hampers structured dialogue with international partners and complicates the prospects for shared management of common heritage. Consequently, the phenomenon of a “multi-speed Italy” becomes more pronounced, with regional differences translating into divergent trajectories in the valorisation of cultural heritage. Regions that have adopted specific legislative frameworks and cultural policies not only benefit from greater operational resources but also from community empowerment mechanisms. In such contexts, the dialogue with heritage communities is more robust, both because they recognize culture as a space of aggregation and identity construction (Baldin, 2018) and because associations and local groups serve as crucial intermediaries for the protection and management of heritage (Venturi, Zandonai, 2014).

In the Sicilian cases, this dynamic is emblematic. The mining sites of *Trabia-Tallarita* and the *Floristella-Grottacalda Park* survive thanks to collective memory and the activity of the local community, which has assumed a custodial role in the absence of adequate institutional support. However, such a bottom-up governance model, while virtuous, risks being non-scalable if not embedded within a structured institutional and financial framework. Although significant public investments (top-down model) have produced

substantial material interventions, they have proven to lack managerial continuity. In this sense, while community activity yields efficient and positive results, that of local administrations, which should support the site's long-term operations, is extremely limited. From a theoretical standpoint, this highlights the need for a hybrid approach: on one hand, institutions capable of ensuring regulatory frameworks, resources, and strategic planning; on the other, local communities contributing knowledge, values, and caretaking practices.

To sum up, the case of Sicily reveals the challenges inherent in multi-level governance systems lacking central coordination. Institutional fragmentation often prevents the formulation of coherent, long-term policies, thereby widening regional disparities. At the same time, bottom-up initiatives prove essential for the resilience of heritage sites, yet they cannot replace the foundation provided by strong institutional support. Effectively, valorising industrial heritage and cultural routes requires a model of integrated cultural governance, one that can bridge the gap between conservation and promotion, while fostering collaboration among institutions, local communities, and transnational networks, such as ERIH.

Conclusions

The case of Sicily illustrates the complex interplay between historical significance, legislative fragmentation, and community-driven heritage valorisation. The island preserves an extraordinary array of mining and refinery remains, holding inestimable cultural and archaeological value. Yet, its potential is constrained by the absence of a coherent and goal-oriented legislative framework. Existing national and regional regulations are fragmented and sectoral, with no provisions specifically addressing industrial heritage or cultural routes. As a consequence, both regional administrations and local actors face significant constraints in managing and developing these assets. This regulatory gap not only hampers formal recognition and coordinated governance but also prevents Sicily from fully integrating its heritage into European programmes such as ERIH and the Council of Europe's Cultural Routes.

Empirical insights from the *Trabia-Tallarita* and *Floristella-Grottacalda* mining sites highlight how, in the absence of institutional support, local communities assume a custodial role. Through social capital, volunteering, and strong territorial identity, they safeguard and transmit collective memory while ensuring public access. Yet, these bottom-up initiatives, while commendable, are often confined to isolated interventions. They lack replicability, scalability, and the long-term planning necessary for sustainable development, revealing a structural tension: grassroots action alone cannot substitute for robust governance, consistent funding, and policy coherence.

Addressing these challenges calls for the development of a comprehensive national strategy that conceptualizes cultural routes not as simple linear paths, but as complex, multidimensional, and cross-border heritage systems. Such a framework should clearly define the roles of national and regional administrations, establish coordination mechanisms, provide stable institutional and financial support, and, finally, lead to harmonized governance mechanisms among different regions. Capacity-building for policymakers, cultural managers, and local actors is crucial to align local projects with European standards. Equally essential are long-term funding schemes integrating national, regional, and EU resources, alongside monitoring and evaluation systems that can assess outcomes, disseminate best practices, and enhance resilience. However, these reforms face potential limitations, specifically regional disparities in administrative capacity, divergent political priorities, and the challenge of reconciling national and European governance frameworks.

Ultimately, the Sicilian case illustrates that the effective valorisation of industrial heritage depends on a harmonized and hybrid governance model, where robust institutional frameworks and active community engagement converge to transform fragmented initiatives into sustainable, interconnected cultural systems. The purpose of such harmonized governance is to provide all regions with shared objectives and common instruments, ensuring that the national cultural heritage – conceived as a collective good – can be coherently developed and promoted.

Limitations and Future Research

Although the study provides a clear picture of the Sicilian context in the valorisation of industrial heritage through cultural routes, it lacks the empirical perspective of the regional administration. As a result, the analysis is limited by the absence of this institutional viewpoint, which represents a key factor in the governance and promotion of cultural heritage. This gap reduces the possibility of fully capturing the dynamics between regional policies, local communities, and transnational networks, and suggests the need for further research that integrates the voices of regional policymakers.

Moreover, a comparative analysis between EU Member States can offer valuable insights for improving cultural routes and industrial heritage enhancement. Comparing countries reveals the significant differences in strategic priorities, funding mechanisms, and institutional frameworks, which can inform policy adjustments and best practices.

Acknowledgments

This paper is the result of the precious contribution received by Francesco Antoniol, Italian ERIH Communication Manager, and the staff of the Sicilian Mining Complexes of *Trabia-Tallarita* and *Floristella-Grottacalda*.

Conflict of Interest: The authors reported no conflict of interest.

Data Availability: All data are included in the content of the paper.

Funding Statement: The authors did not obtain any funding for this research.

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