Il patrimonio religioso in Italia: siti web e geolocalizzazione. 
Un nuova valutazione

Religious heritage in Italy: websites and geolocalization. 
A new appraisal

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Riassunto

Al giorno d’oggi la creazione, l’archiviazione, l’accessibilità, interoperabilità dei dati sul web sono sempre più pervasive. Sul web vengono pubblicate diverse tipologie di basi di dati e/o geo-database – e altre forme di informazioni fornite dalla rete – che affrontano vari argomenti (scienza, medicina, trasporti, turismo ...) e sulla base di diverse architetture. Tali banche dati possono essere private o pubbliche, con accesso gratuito o a pagamento. In ogni caso l’argomento dati è un campo continuo di riflessioni (Capineri, 2015). Un database di dimensioni significative è quello della Chiesa cattolica italiana. Si tratta di un inventario dei beni mobili o immobili su tutto il territorio italiano. Chiunque può avere interesse a questo tipo di informazioni (ad esempio istituzioni e singole persone). Questo contributo si propone di trattare l’informazione geografica concentrando ssi siti religiosi in un periodo in cui il turismo religioso è considerato come una risorsa importante per l’industria del turismo, per lo sviluppo regionale/locale e non solo (Rizzo, 2016). Siti web con basi di dati sul patrimonio religioso saranno oggetto di indagine al fine di capire come collegare i dati religiosi (ad esempio chiese, monasteri, luoghi di pellegrinaggio, santuari ...) con informazioni geografiche e spaziali. Le suddivisioni religiose sono diverse da quelle secolari: in Italia, ad esempio, le diocesi hanno confini diversi rispetto alle province italiane, così come le regioni ecclesiastiche sono diverse da quelle amministrative.

Abstract

Nowadays the creation, storage, accessibility, and interoperability of data on the internet are more and more pervasive. Many different kinds of databases and/or geo-databases are published on the internet, along with other forms of information that deal with various topics (e.g. science, medicine, transport and tourism), based on different architectures. These websites can be private or public, and with or without free access. However, the reflection is ongoing on these data (Capineri, 2015). A significantly-sized database is that of the Italian Catholic Church. It concerns an inventory of its movable or immovable property throughout the entire Italian territory. Anyone could be interested in accessing this kind of information (e.g. institutions and individuals). This contribution intends to deal with geographical information focusing on the religious sites in a period in which religious tourism is considered a significant asset for the tourism industry, for regional/local development, and more (Rizzo L.S., 2016). Databases about religious heritage are investigated in order to understand how they link religious data (e.g. churches, monasteries, sites of pilgrimage, sanctuaries) with geographical and spatial information. Religious subdivisions are different from secular ones: in Italy, for example, dioceses have different boundaries than the Italian provinces, and ecclesiastical regions sometimes differ from administrative regions.

1 The contribution is a result of authors’ joint work. Raffaela G. Rizzo, though, wrote sections 4.1, 4.3 and 5. Luca S. Rizzo wrote: 1, 2, 3 and 4.2. In addition, the paragraph “Conclusions” is by the two authors.
1. Introduction

This article is an update and expansion of the EUGEO 2013 presentation (Rizzo L.S., Rizzo R.G., 2013). After two years, the inventory of church property has greatly continued. Comparing the websites relating to the two periods (2013 and 2015) was of particular interest to appreciate the sensitivity for mapping.

Religious tourism, pilgrimages and visits to religious cultural sites increasingly contribute significantly to the dynamics of the tourist sector in Europe, and more (Trono, 2009, 2012). This is particularly relevant in Italy – a country rich in religious sites and assets (Lo Presti, Petrillo, 2010). Our research aims at evaluating Italian religious heritage websites sponsored by the Conferenza Episcopale Italiana (CEI); in particular how the cartographic representation of cultural religion heritage - namely the Italian catholic church - is made available on the internet. Religious tourism in general, along with daily trips to religious sites are indeed increasing and, with them, the need to provide information to tourists/visitors about the sites they intend to visit (Rizzo L.S., Rizzo R.G., Trono, 2013; Rizzo L.S., 2016). Finding websites of travel agencies dealing with these topics is straightforward. However, they are only concerned with very few punctual heritage points or routes. In addition, the World Heritage Centre now has a special interest for religious sites and their inventories. In fact, the following is highlighted: “Further to the consultation process between the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies, the elaboration of the thematic paper will be ensured in three phases: (i) preparatory activities, including regional thematic consultations; (ii) inventory, research and data analysis; (iii) consultation/production of thematic paper” (http://whc.unesco.org/en/religious-sacred-heritage).

2. Objectives of the research

The research analyses the official ecclesiastical websites and projects. This has allowed us to appreciate how clerical institutions promote themselves and, ultimately, any existing connection between these institutions and the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism (MiBACT) (Cardia, 2005; Latini, 2007, p. 20). In order to do so, we have focused on investigating the following:

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1 Lo Presti and Petrillo (2010) in Table 1, p. 305 subdivide the ecclesiastic heritage in Italy into types of heritage “Churches, shrines, etc.”: 95,000; “Monasteries”: 1,500; “Sacred mountains, houses of spirituality, bishop’s palace, etc.”: 3,000; “Libraries”: 5,500; “Archives”: 100,000; “Religious museums”: 936; “Artistic religious buildings”: 60,653; “Pipe organ music”: 12,000.

2 Especially pilgrimages.

3 See the Intesa tra il Ministro per I Beni e le Attività Culturali e il Presidente della Conferenza Episcopale Italiana relativa alla tutela dei beni culturali di interesse religioso appartenenti a enti e istituzioni ecclesiastiche, Roma, 26th January 2005. This agreement follows and replaces the previous one of September 13th, 1996.
3. Methodology of the research

Our research followed these methodological steps:

- firstly, we reviewed the existing literature concerning religious websites, inventories and religious tourism;
- we analyzed ecclesiastical projects, inventories and websites to understand the cartographic approach adopted – if any – in dealing with the heritage data added to the specific websites;
- we interviewed representatives of the ecclesiastical institutions (and of other entities involved in the projects examined) responsible for storing the geo-information in the inventories and for handling the processes associated with it.

4. The Church and the web: religious sites and their map representation

4.1 The UNBCE and its inventories

The Ufficio Nazionale Beni Culturali Ecclesiastici (UNBCE, National Office for Ecclesiastical Cultural Heritage) of the Conferenza Episcopale Italiana (CEI) started five projects with the intention to carry out a survey on its heritage and create “cultural commons” (Hesse, Ostrom, 2009; Di Giorgio, 2012; Caputo, 2013) freely accessible via the web. These projects represent a dialogue between the Church and the contemporary world and are based on common rules and qualitative standards recognized by a shared participation by different institutions on the basis of a principle of interoperability of the stored data (Russo, 2015).

The web page http://www.chiesacattolica.it/benculturali/attivita/00003744_Attivita.html shows, under the heading “Attività” (Figure. 1):

4 This is an internal interoperability among the inventories and an external interoperability in terms of relationship between different information systems that interact with the UNBCE (e.g. the collaboration with Wikipedia; Weston, 2015).

- CeIA (Cei Architettura): the inventory of diocesan churches;
- CeIOA (Cei Opere d’Arte): the inventory for religious “mobile” heritage;
- CeIBib (Cei Biblioteche): the inventory of religious libraries.
- CeIAR (Cei Archivi): the inventory of ecclesiastical archives;
- AICE (Anagrafe degli Istituti Culturali Ecclesiastici): the inventory of cultural ecclesiastical institutions.

Figure 1 – Home page of the Ufficio Nazionale dei Beni Culturali Ecclesiastici. On the right side: headings of the four CEI projects and the connected websites BeWeb and Le Chiese delle Diocesi Italiane (last download: 30.12.2015)

5 Abbey, cathedral, baptistery, library, bell tower, parsonage, chapel, church, cemetery, monastery, aedicule, museum, oratory, palace, sacred mount, sanctuary and seminary.
6 Archives, museums, libraries (D’Agnelli, 2011; see also: https://foederisarca.wordpress.com/tag/anagrafe-istituti-culturali-ecclesiastici).
In this paper we will refer to sacred buildings and artistic assets of CeiA and CeiOA. These projects are both linked to a computer system that allows the input of data concerning catholic cultural heritage in datasets. The forms that are available to fill in imitate the models created by MiBACT. CeiOA and CeiA in particular were initially inspired by the ICCD (Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione) and later integrated, maintaining key elements or characteristics typical of this kind of heritage. All data inputted are stored in the General Information System of the Catalog of MiBACT.

4.1.1 “Inventari e Censimenti” in BeWeb
These inventories are connected to “BeWeb” (Parrella, 2015). The work started in 1997 and is still ongoing (Caputo, 2013; http://www.beweb.chiesacattolica.it/inventari/). More than 3,829,830 religious items (http://www.beweb.chiesacattolica.it/) have been catalogued on BeWeb so far. The information related to them is made accessible to users by a Google-like search by diocese, type of object, type of sacred subject, author or chronology (Figure 2).

When examining the catalogue sheet, which appears on the screen when we individually analyze the heritage items from a geographical and cartographical point of view, we notice that no reference is made to the geographical context in which the heritage of interest is located: the only freely accessible information concerns the diocese the heritage asset belongs to. There is, however, a “contatta la diocesi” (“contact the diocese”) tag.

7 Central Institute for the Inventory and Documentation of the Italian Ministry of Heritage and Cultural Activities and Tourism (MiBACT).
9 On the website of BeWeb the following “numbers are cited”: 224 involved dioceses, 3,829,830 historical and artistic items, 64,356 religious buildings, 596,792 books, 593 archives, 1,506 ecclesiastical institutions, 1,101 persons, families and insitutions, 472 glossary terms (last download: 2015.12.30).
through which it is possible to ask for further information. This may be due to security reasons related to the heritage site and possible valuable movable assets contained in it (many assets are easily transportable). The lack of cartographic and/or geographic information is a limitation; geo-localizing the heritage would prove useful to allow tourists to enter the territory in which the site is located.

Maps can be found on the right side of the web page under the heading “esplora i beni per mappa” (find items through the map) choosing between the diocese boundaries or the administrative ones (Figure 3a). After selection, we can visualize the distribution of the grouped results with the cartographic representation of Google (Figure 3b). We can isolate single religious building by zooming in on their results. An interesting note is added at the bottom of the map: “Sono visualizzati solo edifici per i quali si dispone di una georeferenziazione esatta” (visualization is only possible for buildings that are exactly geolocalized). This implies that the cartographic procedure has been checked.
If we now examine the website of architectural heritage, the geographical mark changes. On the homepage of the CeiA: “Le Chiese delle Diocesi Italiane” a guided search tool is available. A map of the Italian ecclesiastical regions allows anyone to find, by means of keywords, the desired item by ecclesiastical region, diocese, typology or qualification (Figure 4). The inventory covers many areas. Presently it includes 64,345 churches belonging to 217 dioceses and it provides the public with 10,373 “technical” sheets containing descriptions. However, this cataloguing exercise is still in progress (Gavazzi, 2013; Negri, Gavazzi, 2014). As soon as a single item is ready and validated, the record is made available on the internet. The description can be visualized either in a synthetic form or a detailed one. Below we give an example of the results of a search. After indication of a preference (e.g. diocese of Bergamo, type: basilica), a list of religious sites is provided (Figure 5). On the right side of each record, there is a symbol with the shape of Italy on which to click. The user is then linked to the CeiA Web Map interface that runs with the virtual Bing-based globe, also on Territaly images (Figure 6). This clearly shows the important effort of geolocalizing all heritage sites included in the database. The very same localization is also given in a more “traditional” way in a textual version under the heading “collocazione geografico-ecclesiastica”. In this part, there are both the address of the site and the religious details based on the ecclesiastical administrative rules: region, diocese, parsonage and parish. Below this description, another map is placed: the Google Map

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10 The churches of the Italian Dioceses: http://www.chieseitaliane.chiesacattolica.it/chieseitaliane/
11 In Italy there are 16 ecclesiastical regions.
12 There are 225 dioceses.
13 Namely: abbey, basilica, baptistery, library, bell tower, parish, chapel, church, cemetery, monastery, niche, museum, palace, oratory, sanctuary, holy mountain, ricetto, seminary.
14 See the website at the tag “scegli la Qualificazione”.
15 Geographical - ecclesiastical localization.
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**Figure 4** – Home page of the website “Le Chiese delle Diocesi Italiane” with the map of the ecclesiastical regions and the guided search (http://www.chieseitaliane.chiesacattolica.it/chieseitaliane/, last download: 07.10.2015)

**Figure 5** – Research output. The figure shows the output of the research of the “type” basilica in the diocesi of Bergamo. At the end of the string, the Italy-shaped button takes the user to the map of the site.
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**FIGURE 6**
The satellite map of the Basilica of Santa Maria Assunta and San Giovanni Battista (Bergamo, Lombardia Region) visualized through the virtual globe Bing (an example)

**FIGURE 7**
Personage of Clusone, Bergamo, Italy: Anagrafe Istituti Culturali Ecclesiastici

![Satellite map of the Basilica of Santa Maria Assunta and San Giovanni Battista](image-url)

![Personage of Clusone](image-url)
of the surveyed religious buildings located in the territory of the ecclesiastical institution of the searched site (e.g. parsonage of Clusone for the basilica of Santa Maria Assunta and San Giovanni Battista in the diocese of Bergamo, Figure 7).

4.1.3 Anagrafe Istituti Culturali Ecclesiastici (AICE)

The Inventory of Cultural ecclesiastical Institutions (AICE) began as a consequence of the Intesa sulle biblioteche ecclesiastiche, which dates back to 18 Aprile 2000. This inventory aims at giving visibility to archives, libraries and museums of the dioceses, and more. At the same time it represents a tool of their development, protection and a network between them. Consulting the website of AICE, the following wording is evident: 1,494 published cultural institutes. This includes: 133 diocesan libraries, 352 non-diocesan libraries, 205 diocesan museums, 63 non-diocesan museums, 178 diocesan archives, 568 non-diocesan archives and 682 authorized to the management of users.

Once the scope of these initiatives is established, we can again see the aims: cartographic representation and communication. Regarding the other inventories, the home page of the website offers opportunity for the research. Here we can again find a map of Italy divided by region, and either the Italian ecclesiastical or administrative regions can be selected (Figure 8).

Before clicking on the map, the user has to decide whether to follow the basic research or the guided one. Whatever the option adopted is, the output is a list of the surveyed religious buildings located in the territory of the ecclesiastical institution of the searched site (e.g. parsonage of Clusone for the basilica of Santa Maria Assunta and San Giovanni Battista in the diocese of Bergamo, Figure 7).

16 On May 18 2011, the XVIII GIORNATA NAZIONALE DEI BENI CULTURALI ECCLESIASTICI entitled “Archivi e Biblioteche ecclesiastiche a 10 anni dall’Intesa” (Church libraries and archives: 10 years after the Entente). See the webpage: http://www. chiesacattolica.it/beniculturali/formazione/00020758_Abstract_ XVIII_Giornata_Nazionale_dei_beni_culturali_ecclesiastici.html (last download: 18.12.2015).

17 For further information see: http://www.chiesacattolica. it/anagrafe/beniculturali/anagrafe/00016816_Storia.html (last download: 15.12.2015).
items that can be visualized in Google through the tag “show the map”. Upon clicking on the single point of interest (POI), the address of the item appears with the chance to visualize the POI in 3D through Bing (Figure 9a). The same choice is given if the user decides to enter the desired record of the mentioned list: always the 2D representation with Google Maps and the 3D visualization of Bing (Figure 9b).
4.1.3.1 APP AICE

In the aftermath of the communication “in mobility” published in May 2015, the application of the Italian Church, namely the Holy Bible and the Liturgy of the Hours, was recorded to have had about 98,000 downloads (Rivoltella, 2015; Spadaro, 2015). This modern way of using mobile technologies by believers is well-suited for use with another app, namely the AICE app (http://www.chiesacattolica.it/appanagrafe/; Foederis Arca, 2015). It is an iOS- and Android-compatible application for smartphones and tablets. This app allows the user to navigate through the heritage of AICE, i.e. religious elements. Moreover, the user can be connected to another person. It is enough – thanks to the information tools and technologies (i.e. mobile technologies) – to be connected through the internet (Rivoltella, 2015).

When visiting the home page, the user is able to search for a church by simply inputting the name of a diocese or the name of its municipality or both. The output is, for example, a list of churches of a given municipality, along with the complete addresses (Figure 10). The postal code is also given, which is an important element if the POI needs to then be inputted into a virtual globe (e.g. Google Earth) and thus facilitates easy access for the visitor.

After finding the church, the site allows its storage as a preference to create a route clicking on the flag in the upper left part of the picture of each church (Figure 10). Then, by using “Consulta l’itinerario” and choosing at least two churches, the web user can visualize the itinerary on Google Maps. The description of the route to follow is also given (Figure 11).

4.3 An example of a thematic survey: “Censimento Santuari Cristiani in Italia”

The inventory of the Italian Christian Sanctuaries represents the research output of an academic research project coordinated by Prof. Vauchez and entitled “Censimento dei santuari cristiani in Italia dall’antichità ai giorni nostri” (www.santuaricristiani.iccd.beniculturali.it). Since 1998, a total of 30 Universities have been working on creating an internet-accessible database, whereby each sanctuary is presented on the basis of five macro areas of interest: 1) general, 2) architecture and artistic-historic data, 3) religious rituals, 4) references and 5) bibliography. An enormous amount of work has been carried out, part of it published and some work still ongoing, carried out by the members of the Associazione Internazionale per le Ricerche sui Santuari (A.I.R.S.) (see their yearly conferences). The website is organized into four sections: public area, managing area, research area and vocabulary area. A tourist may be interested in the “public” area, where the

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19 Survey of the Italian Christian Sanctuaries form ancient times to nowadays.

20 See note 17, p. 90: Rizzo L.S., Rizzo R.G., Trono A. cit. Up to now, besides the various proceedings mentioned here, dedicated books were published by numerous authors on Lazio (Boesch Gajano et al., 2010), Puglia (A.A.V.V., 2012), Rome (Boesch Gajano et al., 2012), Trentino-Alto Adige (Curzel, Varanini, 2012) and Umbria (Coletti, Tosti, 2013). Ongoing work on the remaining regions will soon be published.
Example of the output of the research of the churches: the parishes of the municipality of Lazise (Province of Verona, Italy).

The webpage shows how each element of the list has its own address and map. On the left side of the page the string "Consulta l’itinerario" ("Consult the itinerary") is visible with two POIs stored using the flag.

* The search is always connected with the diocese of the church.

Output map of the route connecting two selected churches in the south of Garda Lake. At the right side of the page: in the upper part there is a description of how to follow the route and at the lower part the two religious POI are shown (listed as origin-destination).
description of the selected sanctuary is given\textsuperscript{21}, and in the “research” area, which gives a list of the database fields that can be explored. The information collected, shown in Table 1, makes multiple queries possible. Regardless of the form of each place of worship selected, doubts only arise when visiting the first geographical part (“General”), where there is an inadequate localization of the sanctuary. This section should be integrated with the georeferenced information, where there is a short paragraph on altitude, landscape and territory. Misunderstandings could ensue in interpreting this section, for example, when researching on the Sanctuary of Madonna del Frassino of Peschiera del Garda (Province of Verona), the database gives us the following output (Figure 12):

- altitude: 100 meters
- landscape: hill
- territory: countryside.

The user has no means to localize the heritage site, not even its address.

Usually factsheets are richer in detail, even if they are not always precise. It is possible to find the coordinates of longitude and latitude or the reference of the IGM cartography or other ones. The latter is particularly hard for users to discover.

\textsuperscript{21} To get the output, the correct name of the desired sanctuary is required.
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Furthermore, nowadays we are living in an era of digitalization of data, increasingly encouraged by EU strategies [COM (2011) 808, def.]. The Church follows its own rationale behind EU policies giving people plenty of information thanks to its decision to move from printed inventories to web-based ones. From a geographical and cartographical point of view in its websites, the Church makes an effort to use maps via virtual globes (Google Maps and Bing) to help the user in reaching the POI. The choice to combine ecclesiastical boundaries (ecclesiastical regions, dioceses etc.) with Italian ones (regions, provinces etc.) is interesting, though somewhat confusing as some people may not be familiar with them. The state-of-the-art in the map visualization is at the moment quite satisfactory. The catalog sheet of religious heritage sites nevertheless mainly focuses on information which is either historic or artistic in nature and could introduce a more appropriate level of contextualization of the site in the territory in which it is integrated (with links for example). In this case, more work should be done, also being inspired by the above-mentioned database of the sanctuaries (§ 4.3) and simply enhancing the key elements of the geographical disciplines landscape and territory. The above should be seen as a suggestion to further implement and complete the “religious heritage knowledge as a commons”. However, these rich databases and websites are particularly useful for a variety of reasons to institutions or organizations such as Regions, Universities, Local Action Groups (LAGs), etc. or for individual users.

Table 1 – Geographical items of the database obtained from the research area of the website. Source: elaboration by the Authors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Macro geographical themes</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative</td>
<td>Municipality, province, region, diocese, present diocese, parish, present parish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscape</td>
<td>Wood, hill, river, sea, mountain, country area, lake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Territory</td>
<td>Plane, city, street, village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sites linked to a not martyr saint</td>
<td>Home or life place, grave, with relics, memory sanctuary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship site</td>
<td>Cave, wood, peak, spring, river, tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origin of the pilgrims</td>
<td>Local, regional, interregional, international, not in use sanctuary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusions

Location, space and time are key concepts when we consider geography and geographical information (Farinelli, 2003). Nowadays, the correct dissemination of geo-information linked to the aspect of geo-localization of territorial data is increasingly relentless. These data are communicated via numerous ICT tools, of which the internet plays a significant role. Web-mapping allows access to a very large amount of geographical data, which are sometimes of good quality, although not always adequate. The quality of such information is guaranteed by the institutions that work on the particular website, in our case, the Church and MiBACT. Even if their aims are slightly different, both offer free religious heritage information and take advantage of the potential of the internet. As a consequence, they implement the so-called “knowledge as a commons” (Hesse, Ostrom, cit.), or in this particular case “religious heritage knowledge as a commons”. This is true even if this particular kind of heritage – religious sites – is not public and is mostly owned by the Church. Via the internet, such heritage becomes, in a certain way, "public". This is improved by a virtuous use of geo-localization. What we can now use and enjoy through the internet is the result of years of a huge amount of work in a choral multilevel commitment involving the Vatican/MiBACT, dioceses, and parishes/institutions in the use of both top-down and bottom-up processes; setting the census methodology on the one hand, the response, operation and voluntarism on the other. In this regard, the CEI also urges non-diocesan religious institutes, which usually have a rich cultural heritage, to be active and use the same methodology referred to above (Atzori, 2012). Furthermore, nowadays we are living in an era of digitalization of data, increasingly encouraged by EU strategies [COM (2011) 808, def.]. The Church follows its own mission of spreading knowledge related to its worship sites. However, at the same time, it connects to the rationale behind EU policies giving people plenty of information thanks to its decision to move from printed inventories to web-based ones. From a geographical and cartographical point of view in its websites, the Church makes an effort to use maps via virtual globes (Google Maps and Bing) to help the user in reaching the POI. The choice to combine ecclesiastical boundaries (ecclesiastical regions, dioceses etc.) with Italian ones (regions, provinces etc.) is interesting, though somewhat confusing as some people may not be familiar with them. The state-of-the-art in the map visualization is at the moment quite satisfactory. The catalog sheet of religious heritage sites nevertheless mainly focuses on information which is either historic or artistic in nature and could introduce a more appropriate level of contextualization of the site in the territory in which it is integrated (with links for example). In this case, more work should be done, also being inspired by the above-mentioned database of the sanctuaries (§ 4.3) and simply enhancing the key elements of the geographical disciplines landscape and territory. The above should be seen as a suggestion to further implement and complete the “religious heritage knowledge as a commons”. However, these rich databases and websites are particularly useful for a variety of reasons to institutions or organizations such as Regions, Universities, Local Action Groups (LAGs), etc. or for individual users.


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