Tourism Towards Sustainable Regional Development

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Abstract

Tourism is nowadays an important industry that is growing. Its activities have been diversified towards eco and rural tourism. This has created opportunities that make the new demands from tourists coincide with rural communities’ need for economic development. The former are seeking new alternatives to traditional tourist destinations and the latter are searching for alternative ways to attract new businesses and industries. Tourism development impacts are felt at the national, regional, and local levels. This study will focus on how to develop the eco and rural tourism industry in the region of Centro in Portugal and measure the impact it will have on its communities. The success of this industry in Centro region depends on the quality of its natural resources, available infrastructure, and regional and local governance. The involvement of local governments, NGOs, and the civil society in the planning process and the ongoing tourism development are essential to achieve the goal of a sustainable regional development. Tourism serves as an important incentive to preserve the environment ensuring a balanced growth path of the economy and increasing living standards. Furthermore, the shortcomings generated by the lack of a regional government are addressed and evaluated.
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Chapter I

Study Description

Introduction

Tourism is one of the few potential growth sectors in mature economies. The industry of tourism is considered as one of the most contributively sectors towards economic development in Europe. The present study will be based on a Portuguese region denominated by Centro. This diverse region offers a wide range of examples of the potential and limitations of tourism as a vehicle for development, and of government policies for tourism.

A primary challenge of local governance, both today and in decades ahead, is to steer increasingly external, global forces on local development so that the development achieves the shared vision of the local population. In cities, towns and villages throughout the world, the primary responsibility for this steering process rests with the institution of local government and its diverse local authorities.

As providers of social services, builders of economic infrastructure, regulators of economic activity, and managers of the natural environment, local authorities have many direct instruments at their disposal to influence development. Yet in addition to their direct roles in the development process, perhaps the most important role that local authorities can play in a global economy is that of facilitator among the diverse interests seeking to influence the direction of local development. With globalisation, the governance challenges facing local authorities in different parts of the world have increased in their similarities, transcending the national political and economic systems upon which different communities and Agencies.

Tourism can influence the direction and options for local development. The question of whether tourism can be sustainable that is, whether it can contribute to local and regional sustainable development is though addressed in the context of the Local Agenda 21 process. Can though tourism induces local and regional development? Which institutions are involved? What is their role? A truly legitimate and practical discussion on sustainable tourism must take place in and with the communities that are being influenced by tourist industry development but also for those regions that have potential for such developments.
Aim

The aim of this study is to analyze the importance of the tourism sector in the regional development. The Portuguese Centro region has potential, in terms of natural resources especially with all the income that the tourism-based sector can provide to a region and their locals if successful. Understand what the institutional vision is for the future who’s involved and what role they play in the whole development process.

The forests and protected areas as multifunctional place where variety of different activities and events, though with considerable respect to the environmental achievements in the areas. The expected final outcome of this study is to provide sustainable measures for the renewal of tourism especially through the “natural tourism”, that is fundamental for the region economically environmentally and socially.

Limitations

During the research process it has been very difficult to access regional information about Centro region. This had to do with the inexistence of a regional authority. The data available is mainly related with municipal scale which doesn’t fulfil the regional development level. Therefore the data collected has to be interpolated by bottom up and top down approach. On the other hand some requests of information made by e-mail weren’t answered positively due to confidentiality or unpublished studies.

Problem Background

Portugal has large natural resources, the forest that is being totally forgotten by new generations and ignored by politics. Due to economical and social development in the last decades populations were forced to move from their villages to cities, especially in the west. Closely related with this factor is the successive migration from the rural areas and consequently the decreasing of direct forest and agricultural dependence and maintenance.

Moreover the responsible politicians have done insufficient efforts towards sustainable rural development which embraces the rural tourism sector as priority, especially for the non coastline areas although such efforts are usually missing a regional vision as an integrated part of the national vision for the sector. The
political landscape is very big, with a lot of participants which lack a clear task and have unclear responsibilities. The governmental structure is very fragmented which makes it hard to determine what the responsibilities and jurisdictions of governmental bodies. For several years there have been successive changes on hierarchical structures by central government and a steering of policies, weakening the development efforts made to that time. Furthermore the lack of regional planning dimension and exogenous promotion it is been negative for the development of the tourism industry as well to the region. On the other hand some EU founds have being given to promote rural development which includes rural and eco tourism. The question is if these found could have been well distributed and invest if there was an effective development plan at regional level.

The lack of a strong NGO’s (Non Governmental Organizations) drive and support by local governments is a serious problem towards the EU demanding cooperation’s process, which leads to ”good governance” especially those who have to do with environmental resources and tourism. Even though there are recent incentives to start-up NGO’s that aim to fulfil the lack of local in a desperate action of improvement the communication process among the actors that lead with tourism issues for the good of the region and quality of tourism.

On the other hand the management of natural resources that are essential for the promotion of a region that is welling to grow based in the tourism sector has been dilapidated by forest fires. In addition the effectiveness of the environmental plans is growing slowly and fragmented.

The regional dimension in though an important aspect for the good functioning and relations between institutional power and NGO’s.

Thus make sense that all the regions should maximize the endogenous resources in order to achieve EU regional developments standards and by doing that will be marking the difference when compared with other regions, each one with their on characteristics and richness to share with others in globalize multicultural world.

I believe that is possible to develop a region through sustainable tourism. Some regions are today a global reference due the efforts made for development fostered by local governments and empowered trough tourism industry while developing their territory cities and rural areas and populations. Is also a way of combating the desertification and equalize country development as a whole.
Method

The methodological procedure has been based on interviews to Dão Lafões forest authority and Casas da Beiras Rural tourism association in order to understand the local tourism specificity especially in Centro Region. Research based in books and journals related with regional development and tourism, have been an important tool for the present study. Also other areas of interest have been researched once that the tourism industry evolves other areas as environment, economic development, governance, rural development and so fourth.
Also statistical data has been produced and analyzed in order to understand the level of development and the potential for tourism development manly in Centro region.
A SWOT analysis, strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats, has been performed, aiming to summarize the most important characteristics. Afterwards some suggestions have been made with the purpose of improving the tourism sustainable development in Centro region.
Chapter II

Theoretical Framework and Contributions of Tourism to Sustainable Regional Development

Governance

The concept of Governance is ambiguous itself. The governance concept could be seen in economical way, aiming to reduce the transaction costs, or as planning view aiming to guarantee the sustainable development. This last view has been target of many interpretations. It can be seen as a:

“process in witch political institutions implement their programs in concert with the civil society actors (...) gain potential influence over urban policies” (Pierre 1998).

But according to other authors this concept is just an alternative model for managing affairs.

The development of the dialogue between parties has been rather of rather important because it improves the governance and the outcomes become more profitable for actors involved. Governance is about relations between formal government and society that meet together aiming to stimulate public interests (economical, social, and political) in a contributing way for the society.

According to the political scientist Roderick Rhodes (1996), the concept of governance is currently used in contemporary social sciences with at least six different meanings: the minimal State, corporate governance, new public management, good governance, social-cybernetic systems and self-organized networks.

“European Governance” is a term that European Commission has created. It refers to the rules, processes and behavior that affect the way in which powers are exercised at European level, particularly as regards openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence. These five "principles of good governance" reinforce those of subsidiary and proportionality.

Therefore, for the present study, governance issues will be taken into account, due to the importance of achieving sustainable regional development goals. Furthermore the performance of governments and stakeholders in the planning process is a key factor for the success of policy implementation.
Public Private Partnerships

The National Council for Public-Private Partnerships defines Public-Private Partnership (PPP) as:

“a contractual agreement between a public agency (federal, state or local) and a private sector entity. Through this agreement, the skills and assets of each sector (public and private) are shared in delivering a service or facility for the use of the general public. In addition to the sharing of resources, each party shares in the risks and rewards potential in the delivery of the service and/or facility”.

In addition they come up with six key factors of successes for the PPP: Political leadership; Public sector involvement; A well thought out plan; A dedicated income stream; Communication with stakeholders; Selecting the right partner.

European Union sees it in the same way although it doesn’t consider that PPP at community level.

“…the term is not defined at Community level. Rather it refers to forms of cooperation between public authorities and the world of business which aim to ensure the funding, construction, renovation, management or maintenance of an infrastructure or the provision of a service”.

To gain the involvement of the private sector, it is important that governmental entities develop and foster cooperative activities that are mutually beneficial. By including private sector representatives in the planning and execution of public policy decisions, governments and the private sector can develop risk sharing partnerships. These risk sharing partnerships can help government and private sector participants, to better understand each other’s needs and achieve common goals.

In this sense it is important to finds ways of boosting partnerships among actors closely related to tourism. Government should foster PPP’s, which create value for stakeholders and civil society. Regarding Centro region it seems that PPP’s have not been promoted sufficiently, being necessary to find and create synergies between public and private sector.

Tourism Development and Economic Growth

Tourism development can have positive economic effects on local economies, and a visible impact on national GDP growth. It can be also an
essential component for both economic development and poverty reduction. National development strategies must therefore be developed with recognition that tourism plays an essential role in improving the conditions of poorer segments of society. (John W. Ashe 2005)

Tourism brings economic development and the creation of direct and indirect jobs in hotels, travel agencies, transport companies, restaurants, guides, show and entertainment business, monuments, parks and other related sectors like insurance, health, housing, human resources and training institutions. Tourism projects might be of special relevance for coastal areas and island territories and to vulnerable rural or mountain regions that might find in tourism a rare opportunity for development facing the decline of their traditional economic activities. (Antonio de la Morena 2004).

**Sustainable Regional Development**

"...Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". (World Bank, 2005).

This definition is considered by many as the first example of a definition (Brundtland report) referring to the meaning of sustainable development. Since then, other concepts have appeared from this one, always stressing: the importance of environmental and medium long term vision resource management issues, towards economical growth. Recently other author’s introduced the social dimension into it, despite being present in Brundtland report.

Often, discussions of sustainability are presented within the context of stability, particularly about communities (defined in a territorial versus an interest sense). We generally want our communities to be stable and predictable and to provide a sense of belonging. Sustainability goes beyond economic considerations and biophysical issues; it must deal with important concepts of social order, such as hierarchy, territory, and norms (Burch and DeLuca 1984).

**Sustainable Tourism**

“Sustainable Tourism development meets the needs of the present tourists and hosts regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining
According to (Burr & Walsh, 1993), sustainability cannot be accomplished without imposing limits of use, which are determined by the ability of the biosphere to absorb the effects of that use. In that way the effects of tourism, even being of little footprint, have effects on local territories. Therefore sustainable programs are rather important to minimize the expected effects of such dislocation. Tourism development may impact the distribution of wealth or power, may affect land uses and zoning laws, and may interject new behaviours or institutions. What do these changes mean for community stability? And we must consider factors affecting a community’s capacity to deal with such interventions. In other words, how do type and intensity of tourism-induced disturbances affect our social and economical world?

**Eco Tourism**

Eco-tourism focuses on local cultures, wilderness adventures, and new ways to live on our vulnerable planet. It is classically defined as travel to destinations where the flora, fauna, and cultural heritage are the primary attractions. Responsible ecotourism includes programs that minimize the adverse effects of traditional tourism on the natural environment, and enhance the cultural integrity of local people. Therefore, in addition to evaluating environmental and cultural factors, initiatives by hospitality providers to promote recycling, energy efficiency, water re-use, and the creation of economic opportunities for local communities are an integral part of ecotourism.

Michael J. Stone cites Ceballos-Lascurian where it defines eco tourism as: “(...) environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and any accompanying cultural features (both past and present) that promotes conservation, has low visitor impact, and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations” (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1993).

Outdoor recreation, natural, historical and cultural resources are increasingly important attractions for travellers. Ecotourism is an environmentally responsible form of travel in which the focus is to experience the natural areas and culture of a region while promoting conservation and economically contributing to local communities (Adventure Travel Society, 1994)

TIES (The International Ecotourism Society) define ecotourism as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people." This
means that those who implement and participate in ecotourism activities should follow the following principles:

- Minimize impact
- Build environmental and cultural awareness and respect
- Provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts
- Provide direct financial benefits for conservation
- Provide financial benefits and empowerment for local people
- Raise sensitivity to host countries' political, environmental, and social climate
- Support international human rights and labour agreements

**Rural Tourism**

The rural tourism is not a recent phenomenon, if regarding to the time that the only kind of accommodation available in rural areas were lodgings. The natural exploitation of protected areas though has become common practice and as a consequence of that owners have increased the quality level of accommodations associated with these areas.

Rural tourism involves tourists witnessing or participating in activities that form the core of country life such as farming (synonyms: farm tourism, agro-tourism). Loosely defined it can encompass any activity that takes place in a non-urban, populated area. With farm incomes falling in many developed, but also developing countries, and people migrating to cities, rural tourism is often seen by planners as a magic wand to stop rural decay.

**Contributions of Tourism to Sustainable Regional Development**

Traditionally rural areas were an important part of the overall development of a region due to agricultural characteristics. It had an important role especially related with food supply for the locals and for the cities nearby. Nowadays, apart from some regions in the world where the agriculture still being of major value, rural areas are constrained by remoteness and underdevelopment, and seeking for a impulse adapted to present needs. These regions have limited options for economic development, which can raise income and employment avoiding the desertification
of rural areas. Furthermore; the natural environments in these remote areas are no longer maintained as wished, or high costs are associated to, in particular forest, maintenance. The forest gets underused, a waste of a key resource in natural based tourism. Though tourism has become the prioritized tool for rural planning (Augustyn, 1998 cited in Abby LiU)

Tourism Growth

The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) estimated that in 1999 travel and tourism was direct and indirect responsible for generating the following synergies, across the global economy:

- 11% of GDP
- 200 million jobs
- 8% of total employment
- 5.5 million new jobs per year until 2010.

Tourism industry actually counts as one of the economic and social phenomena of the last century and certainly will retain its position for centuries to come. World tourism has traditionally been measured by international tourist arrivals and international tourist revenues. Tourism has found a niche as an effective instrument for generating employment, earning revenue and foreign exchange, enhancing environment preserving culture and tradition, thereby facilitating the overall development. Tourism is one of the world's largest and fastest growing industries. In 2000, there were 699 million international tourist arrivals throughout the world, an increase of 7.4% over the preceding year and international tourist receipts reached US $ 476 billion, a 4.5% increase from 1999. There has been also a strong growth in foreign travel to developing countries during recent years and this trend is expected to continue. In the last two decades, an increasing number of destination economies have come to rely on the travel, tourism and hospitality industry. Economic diversification and technological improvement have created a favourable environment for tourism development in the present age of globalization.
Tourism Policy and Planning

For instance, Europe requires holistic approach to the planning and development of destinations for sustainable tourism, both in terms of providing a quality experience for visitors and addressing all the impacts of tourism.

There should be concern about physical infrastructure, destination marketing and information services, linkages with other economic sectors, and relationships with the various forms of tourism.

The important role of local authorities in supporting the development and management of sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, is well understood in Europe. Local democratic structures are an advantage for effective land use planning and development control processes, unlike other countries in the world that have strong tourism resources but lack democracies. At the same time the need to foster a participative approach at a local level, for example through engaging village communities, and NGO’s is recognised.

According to C. Shafer facilities and programs development, can change positively personal income and taxes revenues by providing more opportunities for local populations.

Pearce on the other hand defends that evaluations at earlier stages of development can check progress and provide critical planning direction. Help to find a path that promotes the development of symbiotic tourism-park-community relationships. The capacity of such frameworks to be used to evaluate the status of tourism development at a site, in any stage, suggests they can play an essential monitoring role, which has traditionally been a very much neglected component of planning processes (Pearce, 2000).

A sustainable development, and common to most “alternative” forms of tourism including ecotourism, was an emphasis on participatory approaches and a concern for conservation. This presented planners with a new and significant challenge (Gunn, 1991 cited in Michael J. Stone 2002)

The Role of Local Authorities in Sustainable Tourism

In accordance with Local Agenda 21 there are some factors that affect the role of local authorities towards tourism planning and development. Despite traditionally the private sector is still the responsible for this matter, compromising the public interests and the overall sustainable development, thus it has been recognized that authorities play an important role due to:
• The complexity of the tourism sector, where it is the consumer who is brought to the product and not the other way round, as happens with most other goods and services.

• Increasing awareness that tourists select and respond to destinations, not just individual products. The visitor experience is made up of a complex range of elements including expectations, transport, information, accommodation, attractions, activities, local infrastructure, natural environments, cultural heritage, a welcoming host population, security and other services.

• The disparate nature of the private sector in tourism, much of which comprises small and micro enterprises.

• Acceptance that, in the interests of sustainability, public authorities need to be involved in regulating tourist development in destinations, and not simply leaving it up to the market.

• The trend towards administrative decentralisation being implied in many countries, which increases the ability of local authorities to intervene.

Local authorities are often the best placed organisations for establishing a sustainable approach to tourism in destinations. Setting a strategy and balancing the interests of tourism enterprises, tourists and local residents, their ability to manage tourism sustainability is related to:

• Their democratic legitimacy;
• Their relative permanence and ability to take a long term view; and
• Their responsibility for a range of functions that can influence tourism development, including spatial planning, development control, environmental management and community services.

Thus local authorities have an important role towards sustainable tourism development. Municipalities should be involved in tourism planning projects in order to guaranty that whole process is in accordance with the safeguarding of environmental resources and other relevant public interests during the planning process. On the other hand, municipalities know well the territory and goals for the sustainable development of the municipality and its importance in the regional context.

**Impacts of Travel and Tourism**

The tourism industry is able to guaranty substantial economic benefits to both host countries and tourists' home countries. Especially in developing
countries, one of the primary motivations for a region to promote itself as a tourism destination is the expected economic improvement. As with other impacts, this influential economic development brings along both positive and negative consequences.

**Negative Impacts**

**Infrastructure Cost**

The investment on infrastructure represents a gain for local populations, especially when it is needed. The tourism can enable governmental institutions to support infrastructure improvement. Although this can be seen as a negative effect if local’s governments don’t be aware that the money spent on these projects could be better used in other areas of interest, like education, or social welfare.

**Increase on Prices**

Tourism development and related rise in real estate demand may drastically increase the building costs and land values. This increase can make it more difficult for locals especially in lagging regions. Thus it can result in decreasing economical power by local population, while raise of dominance by outsiders.

The increase on demand on basic services and goods from tourist can also affect the prices causing a disempowering of residents. For instance in the Algarve region the prices of houses in the last decade have risen more than in the rest of the country, due to a increase on demand by foreigners that want to acquire second house residences (villas and flats) in the region. The effect of this is increasing demand in residence areas faraway from the touristic areas, by locals who can not afford to pay such values. On the other hand this situation led to an additional pressure by some stakeholders towards new urbanizations construction, increasing the offer of villas and flats expecting a decrease on prices, which can also benefits for locals.
Economic Dependence of the Local Communities on Tourism

The economical development of a region is an important aspect for local populations. However, if a region or even a country depends too much on tourism industry that is characterized by seasonal employment alternatives to this are essential. For instance in Gambia, 30% of the workforce depends directly or indirectly on tourism. In small island developing states, percentages can range from 83% in the Maldives to 21% in the Seychelles and 34% in Jamaica, according to the (WTO). Thus high levels of dependence on tourism carries significant risks. According to United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP 2006):

“economic recession and the impacts of natural disasters such as tropical storms and cyclones as well as changing tourism patterns can have a devastating effect on the local tourism sector”.

Seasonal Character of Jobs

The seasonal character of the industry is one of the problems of employment. Despite this some regions don’t suffering these problems mainly due to strong tourist income during all the seasons. These factors can be explained by the type of tourism practised. Also climacteric characteristics can make some regions appraisable and attractive. Ex: countries that are localized around equator tropic. Though these specificities the main picture of employment seasonality is in fact a real problem that only can be tackled by providing extra activities to employees during the quiet periods. According to (UNEP) United Nations Environment Programme considers that are in some regions are:

“Difficulties in getting training, employment-tourism related medical benefits and recognition of their experience, and unsatisfactory housing and working conditions”.

Environmental Degradation

Tourism can cause the same forms of environmental impacts as any other industries: air emissions, noise, solid waste and littering, releases of sewage, oil and chemicals, even architectural/visual pollution.

Tourism activities can have negative impacts if not properly planned. In other words the effects of such activities should be measured and forecasted and
managed. Such impacts can have effects on important land resources include minerals, fossil fuels, fertile soil, forests, wetland and wildlife. Increased construction of tourism and recreational facilities has increased the pressure on these resources and on scenic landscapes. Direct impact on natural resources, both renewable and nonrenewable, in the provision of tourist facilities can be caused by the use of land for accommodation and other infrastructures. Furthermore alteration of ecosystems by tourist activities habitats can be degraded by tourism leisure activities. For example, wildlife viewing can bring about stress for the animals and alter their natural behavior when tourists come too close. Safaris and wildlife watching activities have a degrading effect on habitat as they often are accompanied by the noise and commotion created by tourists. This puts high pressure on animal habits and behaviors and tends to bring about behavioral changes.

**Positive Impacts**

**Employment Generation**

The tourism industry is able to promote employment creation in several tourism based sectors, such as hotels, restaurants, nightclubs, taxis, recreation. Also can foster spill over effects over indirect activities closely related with tourism such as supply of goods and services. As an example cited in (UNEP) United Nations Environment Programme

“(…) the hotel accommodation sector alone provided around 11.3 million jobs worldwide in 1995(…)”

**Stimulation of Infrastructure Investment**

If regional and local governments support tourism as framework for sustainable regional development it can enable improvements on existent infrastructure and build up new tourism sport infrastructure for recreational and logistic tourism infrastructure support. Benefits for local inhabitants are growing up quality of life through infrastructure such water and sewage systems, roads, electricity, telephone, internet, public transport and so forth. In lagging regions these investments have special meaning for local populations, functioning for several times, as stimulation. Population renovations
in areas that have a deficit of inhabitants are due especially to these lacks of infrastructure support described above.

**Environmental Gains**

Rural areas use to be places where strong activities like production and forest usage for heating and agricultural based activities are based. Many of these areas are today considered abandoned due to demographics factors as aging population and migration to urban areas seeking for education and employment.

Tourism can play and important role for revitalizing these areas, through fostering biological agriculture, forest activities, empowerment of historical monuments, heritage, and preserving rural housing. In this way rural areas have though much to earn with a strategic vision. In tourism development in such areas are reliable and economically sustainable, that in my opinion represents a big challenge.

**Other Impacts**

- Improvement of the conditions of life/habitability
- Participation of the local population and agents in multiple innovations.
- Training/Informing of the Community.
- Fixation of the Population and contribute in the re-establishment of family structure.
- Create awareness to the valorisation and preservation of traditional architecture and cultural patrimony.
- Cultural renovation, regression and strengthening of self-esteem
- Demonstrating the alternatives available with Rural Development
Regional Identity as a Marketing Tool

Regional identity has been stressed as an important factor in regional development particularly by practitioners, but it is also a clear and reoccurring theme in both research and policy. It is often supposed that regions provide a sense of identity, of place and of belonging necessary for social and regional sustainability. Regions are certainly often the formal focus for governance, policy and action. (Jeremy Millard and Astrid Leschy Christensen 2004). At regional level, the need to promote regional territorial identity is sometimes seen just as great as the need to promote economic growth, social inclusion and environmental sustainability. In fact, regional identity and regional social capital are often perceived as necessary (if not present) conditions for, and as precursors to, successful socio-economic and environmental regional development. Regional differences remain the prime sources of competitive advantage. But a region also provides a sense of place and belonging, as well as a focus for governance, policy and action. This is necessary for social and economic stability in such a globalised world. Without the local (regional) the individual’s world is hostile and appears to be full of risks. (Jensen-Butler, 2000). The image of regional identity is an assembly of cultural, economical and territorial homogeneous factors that build the inhabitant’s identity, as well as by other regions outside the region. For instance the Spanish regions were created due to cultural, social, and territorial differences among the regions. That led to an autonomous regions formation were each one setup the regional strategy according to national guidelines towards development and growth.

Tourism and World Wide Web

The webification overcomes time and space barriers (Baum and Sigala, 2001). Internet offers great flexibility to match the specific conditions of work within the tourism and hospitality sector. In the last decades with the generally use of internet resources, some places have gained more visibility in the world. It is quite acceptable to argue that internet is available especially in the develop countries and it is also truth that is a powerful resource for research, commerce, or simply for entertainment. In the especial case of tourism; development of the World Wide Web has been a key factor for the development of the sector and the increase (see appendix 1) of travelling to places that were until then almost unreachable or unknown. Web sites and other on-line promotional activities allow entrepreneurs to appear to the
tourists worldwide. This factor can have spillover effects in activities related with tourism by promoting and increasing the visibility in different web markets.

“Changes in communications and transportation, the key infrastructural requirements for tourism development are instructive of the accelerated pace of globalization (...) For developing countries, capturing these transnational and translocal movements provides an unprecedented opportunity to participate in the global market place. Clearly, the Internet offers a unique digital opportunity to take advantage of these global flows, even in the most remote parts of the world.” (Paula Uimonen)

![Graph showing online population growth from 1997 to 2005](image)
Chapter III

Centro Region (Nuts II) Tourism Sector Case Study

The Centro region is conveniently situated half way between Lisbon and Oporto and has easy access to the rest of Europe across its border at Vilar Formoso and through its ports at Aveiro and Figueira da Foz. The region boasts valuable natural resources: the sea, its rivers, and its large expanses of forest. Around 17.2% of Portugal’s population lives in this region, mainly concentrated in eight medium-sized cities.

The geographic location of Portugal, in the south western extremity of the Europe and at the Atlantic coast, equally provides a fast access to all the ones that come of the remaining portion of the Europe towards the North and Centre regions.

The tempered climate, the extensive white sand coast of the Continent and the steep cliffs of the archipelagos, the great diversity of landscapes and the hospitality of people make Portugal a tempting holiday’s destination.

It offers tourist qualified and modern infrastructure certify the vocation of the country for the tourism, sector that it is seen to grow in the last years importance, with an increase in visitors in the last few years.

The tourism is in fact, one of the sectors most important of the national economy. Due to labour force that absorbs (8% of the Portuguese workers) generating a considerable contribute to the GDP (5%).
The country was located, in 2002, on 17th place in "ranking" of the main tourist destinations, with a quota of 1.7%, for the number of tourist. According to the Portuguese Government, Portugal has kept its participation the world-wide level, despite the emerging of new destinations that have moved away tourists from the traditional markets.

Tourist areas protection has been used an instrument of planning destined to give an unequivocal signal to the investors on the available spaces for the diverse types of enterprises, as well as guaranteeing the preservation of the quality of these spaces. (Source: Portuguese Government).

**National Strategy for Tourism**

The national strategy for tourism during the last decades till 2005 was basically focused on the Lisbon, and Algarve Region this last located in the south of Portugal.

According to the Portuguese Tourism Board the strategy for the next years will be based on ten touristic products around national territory, selected by its, attractiveness potential evaluation of development demand and also by the strategic interest for the country and region. They are:

- Food & Beverage
- Cultural Touring and Landscape
- Health and welfare
- Ecotourism
- MICE (International Meetings, Congresses and Events)
- Residential Tourism
- City Short breaks
- Golf
- Nautical Tourism
- Sun & Sun

The announcement was made recently which means that specifics plans are being developed and selected according to previous indicators. The Centro region has numerous chances to attract such investments due to environmental characteristics and existent infrastructure has we can see further on this chapter. From available information provided by the Portuguese Tourism Board the Strategy for the Centro Region will be mainly focused on Touring and Active Tourism (See appendix 3).
Centro Region Economical, Environmental and Social Characteristics

Centro Region (see appendix 4) can be divided in from four distinct areas: Beira Litoral, Beira Interior, Pinhal and the region of Beira Alta. The first is characterized by the proximity of important railroad and road axes. The main axes are Marinha Grande-Leiria-Figueira da Foz-Ovar and Leiria-Pombal-Coimbra-Águeda, respectively the main railway and road axes in the country. Other important axis is Guarda-Covilha-Fundão-Castelo Branco. In Beira Alta there’s an international dynamics Spain-Guarda-Viseu-Aveiro is the most significant international entrance axes by road (A25) in to the country.

Due to the central territorial position Centro region is a passage for those who cross the country South towards North but also those who came from the Portuguese/Spanish border Vilar Formoso.

The main railroad in the country is the connection between (Lisbon-Coimbra-Porto) and secondly between (Coimbra-Vilar Formoso). Although the existence of a railroad between Guarda-Covilhã-Castelo Branco this one needs to be upgraded, which is an important factor for that sub-region.

In terms of road accessibility Centro region is crossed by several roads of national relevance. (A1) highway between Lisbon and Valença is the most important road axis in the country. Between Aveiro-Viseu-Guarda-Spain (A25) the main entrance of goods and people coming from Europe by car. There is located (A23) also a rather important connection between Coimbra-Viseu-Lamego. This road as been partially converted to highway (Viseu-Lamego) representing an important link within the region.
Environmental Characteristics

Centro region consists of two contrasting areas. There are extensive beaches and fishing villages located along the west coast in the interior; mountains and plateaus dominate the landscape. ‘Beiras’ is the traditional name of Centro region located south of Douro River and north of Tagus River. The region has deep contrasts: the Atlantic coastline, with a temperate climate, white sandy beaches and the Atlantic pine forests, and the interior where more mysteries mountains and rocks formation set the tone. In the heart of this hinterland’s rises the Serra da Estrela (Estrela Mountain Range), the highest in continental Portugal. This is where the Mondego river has it source, running down to the city of Coimbra. Here, the river that over the centuries has had so many odes composed to it by generations of university students, flows out into the Atlantic Ocean by the lengthy Figueira da Foz beach.

The region is also considered as a climatic transition area deeply marked by different forms of territorial shapes. Formed by a richness of landscape scenarios, mountains valleys and rivers and sea natural parks (Serra da Estrela, Serra da Malcata), as well as protected landscape such as Serra de Xisto do Açor e da Lousa. On the other hand the dunes of S. Jacinto and the famous Ria de Aveiro with singular environmental characteristics as deltas and avifauna present there.

Natural Protected Areas

Centro region has in all its extent, spaces of great ecological and landscape value. In relation to the natural parks is rather important to mention Serra da Estrela with a huge area (around 10000 hectares) where important wild animals live and some forms of flora considered singular. Important as well is the Douro International, located at the north part of Centro region. Last but not the least is Tagus International Park that has been created recently where some wild species and birds are of importancy. Very important are also 3 Natural reserves localized in Centro Region: Serra da Malcata (last refuge of Iberian Lynx in the national habitat), S. Jacinto Dunes (dune ecosystem with relevant importance for avifauna) and Paúl de Arzila (humid area of great biodiversity one of few places where the Otter as possibilities of survival). Also important to refer to is Serra do Açor, which includes the woods of Margaraça, where rare vegetation in the shale slopes.
Rivers

The Centro region contains many rivers and water streams of different dimensions and characteristics. A diverse hydrographic network that can be used for tourist utilization is one of the possibilities for different alternative uses; such as leisure and sport activities. In this region four great hydrograph bays are located: Mondego, Vouga, Tagus and Douro. Mondego is the biggest exclusive Portuguese river, which crosses the central part of Centro region characterized by beautiful landscapes along its path. More up north Vouga River where spectacular landscapes occur along the river (Lafões Valley) and its haff-delta streams more known as Ria de Aveiro. Tagus and Douro in this region is included in this study, although representing the border of the region (South and North). The first has its path along the municipalities of Castelo Branco and Idanha a Nova. On the other hand its major affluent is Zêzere markedly by the place where it raises (Valley in shape of U) along the territory with beautiful landscapes along its flow.

Thermal and Fluvial Waters

The thermal waters spot in Centro region are many and has brought several thermals resorts. The most important ones are S. Pedro do Sul, Curia (Anadia), Luso (Mealhada), Monfortinho (Idanha a Nova). These resorts have great demand by national and international people. Also important to refer the existence of some other thermals spots: Carvalhal (Castro Daire), Caldas da Felgueira (Nelas) and Manteigas.

Maritime Beaches

Centro cost consists to a large extent of flat cost; characterized by strong dune formation. The only exception is the Mondego Cape near to Figueira da Foz City. Thus these areas represent a great touristic resource by itself, but also by the evolvement along the coastline with the pine woods and waters mirrors facing Atlantic. These areas are markedly by seasonal tourism, though it is important to come up with alternative activities that can face this problem. Despite the mischaracterization that Figueira da Foz City was victim, it still one of the most remarkable places in Centro region cost, where Mondego has its river mouth.
**Fluvial Beaches**

The large number of rivers and streams in the region furthers the emergence of fluvial beaches. Also lakes and dams have many beaches which have numerous possibilities for leisure and touristic usage during the whole year. Only few of these beaches have surveillance during the summer season. Despite this factor the other ones are still being used by locals and emigrants coming especially by France and Germany that came to Portugal to spend the summer.

**Forest**

Centro region has the most significant forest spots of Europe. The dominant species is the *pinus pinaster*. Therefore it is an important tourist resource especially on activities related to the ecotourism. In the last few years it has been dilapidate by the forest fires and inefficient management, more specifically the introduction of the eucalyptus. The sub region Pinhal Interior; beyond the beauty of the natural landscape has an important function of avoid sand movements towards the interior. Therefore this natural resource has to be protected due to natural value and functionality.

The dense wood of Buçaco is a wonderful quiet place in the winter and is in the summer, due to the thermal amenity, a pleasantry place to enjoy and rest. Also near Vouzela there is a Botanic Reserve which the singular characteristic which is considered by many as a rarity. Others sorts of forest can be found as well in the region especially species such as oaks and *quercus rotundifolia Lam*.

**Forest Property**

The forestry ownership, in Portugal is mainly private, since approximately 80% of the forest area is owned by 400,000 individual owners, 12% is owned by communities and only 3% is publicly owned. Due to a land acquisition policy, industry is also a significant forest owner. Across Portugal, there are considerable differences in the size of the forest properties and the extent to which they are integrated into properties dominated by agricultural production. In terms of topology, we can divide it into forest explorations, and forest integrated in the agricultural explorations. The forest properties in the North and Centre of Portugal are mainly small and dispersed, whereas in the South they achieve greater
dimensions. Further, the forest owners usually have strong connections to their forest property, while they have little involvement in their role as forest managers.

**Land Use Planning Instruments**

The Portuguese Land Use Planning Systems are based on Regional Land Use Plans that include the Municipal Land use plans. The municipal plans establish restrictions on land use and they define the rules for land use change through two instruments: the National Ecological Reserve (REN) and the National Agricultural Reserve (RAN). The National Ecological Reserve includes land around waterways, areas with slope sleeper than 30% and high altitude zones. The National Agricultural Reserve limits the transformation of agricultural land to other uses, including forest. Parks and Natural Reserves have their own specific land use plans, which are defined in their policy of protection and conservation.

**Protected Areas**

In addition to land use plans restrictions are also established by Special Protection Area Zones, Protected Areas, Natura 2000 areas, that together correspond to 21,5% of the Portuguese territory. As a curiosity we can mention that the Natura 2000 area, in Portugal, is the largest in Europe and the percentage of private ownership is also the largest. Considering the high degree of private ownership as well as the importance of biodiversity and habitat protection in Portugal it is relevant to question whether private forest owners are adequately compensated for restrictions lay down by nature protection instruments.

**The Stakeholders of the Forestry Sector**

The main stakeholders are obviously the forest owners, as they own 85% of the forest area. The private forest owners are represented by several different organizations, which defend and promote the private forest areas: local associations and cooperatives, and National federations. The parties involved are the local authorities which have gained competence in Land Planning activities, as they are responsible for the Municipal Land Plans.
Unfortunately, these plans have a strong urban bias, partly because the urban construction activities are one of the major sources of funds for the local authorities, through taxing. Further, other stakeholders have recently emerged, including the tourism companies that are interested in establishing facilities in rural areas, due to the interest of urban society in green tourism.

The Public and Private Forest Sectors

The Forest Regime authority caused large resistance from the rural population, who had no voice in the decisions taken, especially in the community forest areas, where the authority interfered with their activities, namely their pastoral needs. These negative feelings still prevail today. In the meantime, because of the political changes in Portugal, the weight of the Public sector has been reduced and the State has begun a process of transferring forest management to the private sector, with the exception of part of the community forest areas, which are still managed under the rules of the Forest Regime.

This attempt to transfer management functions to the owners is not easy for two reasons: the rural community emigration (resulting in a higher average age of the population and abandonment of the agricultural and forest activities), and the lack of qualified forest management technicians in the private sector. At this point, there were no private companies of any sort, with the exception of the cellulose industries, and the private forest owners did not have the necessary knowledge to face the new challenges of forest management. The social transformations between the 60s and the 80s gave rise to a growing distance between landowners and forest, allowing the pulp industries to start a policy of acquisition and renting properties for Eucalyptus planting. This species went from an insignificant position to becoming the third forest species in the 70s. It is also notorious because in the 80s, the country’s economy went through a rough period and for some landowners the Eucalyptus plantations allowed them a high and faster source of income (10-12 years), as the prices on the international market were high. This expansion of the Eucalyptus area gave rise to strong campaigns of protest amongst the civilians through environmental associations, which demonstrated against the landscape changes caused by the expansion of an exotic species, and the consequences these new plantations would have on the ground water reserves.

For the first time, after the popular protests against afforestation of the mountainous areas, there were demonstrations against the use of one species planted across the country. Although many of the interventions at this time had a fundamentalist character, in some cases they were right as the competition between
industries gave rise to the establishment of Eucalyptus plantations under inappropriate ecological conditions.

In the 90’s an organizational process was initiated by private forest owners leading to the creation of Forest Associations, which began to change the relationship between the public and private sector. For the first time the forest owners had organizations, which could defend their interests and provide them with technical management assistance. In addition, the Public Administration has now identified spokespeople that communicate with private owners.

Mountains

Some of the most important mountain ranges in the Country are located in the Centro Region. The Central mountain range includes the shale mountain of Lousã (1204m) and Açor (1419m) and the granite one Serra da Estrela (1993), the higher mountain in Portugal continental. All of those mountains represent a potential for the region and the country. For instance, in the last mentioned above has been developed some tourist infrastructure in order to attract visitors. The sky resort, museum of the bread, lodging resorts and other winter sports are the some of the few examples of what has been done in that area. In the western part of the Region the humid mountains: Montemuro (1381m), S. Macário (1052m), Arada (1119m), Freita (1077m), Arestal (859m), and the last Caramulo (1075m). This mountain range it isn’t very much known but has a potentiality due to its diversity and its landscape.

Social Characteristics

The figure below shows that has been a decreasing of population in the municipalities near Aveiro (Westside). On the other hand the increasing of population in some municipalities like Castelo Branco is due to migration within the country either least significant the increasing birth rate is a factor that affects the population’s growth. This general increase shows that the region is been able to attract more people.
Due to equilibrium of the birth and mortality rates in the region, it is the migration that explains the positive of population in the municipalities of Centro region. In accordance to map 1 it is possible to verify that in the municipalities that registered an increase of population this was mainly due to growth of migration in some municipalities though the growth was not enough to compensate the decreasing of population.

It can be argued that there is an unbalanced population growth existing, limited to west cost of Centro region and some singulars growths in the interior.

The municipalities with more than 60 thousand inhabitants are Coimbra, Leiria, Aveiro, Figueira da Foz, in the west cost and Viseu.
In accordance with figure 3, that relates the population with the area, the municipalities broadly occupied are Ílhavo (506 inhabitants per Km²), Coimbra (466 inhabitants per Km²), Ovar (347), Aveiro (367). The regional average is 75 inhabitants per Km². The rest of the region is barely suffering desertification especially municipalities close to the border (east).

In terms of the population there is a high tendency in the inner region and in the east part as well. Exceptions to this are the municipalities of Viseu and Oliveira...
de Frades due to higher capacity of attracting people from neighbouring municipalities leading to an increasing ageing population in those municipalities. In addition the increase of health care has contributed to live expectancy, but on the other hand the number of births is reducing.

**School Enrolment 2001**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nível</td>
<td>Nº</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Nº</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Nº</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nenhum</td>
<td>536 505</td>
<td>30,1</td>
<td>344 903</td>
<td>20,0</td>
<td>277 056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1º Ciclo</td>
<td>854 219</td>
<td>48,4</td>
<td>754 586</td>
<td>46,2</td>
<td>673 958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2º e 3º Cíclos</td>
<td>272 723</td>
<td>15,3</td>
<td>373 402</td>
<td>21,7</td>
<td>404 269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secundário</td>
<td>54 607</td>
<td>3,1</td>
<td>121 168</td>
<td>7,0</td>
<td>241 668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Médio</td>
<td>17 610</td>
<td>1,0</td>
<td>21 323</td>
<td>1,2</td>
<td>9 112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superior</td>
<td>33 153</td>
<td>1,9</td>
<td>66 211</td>
<td>3,9</td>
<td>170 191</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 5**

Source: INE (National statistics institute)

In figure 5 the number and percentage of school enrolment is represented by age in three different moments. There’s been and increase school enrolment on almost all levels. The exception is the 5th year of school that has been reduced, due to a decreasing on births.

Also important is to refer the amount of Universities that are present in the region. For instance one of the oldest Portuguese universities is located in Coimbra. Aveiro University represents a major value in terms of education in various areas such as Planning, Tourism, and Engineering. Viseu University has as well some courses related with tourism practise and the overall university context is very significant.

**Economical Characteristics**

To increase the general well-being, it’s necessary to enhance the GDP and income. Economic development increases a regional economy’s capacity to create wealth for local residents. It depends on deployment of a region’s building blocks – labor, financial capital, facilities and equipment, know-how, land, other physical resources, and public and private infrastructure. On the other hand economic development
implies a qualitative change in what or how goods and services are produced through shifts in resource use, production methods, workforce skills, technology, information, or financial arrangements. (Kane and Sand, 1988. cited by Kane Matt 2004).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main regional accounts aggregates by NUTS III, 2002 and 2003</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>millions euros</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centro</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6

Source: INE (National statistics institute)

As we can see, in the figure above, the Centro region plays an important role in the gross domestic product (GDP). But it also has a rather significant influence in the gross value added (GVA). In terms of employment it represents around one million people which means 1/5 of the overall employment in Portugal. In addition to the growth national income in Centro region is quite significant and contributively for the national context.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main regional accounts by sector (2003)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GVA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>millions euros</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal 112 521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, hunting and forestry; fishing and operation of fish hatcheries and fish farms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry, including energy and construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centro 20 808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, hunting and forestry; fishing and operation of fish hatcheries and fish farms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry, including energy and construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7

Source: INE (National statistics institute)
Figure 7 shows the importance of each sector in the national and regional economy stressed by (GVA) in millions of euros. Centro region is mainly characterized by services activities representing around 13 million Euros, while the industry sector represents around 7 million. The primary sector (agriculture, forest etc) represents only 1 million Euros of the total amount of 20 million Euros. Consequently the employment is closely related to the pictures previously presented in this paragraph.

![Buildings Growth rate between 1991 and 2001](image)

Figure 8

Source: INE (National statistics institute)

The growth building rate seems to me quite interesting to present is this study due to a significant perspective of growth in certain areas in the region. This can be a result of migration population, attracted by municipalities to move there or brought by employment needs and though the consequently increasing on housing demand. On the other hand and this figure can just be seen as complementary view of previous figures.

**Rural Tourism Industry in Centro Region**

According with Cunha (1997), the development of new forms of lodging (where was included the Tourism in Rural Space) more flexible and less burdensome in investments and taking advantage of the existed patrimony enabled, already in the century XX, the widening of the benefits of the tourism in the territorial areas where the economical feasibility of the traditional undertakings was minor. It was in this context that with the law 251/84 was enacted for the first time in this area institutionalizing Rural Tourism. However, with the LAW 256/86, and due subsequent challenges for the sector for the development of the
Tourism in Rural space. With the development of the activity felt the need of altering that Law establishing itself in 2002 with the LAW nº 54/2002 and 55/2002 the new regulations. The relevant issue in this law was the fact of recognizing the sector as:

- Assembly of activities, lodging services and tourist animation for tourists within dwellings of familiar atmosphere, realized and provided through remuneration in rural areas ” (Law - Decreto-Lei nº 54/2002 e 55/2002)

- Lodging subtypes of Tourism in Rural space (TER): Turismo de Habitação, Turismo Rural, Agro-turismo, Turismo da Aldeia, Casas de Campo, Hotéis rurais e parques de Campismo Rurais

According to DGT (National Tourism Board) the five categories of Tourism in rural space are defined based in simple characteristics:

**Tourism in rural space** consists of a set of activities and services supplied through remuneration in rural areas according to the different modalities of lodging, activities and complementary animation services seeking pack creation across rural diversity.

**Turismo de Habitação** is characterized by a lodging service practised in Manor Houses in which architectural value is recognized, doted with quality furniture and decoration as well.

**Turismo Rural** is developed in rustic houses with singular rural characteristics of the involvement, located in the rural core or not faraway.

**Agroturismo** means houses of habitation or its complements integrated in an agricultural exploration, where the participation in works of the proper exploration or forms of complementary animation is allowed to the guests.

**Casas de Campo** are particular houses and situated houses of shelter in agricultural zones that provide a lodging service, whether or not used as proper habitation of its proprietors.

**Turismo de Aldeia** is characterized by the service of lodging given in a minimum set of 5 houses situated in a village and explored particular houses of integrated form, wants or is not used as proper habitation of its proprietors.
The tourism in the rural space represents a generating activity of economic development for rural world. In some rural areas where this activity has being developed positive impacts. This improvement can be expressed by:

- Sustainability of farmer’s income;
- Diversification of the agricultural activities;
- Maintenance and new sorts of employment creation especially for farmers
- Development of new services (of information, transport, communications, animation, etc.);
- Natural landscapes improvements.
- Support of manufactured products;
- Fostering of cultural initiatives;
- Recovery of historical heritage;
- New coming NGO’s

In the end of 2004 there were registered 965 unities offering a global capacity of 4669 rooms and 9815 beds.
Of the total unities the largest percentage belongs to Rural Tourism with 42.1% followed by “Turismo de Habitção” 25,6%.

![Number of Units by Modality (2004)](image)

**Figure 9**
Source: (Portuguese Tourism Board)

Through NUTS II analysis, it is revealed the North region is the one with largest capacity of lodging (4231 beds, which corresponds 2132 rooms distributed by 429 lodging unities. The Centro region is in second place with 2525 beds distributed through 240 lodging unities.
The North region is the most significant one in terms of rural tourism units with 44.5%, secondly Centro region with 24.0%. These both regions together represent almost 80% of the total supply in the country including the autonomous regions of Azores and Madeira.

In this diagram we can observe that there are more foreign tourists using this type of tourism than national’s ones. The high season (between June/August) was close to reach the forty thousand sleeps on the other hand the national sleeps only thirty thousand. The Portuguese tourist only overcame the foreign sleeps in September and around Christmas time (December). Thus it seems that there’s huge imbalances when related to number of sleeps comparatively high/low season.
Estimative of sleeps by modalities and months

This diagram shows the modalities within the Rural Tourism. It is rather clear that Turismo Rural modality is the most sought among the others. Only Turismo de Habitação has similar values especially during the months of June and October.

**Historic Villages**

Portugal’s Historic Villages is one initiative of the Central Region’s land valorization. Fundamental references in the country’s history and culture, Linhares da Beira, Trancoso, Marialva, Castelo Rodrigo, Almeida, Castelo Mendo, Sortelha, Belmonte, Monsanto, Idanha-a-Velha, Castelo Novo and Piódão. These villages played an active role in constructing and establishing Portuguese territory, as seen in innumerable examples of defensive and military architecture, the diversity and artistic quality of its religious heritage, emblems of judicial and municipal power, manor houses and palaces and the uniqueness of their popular architecture.

This initiative has been quite successful since the aim was to preserve architecture and cultural legacy of the remote villages. The success is due to some special plans for these villages in terms of rebuilding old houses. There are some guidelines that owners have to follow especially related to the facades to ensure that the patrimony keep its characteristics while being renovated and promoted for tourism and local development proposes. Furthermore in some villages the upgrading was complete, because the locals weren’t living there anymore due to migration and ageing factors. Nowadays some of the local’s inhabitant’s descendents returned to live there and working in tourism related jobs. These villages have gained a new live, the income for locals has increased but also locals daily live have been changed.
The Importance of the Natural Resources and Cultural Heritage for Tourism

There are several aspects that are relevant for considering regional investments based on tourism development policies. It is necessary to determine and see if they exist or they coexist, in order to assure the success of the investments carried out;

- Landscape;
- Specificity of the fauna and flora autochthones;
- Respect and harmony of the rusticities of the set of the constructions, as well as of the used materials;
- Cultural interests, such as historical monuments and places, parties and pilgrimages, ethnic patrimony, etc.;
- Proximity of population aggregates and polar regions of local commerce;
- Practical conditions for porting or of leisure (hunting, fishes, strolls, etc.);
- Active intervention of them to be able public places, as well as of the associations of local development, in the direction to assure the necessary collective improvements;
- Ability and effectiveness in the promotion of the region the commercialization of the existing units;
- Quality of the shelter installations and lodging and ability of the given services;
- Possibility of participation in the active life of the agricultural explorations.

The Role Regional and Sub-Regional Development Agencies and Tourism Authority

The role of local and regional governments is crucial in the sustainable development process. A synergy should be created in order to promote a balanced development of the territory. In addition the cooperation between governmental institutions and NGO’s plays an important role towards local development.

Thus in this section we try to describe the existent synergies among the major actors on sustainable development within Centro region and the current effective programs.
The Role of Local Governments and Development Institutions

CCDR-Centro - Regional Development Coordinating Commission

The mission of CCDR-Centro is coordinating the regional planning and evaluation. Its responsibility is also to provide access to EU funds for regional and interregional cooperation improvements. Among others CCDR is the institution that is in between the national and the local level, despite lack of an autonomous Portuguese regional decision making institution. This means that CCDR is rather dependent on national government at the same time it does not have enough power and budget to take decisions towards regional development. Though the administration system is based on local and national perspective, there are some institutions working at regional level especially due to Portuguese entrance to EU in 1986. Although the Portuguese constitution foresees the need for the regional dimension such action hasn’t been taken by politic parties although recent increasing discussion about this matter by civil society scientific communities and politicians.

The figure bellow shows the structure of the actual institutional regions.

Source: National planning ministry

ADDLAP - (Development agency Dão Lafões and Alto Paiva)

According to the agency statutes, ADDLAP has the mission of promote the rural development, enable and add value to inter-municipality cooperation among the municipalities associated (Oliveira de Frades, S. Pedro do Sul, Vila Nova de
Paiva, Viseu e Vouzela) as well as regional and national cooperation with public and private institutions with identical propose.

The main principles of ADDLAP association are:

- Promote research that seeks to have a better understanding of realities and potentialities at municipal level.
- Give Support to initiatives that are within the ambit of such studies.
- Technical support to rural development.
- Training programs for locals.
- Promote the tourism in rural space.
- Cooperate with SME’s (small and medium enterprises) strictly related with manufactured products.
- Promote add value and commercialization of local manufactured products.
- Other initiatives within the goals of regional development.

The ADDLAP framework is rather important due to the mission of help municipalities to create synergies and support small but significant for local development. This sort of synergies is only possible in these terms due to a lack of regional authority for regional development.

**NGO’s, National and International Programs**

**Casas da Beira (Rural Tourism Association Beiras)**

Casas da Beira is a non profit organization that was recently constituted aiming to represent its owner’s interest Centro region. The selection of the unities is mainly based on the kind of certification that the unit received by Tourism Board, institution that regulates the sector. Casas da Beira mission is mainly directed towards promotion and selling the unities, although it has other areas of interest like units representation to institutions. In addition the role of the association is to enable and increase the communication between travel agencies, tourism operators and civil society.

From a interview with to Carolina Oliveira executive director of Casas da Beira association. When asked; if “there’s a lack of a regional institutions that support the tourism development?” the answer was:” There is in fact a lack of a regional institution that as the same area of influence (Centro region) “.Carolina Oliveira also points out that it is urgent to create a public-private institution that works on the regional tourism
strategy elaboration according to national vision for the region. “It is quite difficult to conciliate the four tourism sub regions (Dão Lafões, Rota da Luz, Serra da Estrela e Centro”).

What are the factors of successes towards tourism development for the region?

She considered that tourism is an activity that is related with various sectors being though necessary to “guarantee a sustainable management for the ongoing success of the activity for the future”. In addition to this the association has a fundamental role on promoting and “increase the interest/knowledge by tourists regarding culture, traditions, manufactured products, and gastronomy”.

Also considering as a factor of success first, the capability of the region preserve agriculture activities and rural landscape. Secondly, the roles of institutions on safeguard the forest and water resources aiming to keep the environmental characteristics of the region. Thirdly the need of “effective PPP between private entrepreneurs (recreation/restaurants/ Cellars / thermal unities/ horse riding centers…”

How you characterise the level of participation of the associated owner’s?

Carolina Oliveira pointed out that “in Portugal sorrowfully there is no participation tradition; therefore level of participation within the association is also low”.

What is the importance of the internet and networks for the association?

Carolina Oliveira considered that the presence of internet is rather important, because it reduces the time of communication between tourists and the association while work as a way of people know more about the region and the unities, but also among the associated owners the gains on communications are evident. Hence it refers the networks as important tool for reach efficiency and trade of knowledge among the several institutions, NGO’s and entrepreneurs in order to provide goods standards of products and services. In addition the use of internet has also publicity advantages.

PITER (Intervention Programs of Tourism in Rural Space)

In Accordance with Normative Forwarding n.º 35/98, of 28/5, considers integrated tourist programs of regional base (PITER) coherent groups of
complementary projects investment that seeks similar objectives changing though the existent infrastructures for touristic purposes with impact at local, either regional level. In addition to the investments this should have impact on local community’s development. These programs are composed by different sets of projects of tourist vocation, that can have direct impact on tourism services but also projects of background support for tourist services of public nature. The aim of this program is mainly boost local and regional cooperation between the public and private sector, contribute for local and regional touristic development infrastructure supply.

**Leader +**

Leader + is one of four initiatives financed by EU structural funds and is designed to help rural actors to consider the long-term potential of their local region. Encouraging the implementation of integrated, high-quality and original strategies for sustainable development, it has a strong focus on partnership and networks of exchange of experience.

The Leader + initiative were born in the context of the first Structural Funds reform (1989–93). The Commission conceived the Community initiatives as a tool to promote measures of special interest to the Community (such as transnational cooperation), to introduce and test new methods, new concepts in the perspective of integrating them into the mainstream programmes. One of the Community initiatives was Leader I (links between actions for the development of the rural economy). It was launched in 1991 with the aim of improving the development potential of rural areas by calling on local initiative, promoting the acquisition of know-how on local development, and disseminating this know-how in other rural areas. According with José Rodriguez, Director-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, European Commission

“Many national rural development programmes at this time failed to take into account the wider rural interests outside of traditional primary economic sectors, and were mainly administered in a top-down approach”. (José Rodriguez)

Thus, Leader + began in an experimental way, bringing together, at local level, the various issues, actors and resources (this was known as the integrated development approach). The necessary local focus for development was achieved through local action groups (LAGs) which were created from the public, private and voluntary sectors to oversee the implementation of the local Leader program.
Agris (Agriculture and Rural development of Operational Regional Plans)

The strategy of agricultural development is to continue in period 2000 to 2006 has as central objective generally to stimulate a solid alliance between agriculture, while modern and competitive production, and the sustainable development of the agricultural territories environmentally, socially and economically. The agriculture development plan, assigned Agro Program, assumes the general strategy objectives of integrate two priority axes that corresponds the following objectives:

- To improve the agro-forest competitiveness and the agricultural sustainability;
- To strengthen the human potential, the agricultural services and rural zones.

The general objectives of the strategy will be continued through the following set of specific objectives:

- Agro-forest reinforcement thought competitiveness of productive rows activities while safeguarding the environmental values as well economical and social cohesion.
- Incentives to multifunctional use of rural spaces contributing for internal diversification and economical viability.
- Promotion of the quality and the innovation of the agro-forest and agro-agricultural production, with sight to get a supported growth of the productivity
- Valuation of the specific potential agricultural territories by their diversity and support to their economical diversification.
- Improvement of the conditions of life and work of the agriculture populations, through its regeneration and qualification, boosting equality of chances, and improving their jobs guaranteeing access to the essential resources and services to the human development.

INTERREG - III

The Interreg program has impulsed the programs of cross border cooperation. The regions involved in the case were Centro, Estremadura, Castilla y Leon due to territorial border proximity. The first stage was dedicated to full comprehension of the juridical systems of each region as well as social and
economical aspects of both regions. Interreg I had focused on infrastructure project (cross border roads, water supply and sewage) on both side of the border. Various projects have been developed aiming at infrastructure improvements like economical structures, environmental and patrimonial. Later the Interreg II had function to concretize previous projects, exchange information and stimulate cooperation among other projects of common interest. Finally the Interreg III (2000-2006) has the objective to reinforce the social and economical cohesion of the communities, fostering cross border cooperation at national and international level aiming at the balanced development of the territory.

**Interreg III (2000-2006)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Zones(Vision for Centro Region)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A – Cross-border Cooperation</td>
<td>Develop social and economical cross-border cores.</td>
<td>Beira Interior North Beira Interior South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B- Transnational Cooperation</td>
<td>Foster the territorial integration between regions within Europe</td>
<td>Atlantic Space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-regional Cooperation</td>
<td>Policies and instruments improvements; develop of knowledge networks</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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Source: ADTRC

**Successful Factors of Regional Development through Tourism Approach**

Tourism has an enormous potential as an instrument of regional development. However, the opportunities are not the same for each territory and it is easy to understand that, considering the resources available, not every region has the choice to base its development strategy in the touristic industry. Taking this into consideration, the mission of classifying, evaluating and comparing, from a consistent and realistic point of view, several groups of tourist resources became a necessary task and a precondition to define the touristic vocation of a region. This approach allows selecting the best alternative to tourism development.
**Galicia Region**

In order to analyze to what extend spatial concentration is evidence for the supply of rural tourism in the Galicia region. In this perspective, the number of establishments of rural tourism in Galicia is not homogenous. The Lugo province presents a certain specialization in the rural tourism, that could be due appointed to an competitive advantage in terms of touristic resources or, more probably, less development in this province in other types of tourism.

The increased supply of rural tourism is mainly due to grants given to this sector. The Galicia regional governments setup a regional strategy for tourism development gathering all the available resources that might be relevant for tourism development. The major values considered were the natural landscape (sea coast and rural areas), religious and Celtic legacies. Through this endogenous resource the strategy was to promote investments in recreation activities in rural areas taking advantage of the natural resources (rivers, forest), investments and grants for rural tourism accommodation. At same time investments in infrastructures were made to ensure the well functioning and basic comfort in such areas as well as improvements on accessibility. The region took advantage of the airports located in the region which are rather important for foreign tourists to reach the region easily.

Although Galicia has been known by its religious aspect (Santiago de Compostela) which brings thousands of people every year, government fosters rural tourism. The strategy of Galicia was also complemented by marketing the region on tourism fairs, which improved the role of the region in this kind of tourism. The region has been growing in the last few years due to a strong marketing passing the idea of strong regional identity and pleasant places, as well as multi kinds of tourist organized routs and activities that have called the attention of tourism dealers and agencies.

**Algarve Region**

The Algarve region is located in the south of Portugal. To understand the tourism sector in Portugal, it is important to have a look at how a region can be developed so fast. For this study I thought it was relevant to study this, to understand the dynamics created in this region mainly characterized by tourism development. Then I pick some good practises, advantages and inconveniences of such regional strategic orientations and apply to the Centro region, despite all the territorial disparities. It is rather valuable also to relate the factors that lead to development especially those related with governance issues among others. Although the Algarve region has different characteristics from the Centro Region, in theory they should work on the same basis according to national and regional
plans. But the fact is that Algarve has been target of huge investments more than other regions in the country. It seems that it is the only region that has a structured regional vision for the future, especially on tourism development working as a cluster, affecting industry, services, and local population development.

Among all others aspects that enable a region to steer towards regional development, with a strong basis in tourism are the environmental resources. These factors are the most important values that enable the touristic development as well as regional internationalization.

The Algarve tourism board has developed, during the last decades, a plan for tourism development where municipalities are invited to participate and contribute in an active way towards regional development. For instance the Algarve tourism board and the regional Authority CCDR Algarve have developed, during the years, special synergies, working together when applying for infrastructure. Just before the European championship 2004, the regional Authority (CCDR) where was front of the line to apply for the stadium construction in the Algarve region. In this process the regional scale seems to be relevant because, municipalities couldn’t afford such investments having to recur to inter municipal cooperation lead by the regional Authority as representative was of common interest for the region.

Finally, the CCDR-Algarve framework present in the Algarve Region, is the main lesson that Centro Region can learn. The good functioning of the institutions at the regional level is the key factor for the Algarve Region’s development success.

**SWOT Analysis**

Centro region is environmentally, economically and socially heterogeneous considering the different municipalities or sub regions (NUTS III). The spatial singularity turns out that the characterization of the whole region is quite extended and not useful for the present study. Thus the suitable solution was to produce a swat analysis based on the most relevant spatial aspects on the Centro region. In the next chapter the discussion will be mainly based on this task that was elaborated through analysis of data presented above and also based on empirical knowledge. The present SWOT analysis is derived from an extent one, more descriptive (please see the appendix 2) reason why presenting this one in this chapter to form of a conclusion, aiming to be less descriptive and more objective.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SWOT Analysis</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Accessiblity</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Good regional location (center of the country; border with Spain)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tourism development</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Dense and green forest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Fauna and Flora diversity.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural Heritage</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Roman Legacy (roads, churches, other interesting monuments).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Historic Villages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food and Beverage</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Wine production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Traditional products (Cheese, ham, honey)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Gastronomy</td>
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</table>
| **Natural Resources** | • Dense and diverse green forest.  
  • Fauna and flora richness. | • Devastation by forest fires  
  • Forest belongs manly to private owners.  
  • Forest legislation doesn’t allow use of forest by people with the purpose of leisure. | • Apply efficient strategies for preventing forest fires.  
  • Creation of support infrastructure for tourism recreation and leisure. | • Without a sustainable forest management, decrease the chances of a regional development based on tourism based-investments.  
  • Employment generation. | • Produce some changes on forest legislation towards a multifunctional forest.  
  • Support projects based on ecological. Tourism. |

| **Research and Knowledge** | • Increasing school enrolment (especially higher education) | • Abandon of skill labor force to other regions(Porto/Lisbon) | • Recruit local university students. | • Seasonal employment. | • Establish cooperation between universities and entrepreneurs and Ngo’s. |

| **Governance** | • Constitution of regions already predicted in Portuguese constitution | • Political interest that prejudice the national development and planning efficiency | • Improvements on governance  
  • Increasing of communication between Ngo’s, entrepreneurs. | • Fail the implementation. | • Regional Plan based for tourism for the region. |

| **Public Participation and NGO's** | • New coming Ngo's(rural tourism) | • Quality of some units.  
  • Low union spirit.  
  • Tourism board pro activity role is low. | • Promote local cooperation between unit owners and local services and commerce.  
  • Built up cooperative of materials used by rural tourism owner’s(tent, pool instruments so fourth) | • Financial support of Ngo’s can not happen. | • Establish quality standards though evaluation and certification processes.  
  • Build networks of communications and central reserves. |

Source: Own
Chapter IV

Discussion

Tourism Development and its Impacts

The tourism sector is an important industry in the global economy. Traveling between countries and regions has increased in this globalised world. The gradual increase in income, technological progress and knowledge has led to a society more interested in visiting and knowing more about different cultures. New destinations and segments of tourism appear in different parts of the world each one with special characteristics and singularities. In the last decades large amounts of investments around the world in infrastructure have been made for tourist purposes such airports, roads, rail, accommodations and landscape qualification.

Tourism has also been recognized in the European Union as an important industry for the economy. For many rural communities in particular, tourism frequently represents an alternative option to revitalise the local economy. However, sustainable growth depends on respect for and development of cultural and natural heritage. Developers, tourist managers, local populations, and tourists themselves are the main actors in the overall process. The principles of sustainability, competitiveness, and open markets should frame the development. Cooperation is also important; all actors can contribute to a sustainable development in such areas and for such populations.

The Portuguese strategy for the tourism sector has been mainly concentrated and assumed by political power in the Algarve and Lisbon region. Despite some investments made in other regions in the country, these seem to disperse and have not been part of a regional action plan.

The Importance of Natural Resources to Eco and Rural Tourism

The natural resources are the basis for Eco and Rural tourism establishment and success. Therefore diversity of fauna, flora and sensitive ecosystems has to be preserved and constantly evaluated. Also the water quality and abundance are of importance for tourism development and especially for local inhabitants. The
factors should be on front line of considerations when planning for touristic development purposes. Local governments should guarantee mechanisms of wild life protection and forest maintenance when developing planning instruments that are available to face such problems. In addition to several programs promoted by the EU, such as INTERREG, LEADER AGRIS, FEDER are of rather importance and through its sustainable development can be easily ensured. In addition some municipalities have had developed programs, subsides and stimulating private investments and public infrastructure upgrading or construction. On the other hand Some NGO’s have been developing networks and setup strategies for environmental preservation and change the actual use of forests and water courses.

**SWOT Analysis**

In this sub-section the discussion will be based on the on the most relevant aspects selected from the previous chapters. The SWOT was in my point of view a good way to come up with the discussion through a set of information filtered and analyzed providing to the reader the possibility of built a own opinion. All aspects selected had been previously target of problem formulation and explanation as well, and at last some brief suggestions for each topic selected.

**Regional Location of Centro Region**

Centro region is located between important regions either Portuguese or Spanish. Considering the opportunities available due to a territorial proximity, cooperation between those can be fostered. In one hand, Centro region share touristic resources that are rather relevant for tourism purposes especially with North Region and also with Lisbon and Tagus Valley (South). For instance the Douro River is considered World heritage vineyard landscapes by (UNESCO) due to environmental values but also for the unique characteristics of the soil shape (sulks) and also for Porto Wine production. On the other hand cross-border cooperation between Portugal and Spain is barely important for both, in terms of regional development and growth especially in tourism industry. Some projects of cultural tourism approximation (Concerts between Portuguese and Spanish Bands) have been done. The ongoing cooperation also cross entrepreneurs trade of knowledge and other projects of tourism interest, especially around the border due
to resources share. In addition I consider that cooperation is the best way of improving the region once that Centro regional neighbors have higher probabilities of arrange partnerships with others region, which is not favorable to the Centro’s future regional development. Hence Spanish market is rather important, because is geographically nearby, the language is similar, and representing around 40 million potential visitors. Spanish Tourists are spending more days in vacations in Portugal, mainly during short breaks periods.

Finally, in my opinion, the investment on infrastructure accessibility is needed but also flexibleness of the transportation system in terms of frequency and costs. Centro region represents the most important region, by which foreign visitors and goods arrive from Europe by land. The main weakness in terms of transportation is the train connection North-Centro-Spain. Investments are being discussed by national government regarding the path that high speed train shall pass. The west-east region is not connected by train. Though the West/North communications are made by road where the traffic is intense and consequently less environmentally friendly. In addition the fact of inexistence of such alternative means that industry settlement selects other regions to establish their companies due to attractive transport alternatives for raw materials and distribution chip transportation. Also improvements on roads within the region are needed, especially towards airport and Spain, with the purpose of reducing the time of transportation, either increasing the transport efficiency and turn the region more accessible and visited. Thought I suggest the creation of a new axe between West and east shall be prioritized in futures investments in accessibility in the region.

Cultural Heritage and Historic Patrimony

Centro region has a remarkable set of traditions, monuments and history. Many of these are relevant aspects that should be addressed into tourism action development plans. The richness of the region, especially regarding the roman time, from which it possible to see roads, churches, aqueducts, bridges, water meals and other relevant legacy. On the other hand the historic villages are also especial representation of historical legacy where Portuguese culture still present in terms of architecture, costumes and traditions. Recently some municipalities and the tourism board all together, decided to take action towards preservation and renovation of some villages for touristic purposes, ensuring at same time that local populations still live there, that the patrimony is maintained and fostered. Although some successful programs towards historic villages many things to do, regarding accessibility to these remote places, and the ongoing degradation of relevant interesting monuments. Also improve routes which interlink several monuments nearby in order to make these places attractive enough, once that one monument
might not have sufficient relevant if considered by it self, but rather a set of several points of interest crossed over with complementary activities for tourists. Though to achieve a certain level of attraction restrictive policies regarding new housing construction in Villages identified as representative of architectural value and also support new projects that aim local development especially if brought from local residents.

Such policies and framework opportunities are rather important for the region and local populations, once that help to maintain locals and attract new comers to help develop such places. In this matter EU funds can have an important impact enabling economically, private and public projects. Finally, after such investment and fostering, inclusion of these spots in promotional regional touristic marketing campaigns are essential for the success bringing back investment revenues realized previously.

**Food, Beverage and Manufactured Products**

In this mater Portugal in general is quite none. The gastronomy is rather diverse within the country. Each region has gorgeous specialties according to local agriculture production in the past. For instance in the south of Portugal the dish “açorda” which was original from the times of economical crises in times of war, scarceness of goods lead to a creation of new dishes by locals in order to subsist. Manly, this dish is made by water, bread, and spices because at the time where quite easy to get/produce. Nowadays it is a mark on regional gastronomy while connected with some history. On the other hand the wine production is an important sector. In addition to this there are some complementary productions that are still being manufactured. These products are for instance the honey, cheese, bread, olive oil, wine, compotes. Some producers had to renew installations and apply for the quality of product certification (IOS) International Organization for Standardization. The wine production is spread the country but the most well none regions productions are the Douro where Porto wine is produced, the Centro region where Dão and Bairrada wine is produced and the last is Alentejo region wine production. In certain places where the wine is produced it is already possible for tourists to participate in the all process of wine production or only to visit some caves and degust some wines.

In my point of view the tourism sector, especially the rural tourism has an important role is this matter. Producers are not associated which makes their approach rather difficult. The need of critical mass is barely important for successful partnerships among the producers and rural tourism unities. Partnerships can be developed aiming the promotion of such goods close to
tourist. In addition the creation of routes related with wine, food, and traditionally manufactured products have great representative feasible characteristics, once is just a matter of coordinate resources and plan tracks. It seems though a win-win situation because in one hand the tourist will be pleased to come in touch with local products and producers, high quality products, also the rural tourism owner is increasing the quality of the service while helping on endogenous development. On the other hand producers can improve their quality and quantity production means increasing of labor in a sector that is decreasing adepts, especially in lagging areas. The final outcome of this suggestion is that tourist buys products to bring back to their home countries and the promotion of the region is ongoing. Cumulatively websites regarding the selling of these products might represent a serious case of success.

**Natural Resources**

The resources are the most important part of the whole set that Centro Region has to offer regarding rural tourism. Without that the region will be outfitted and though tourism will be reduce to a set of lodgings spread around the region. Thus it is rather important to conserve and improve the management of natural resources. In the last decades the protection of streams, rivers and forests has been weak. Municipalities are responsible for the lack of inspection of certain kinds of industries that constantly pollute and harm species, environment, and decrease quality of live standards of local population. For some years now there’s some awareness regarding this issues, steering the mentalities of population that is complaining to environmental NGO’s and also some policies applied to the industry sector characterized by benefits to those who care about environment and apply high taxes to those who still pollute. Due to several mountains the region has many rivers and streams. This represents a major value for nautical sports, and other recreational activities. On the other hand the land use in Centro region is characterized by forest cover. The forest is a great economical, social, and environmental resource as explained in previous chapters though it should looked after carefully. Firstly the main weakness of the forests is indubitable the fires year after year. The causes are identified as the high seasonal temperatures in the summer, the low cleaning by owners, low equipment of forest fire fighters (especially planes). Too many owners and small properties enable the forest management is difficult. Furthermore the property right’s, which generally means that forest, is not for public use if owned by a private but also by state.

In my opinion there’s a great opportunity to tourism entrepreneurs to get involved in forest maintenance, by selecting the areas more important around their houses,
informing municipalities of relevance to development of complementary activities of their unities. On the other hand municipalities should consider in the local plans for the forest, or other relevant natural resource localized on the edges of rural unities. In addition agriculture is very important to keep the landscape as it has been while supplying goods. This activity has to be fostered especially regarding the bio agriculture that as less impact on soil, water and food. Hence governments can play a proactive role by enabling projects based on eco and rural tourism, once that can increase of the natural resources surveillance and maintenance, while contributing to the local economy and development.

Despite tourism development contributes to environmental improvements in rural areas, negative effects can be expected if miss planned. Though the capacity of charge of certain places have to be measured by establishing limits of construction of tourism based infrastructure such as accommodation and recreational activities nearby protected areas, water courses and so forth. In addiction if governments don’t be aware of negative impacts that massive tourism development can bring certain villages, rural areas, might be mischaracterized for instance by building pressures or simply by exhausting the environmental resources as water supply, sewage overrides.

The tourism in Centro region should be focus on environmental quality and simplicity once that, the key attractiveness lies on the environment strengths of the region unlike Algarve region where the main attractiveness is sun and beach.

Finally it is rather important that governments set up a strategy for the forest maintenance, not only based on prevention of the forest fires but also for feasible activities steering the idea that the forest is anymore seen as a dark, inaccessible place, rather a place where locals and tourists can enjoy, assuming the forest an multifunctional characteristic for recreation, economic income, and wildlife habitat. To enable this idea chances on forest legislation are need particularly regarding the land use, and seasonal forest compulsory cleaning.

**Research and Knowledge**

Centro region has several universities around the region, which to my point of view represent potential gain for the region in terms of attracting young people to study while contributing to knowledge development especially regarding the region. Universities have an important role on helping students knowing how to analyze and produce knowledge. Though universities while teaching students can help entrepreneurs and governmental institutions to improve their work or simply add some new useful perspectives of certain issue. In this sense cooperation
between universities and civil society should be increased for both parties. Other relevant aspect is to ensure that the region is attractive enough to retain the young skilled labor force in the region representing an advantage for competitiveness especially in tourism industry. On the other hand the seasonal character of tourism can move away skilled labor force, thought a complementary strategy to face periods where there’s a reduction on such activity in need. This can be tackled by increase the flexibility of jobs, training programs during these periods. In addition in other way of tacking this seasonality is establish a strategy for these special seasons by reducing the prices, creation of new tourism packages, aggressive marketing aiming to fulfill vacancies on tourism unities.

Governance

The governance concept as stressed in Chapter II regards openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence. In my point of view this are important aspects towards good governance. Hence to overcome these aspects is of rather importance to have a decentralized government where policies and decisions can be applied by top down approach, as an effect of local and regional concerns and requests, towards sustainable development. In addition the importance of the existence of different levels of governmental bodies is essential due to different planning scales useful for efficient usage land used with high standards of social satisfaction.

According to EU the regional dimension is considered as a homogenous territorial unit different from other regions. Though the regional dimension when concerning to spatial planning it is rather essential, once that relates social, economical, and environmental issues at a top scale than local level, addressing regional policies to each municipality as a whole. Regions also have bargain power rather municipalities when apply for investments or simply to attract companies to municipality/region territory. The dimension is though relevant but the endogenous resources as well as a starting point for trade at most various levels within the region and especially between regions where share and mutual gains though partnerships involving the private and public sectors.

Since 1974 when Portuguese constitution was updated due to new coming democratic system, was stated that in next years the creation of regions have to be done, because was recognized that has a relevant importance for the effectiveness of policies appliance and increases the participation of local population in the planning process. Over the last years the discussion about the regional dimension as been increasing by scientific community, politicians, civil society, but no
effective action from as already come out. It seems to me, that some political parties have especial interest in keep the power concentrated, increasing the chances of easily turn policies, when they take the power, towards serving group interests instead of developing policies that increase territorial cohesion and sustainable development. Only in the past few years the actual government announced that regions will be finally created and that all the steeps to that are being studied.

If central government forward with the regionalization process the governance will be certainly boosted especially by NGO’s that can easily communicate with governmental institutions about regional problems and needs, and also have a fast feedback. The aim of the all process is to increase the regional competitiveness of each region through the delegation of powers from national government to regional governments. Of course that is importance issues and steps that have to been studied and discussed, especially regarding the competences that the regions will have and the level of autonomy of each region respect for national policies and priorities.

Finally, regions have opportunity to start develop plans in the most various areas, where a master plan that consider all aspects relevant for the sustainable regional planning. Then specialized plan can be created according regional priorities and national demands, especially regarding tourism development.

**The Importance of NGO’s on Tourism Development**

NGO’s can play an important role in sustainable tourism development. If governments recon the efforts of such organizations towards governance improvement the outcome would be certainly better. Nowadays in Centro region the role of NGO’s, especially those related with tourism represent a add value to the region due to the blurring of governmental competences and bureaucratic issues, which empower even more the work that is been done by such organizations. On the other hand the role of such organizations is quite important especially the NGO Casas da Beira which was built by rural tourism owners that felt a need of being represented, and take the lead in some issues that they considered fundamental for the sustainability of the sector. For instances some unities that are receiving guests had low level of quality in the services provided, which has negative effects on other unities that are following quality standards and consequently promoting this kind of tourism. In addition owners felt that was all unities have similar problems and the only way of facing it was to be part of an organization with enough units in order to contact with local governments and
tourism promoters such as agencies, or operators. This means that unity is power and power is need to achieve certain goals as: improve rural tourism and the surroundings; increase the communication and creation of partnerships among the unities and tourism entrepreneurs (recreation, Gastronomy, manufactured products, cultural agencies); easy access to subventions from central government or EU for feasible developments projects.

In this sense I think that all rural tourism unities should be compulsory associated to a certain organization in order to increase the quality of the sector the and also to facilitate the communication process between governments and the unities among others groups of interest.

**Final conclusions**

The tourism sector plays an important role on sustainable rural development. It stimulates infrastructure investment and its benefits spill over to other activities. However, when implementing tourism projects, the full impact on such activities must be assessed in terms of natural resource degradation and unstable seasonal employment.

Governments should be aware that massive tourism activities can prejudice the quality of live of local inhabitants, environmental resources as well as natural reserves and wild life. The pressure by investors in sensitive areas must be contained by implementing restrictive land use expansion policies.

The Centro region has the potential to improve the sector and consequently to boost its sustainable development. The region has the required resources, infrastructure, and accommodation to become a full fledged tourist destination. The key for success, however, lies in a balanced cooperation between local business leaders, government, and NGOs. Reducing information asymmetries between stakeholders ensures that the potential benefits from establishing this sector will be fully absorbed by the local community.

Finally, the need of an intermediate level of decision-making is needed to face regional governance issues. This intermediary can be in the form of a regional institution, as long as it is given effective decision making powers and is characterized by openness and closeness towards civil society and entrepreneurs.

However, a real challenge to develop a well established tourism industry lies in maintaining its natural resource base. Years of neglect, mismanagement, and
misguided action plans have been especially pernicious to forests. As such, a close cooperation between all stakeholders is required to ensure that forests will survive alongside the development of the tourism industry.

**Further research**

From the present study some issues remain to be answered regarding the evaluation of future tourism development plans in Centro region. Futures research should focus on measuring the regional cultural heritage and identity as a way to boost the competitiveness of regions. Finally, a useful approach to understand which factors contribute to the success of projects is through a regional marketing survey which will make it easier to identify critical issues regarding the tourism industry.
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2/5/2006

Interviews

Dão Lafões Forest Office
NGO -Casas da Beiras -Rural Tourism Association in Centro Region
Appendixes

Appendix 1

Sells Through Internet

Source: UNWTO (World Tourism Organization)
## Appendix 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Threats</th>
<th>Suggestions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accessibility</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Good regional location (center of the country; border with Spain)&lt;br&gt;• Highways (North/South and West/East)</td>
<td>• Train accessibility&lt;br&gt;• Distant airport&lt;br&gt;• Road safety problems (IP3)</td>
<td>• Increasing of inter-regional and cross border cooperation among other regions.</td>
<td>• Neighbor attractive regions can reduce investments opportunities on the region.&lt;br&gt;• Safety can demobilizes people to travel to the region</td>
<td>• Construction of rail road between West and East&lt;br&gt;• Improvements of roads conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tourism development</strong>&lt;br&gt;• West coast for tourism development purposes.&lt;br&gt;• Natural resources and landscape.&lt;br&gt;• Fauna and Flora diversity.</td>
<td>• Lack of coastal tourism plans and vision.&lt;br&gt;• Underdeveloped areas and lack of infrastructure.&lt;br&gt;• Low accommodation offer.&lt;br&gt;• Excessive industry concentration near ria</td>
<td>• Promote the cost touristic development.&lt;br&gt;• Closeness to Porto Airport.&lt;br&gt;• Development plans can whelp to bring a sustainable management.</td>
<td>• Construction pressures over protected areas (ria, shores).&lt;br&gt;• Delay of a regional plan for coastal areas.&lt;br&gt;• Pollution of ria de Aveiro</td>
<td>• Accelerate the process for coast plan.&lt;br&gt;• Improvements on governance, by local and regional government.&lt;br&gt;• Increase the accommodation offer.&lt;br&gt;• Stimulate cooperation&lt;br&gt;• Assume rural tourism as a strategic vision for the region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural Heritage</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Roman Legacy (roads, churches, other interesting)</td>
<td>• Degradation of the heritage.&lt;br&gt;• Broken connection between points of interest.</td>
<td>• Bring old roman villages to the map again.&lt;br&gt;• Renew and preserve heritage through</td>
<td>• Continuous abandon of populations due to remoteness issues.&lt;br&gt;• Lost of cultural</td>
<td>• Touristic routes creation by linking monuments and important cultural heritage.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
monuments).
- Medieval Inner cites and castles
- Historic Villages
- Difficult access though some are located in very remote areas.
- Lack of support infrastructure for touristic visitors
- Lot’s of places are almost unknown.
- partnerships either access the EU funding.
- Spillover effect in case of success.
- Set restrictive housing policies and evaluation
- identity of local populations.
- Degradation and vandalism of cultural legacy.
- Certain localities can be too much touristic.
- Investments on cultural heritage maintenance.
- Investments on promotion and marking.
- Events on historic places connecting History/Tourism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food and Beverage</th>
<th>Natural Resources</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Wine production</td>
<td>- Dense and diverse green forest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Traditional products(Cheese, ham, honey)</td>
<td>- Several rivers and stream courses with special focus on Zêzere and Mondego</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Gastronomy</td>
<td>- Mountains (Caramulo,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Product certification bureaucracy.</td>
<td>- Devastation by forest fires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Producers are spreaded/weak union producers.</td>
<td>- Forest belongs manly to private owners.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Forest legislation doesn’t allow use of forest by people with the purpose of leisure.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Inefficiency of forestry planning</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Apply efficient strategies for preventing forest fires.</td>
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<td>- Provide to fire fighters headquarters adequate and sufficient equipment.</td>
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<td>- Reorganize the forest, by area and</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Radical decreasing of the forest surface and consequent increasing of co2.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Without a sustainable forest management, decrease the chances of a regional development based on tourism based-investments.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Produce some changes on forest legislation towards a multifunctional forest.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Evaluate and penalize owner's that don’t maintain their land forest.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Support projects based on ecological. Tourism.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Boost recreational act ivies near classified</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Evolve tourists on wine production.
- Create/improve routes.
- Increase sales of regional products by put them available on rural tourism unities.
- Extinguish of some activities production if not supported.
- Increasing of prices if supply doesn’t increase.
- Increase the quality of regional products
- Stimulate the production of regional products

- Investments on cultural heritage maintenance.
- Investments on promotion and marking.
- Events on historic places connecting History/Tourism
| Research and Knowledge | Increasing school enrolment (especially higher education) | Important universities in the region | Low wages especially lagging areas. | Abandon of skill labor force to other regions (Porto/Lisbon) | Tourism can foster employment creation. | Recruit local university students. | Skill labor force means increasing of competitiveness | Seasonal employment. | Low wages | Establish cooperation between universities and entrepreneurs and Ngo’s. | Enable tourism related internships in the region. |
| Governance | Constitution of regions already predicted in Portuguese constitution | Socialist party announced that is willing to enable the regions | Political interest that prejudice the national development and planning efficiency | Re-adaptation of new structures. | Long process | Improvements on governance | Increasing of communication between Ngo’s, entrepreneurs. | Improve the regional Identity in the region either outside. | Lack of services supply by institutions during changing process | Fail the implementation. | Regional Plan based for tourism for the region. | Action plan (Implementation/evaluation) |

- Landscape spots. (ex. Horse ridding, rafting and so forth)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>creation process soon.</th>
<th>regions best practices</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Participation and NGO’s</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Centro region as a important percentage of rural tourism units in the whole country</td>
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<tr>
<td>• New coming Ngo’s(rural tourism)</td>
<td>• Quality of some units.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Low union spirit.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Few guides in the region.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Tourism board pro activity role is low.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Difficulties on implementation and support by local governments to Ngo’s</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Promote local cooperation between unit owners and local services and commerce.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Built up cooperative of material used by rural tourism owner’s(tent, pool instruments so fourth)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Creation of routes and interlink several activities.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• A lack of a feasible plan for rural tourism can decrease the number of unities.</td>
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<td>• Financial support of Ngo’s can not happen.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Establish quality standards though evaluation and certification processes.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Build networks of communications and central reserves.</td>
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<td>• Foster owners and tourism stakeholders to participate in planning activities and help to develop policies.</td>
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Source: Own
Appendix 3

Note: Centro region appear as Beiras (alternative designation for the region

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<th>National Strategy for Tourism by Region</th>
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<tr>
<td>Porto a Norte da</td>
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<td>Portugal</td>
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<td>Beiras</td>
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<td>Lisboa</td>
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<td>Alentejo</td>
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<td>Algarve</td>
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<td>Madeira</td>
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<td>Açores</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Portuguese Tourism Board
Appendix 4

Centro Region Map

Source: Portugal Virtual