ERSA 2008

48th European Congress
of the Regional Science
Association International

CULTURE, COHESION AND COMPETITIVENESS: REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES

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Welcome

Dear Colleagues and Guests

On behalf of the Local Organising Committee, I am delighted to welcome you to this, the 48th European Congress of the Regional Science Association International - ERSA 2008.

ERSA 2008 is jointly hosted by the Department of Civic Design at the University of Liverpool and the British and Irish Section of the RSAI. A team of regional scientists from throughout Britain and Ireland has worked hard to create a particularly strong conference programme.

Chosen as European Capital of Culture for 2008, the City of Liverpool has been the focus for numerous regeneration initiatives. The City has changed dramatically in the last decade and is rapidly emerging as one of the UK's leading centres for learning, culture, entertainment, sport and endeavour. The Congress will, I am sure, provide an excellent opportunity to see, and reflect on, the substantial progress that has been made. The City has mounted a major programme of cultural events extending throughout the year and I hope you will have the chance to sample these during your brief stay.

The Department of Civic Design, the world's first planning school, will celebrate its centenary in 2009 and the Congress is one of several special events intended to recognise this important milestone. Despite its title, which might suggest a rather narrow architectural focus, the Department of Civic Design has a proud tradition of inter-disciplinary research in regional science embracing urban and regional analysis, planning methodology, geodemographics, demographic-economic analysis and strategic environmental assessment.

The overarching theme for the Liverpool Congress is **Culture, Cohesion and Competitiveness - Regional Perspectives,** chosen because it encapsulates a number of different aspects that are topical not only for Liverpool but also across the whole of Europe. Plenary lectures, special sessions, round table discussions and a range of technical excursions ensure that this theme is fully reflected in the Congress Programme.

This year's Congress promises to be the largest gathering of regional scientists ever. The response to the Call for Papers earlier this year, with more than 1250 abstracts, was a clear indication of what was to follow. The Congress has attracted not only European, but world-wide interest, as the list of participants demonstrates. During the course of the next few days we expect to welcome more than 800 delegates and some 900 papers will be presented.

I am very pleased to welcome you to Liverpool and I hope that the Congress and the City together provide an experience that is stimulating, inspiring, rewarding and enjoyable.

Peter Batey
Chairman, Local Organising Committee ERSA 2008, and
Lever Professor of Town and Regional Planning, University of Liverpool

Sponsorship of the Congress

The Local Organising Committee wishes to thank the sponsors of the Congress. Without their generous support, the Congress could not have been organised.

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Venue

The Congress venues and accommodation are all located in Liverpool city centre making this a 'compact congress'. It is possible to see the city centre on foot and all Congress venues are no more than twenty minutes apart. Public transport and an abundant supply of taxis help to ensure that you can move about the city easily and safely.

The Congress begins at the Liverpool Convention Centre, on the Mersey Waterfront. This purpose-designed building opened in January 2008 and provides excellent conference facilities. The Opening Ceremony and the Plenary Sessions take place here. Please note that the plenary lectures start on Wednesday evening (with Edward Glaeser) and continue on Thursday morning (John Flamson, Sir Alan Wilson and Tony Venables).

On Thursday lunchtime the Congress moves to the University of Liverpool Precinct about one kilometre away. Buses will be provided to enable delegates to make this transfer. At the University the Congress organisation base will be in the Civic Design Building on the corner of Abercromby Square. The Congress will use a number of rooms in University buildings around, and close to, the Square. Lunch and coffee breaks will be serviced from a series of conveniently accessible points near to these rooms. A map is provided in this Programme giving details of the rooms that will be used for Parallel Sessions. These rooms are labelled A-ZZ (28 in all) and these labels are also used to refer to Congress Sessions. For example, Session 1.B takes place between 2.00 and 3.30pm on Thursday in Room B, Lecture Theatre 1 in the Civic Design Building.

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The Local Organising Committee also wishes to thank
Marie Hervo, Executive Director of ERSA, for her invaluable support.

Registration Desk, Messages and Emergencies

The registration desk will be located initially at the Liverpool Convention Centre where the Opening Ceremony and the Plenary Sessions will take place. Registration will begin at 12.30pm on Wednesday 27th August, remaining open until the start of the Opening Reception (8.30pm). It will re-open at 8.00am on Thursday 28th August, again at the Convention Centre. It will then move, with the Congress itself, to the University of Liverpool Precinct at lunchtime on Thursday, re-opening at 2.30pm. The Congress administration base there will be on the ground floor of the Civic Design Building. The location of this building is shown on the map of the University Precinct. The administrative base will remain open until 5.30pm on Thursday, and on Friday and Saturday it will be open between 9.00am and 5.30pm.

There will be a team of volunteer students ready to help you and to provide technical assistance in the session rooms. ERSA 2008 Volunteers will be easily identified through their blue tee-shirts.

Messages and Changes in the Programme and Emergency LOC Contact

General announcements, changes and updates to the Programme will be displayed on the Message Boards located in the Civic Design Building. This is also where messages for delegates will be pinned-up. During conference hours you can contact the Congress administration base, telephone number 07528 275566. In case of an emergency, you can contact a member of the LOC on 0151 794 7432.

Programme Overview

TIME	WEDNESDAY 27.8.2008	THURSDAY 28.8.2008	FRIDAY 29.8.2008	SATURDAY 30.8.2008	SUNDAY 31.8.2008
09:00 - 10.30		Keynote Lectures Plenary Session	Parallel Sessions 4	Parallel Sessions 9: Young Scientists	
10:30 - 11:00		Coffee Break	Coffee Break	Coffee Break	
11:00 - 12:30		Keynote Lectures Plenary Session	Parallel Sessions 5	Parallel Sessions 10	Post-Congress Excursion to the Lake District
12:30 - 14:00	Registration	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	
14:00 - 15:30		Parallel Sessions 1	Parallel Sessions 6	Parallel Sessions 11	
15:30 - 16:00		Coffee Break	Coffee Break	Coffee Break	
16:00 - 17:30		Parallel Sessions 2	Parallel Sessions 7 / Technical Excursions	Parallel Sessions 12	
17:30 - 19:00		Parallel Sessions 3	Parallel Sessions 8		
19:00 - 20:00	Opening Ceremony Keynote Lecture & Welcome Reception		Informal Reception	Formal Dinner	
20:00 - 22:00					
22:00 - 23:00					

Registration spans Thursday morning through Friday morning columns.

SATURDAY 4.00pm - 5.30pm　　　　　　**RENDALL LECTURE THEATRE 1**

KNOWLEDGE NETWORKS (O-Session: 12.K)

Roderik Ponds, Frank Van Oort, Koen Frenken,
Academic knowledge externalities: spatial proximity and networks (588)

Jessica Barker
*Post-industrial peripheral communities, the knowledge economy
and social exclusion (731)*

Dafna Schwartz, Raphael Bar-El, Miki Malul
*A joint virtual advanced technology incubator:
a new pattern of Israeli-Palestinian economic cooperation (1130)*

Giuseppe Pace*
Port/city relationship in the Mediterranean cities: a learning region approach (1050)

Fernando P., Rui A. R. Ramos
*Tourism and new governance structures, a relation with potential to develop
depressed rural areas: the example of the municipality of Almeida (Portugal) (938)*

SATURDAY 4.00pm - 5.30pm　　　　　　**RENDALL LECTURE THEATRE 5**

NEW TECHNOLOGIES, INNOVATION AND SPACE 8 (S-Session: 12.N)

Riccardo Crescenzi
*Human capital mobility, knowledge flows, innovation systems and the innovative
performance of the EU regions (980)*

Francesco Antonio Anselmi*
*Knowledge - training - learning - innovation: the virtuous circle for the development
of the productive systems in the twenty-first century (939)*

SATURDAY 4.00pm - 5.30pm　　　　　　**RENDALL LECTURE THEATRE 7**

DISPARITIES IN REGIONAL COMPETITIVENESS 2 (O-Session: 12.P)

Martijn Burger, Ronald Wall
Measuring urban competition using a relational approach (1045)

Eoin O'Leary, Don Webber*
The role of structural change in productivity convergence among EU regions (875)

Corsatea Teodora
Geography of research. The formation of competitive clusters (1007)

SATURDAY 4.00pm - 5.30pm　　　　　　**RENDALL LECTURE THEATRE 8**

CULTURAL REGENERATION AND ITS EVALUATION 2 (S-Session: 12.Q)

Ignazio Vinci
Culture and urban regeneration: the role of the European Union regional policy (419)

Roberta Gemmiti
Creative cities, culture, tourism. The experience of Rome (173)

Pier Luigi Sacco*, Massimo Buscema, Guido Ferilli, Stefano Terzi,
*System wide cultural districts: mapping and clustering the tangible and intangible
cultural assets for the policy design of the regional clusters in the Veneto region,
Italy (781)*

Howard Hughes
*The culture-tourism-regeneration relationship:
Krakow, European Capital of Culture 2000 (1137)*

SATURDAY 4.00pm - 5.30pm　　　　　　**LAW LECTURE THEATRE 1**

DEMOGRAPHY, LABOUR MOBILITY AND MIGRATION 2 (O-Session: 12.S)

Thomas De Graaff, Peter Nijkamp
*Impacts of urban migrant networks and clusters on educational achievement:
a quantitative study from The Netherlands (1006)*

Peter Batey, Peter Brown*, Simon Whalley
*The geodemographic analysis of residential turnover and neighbourhood change:
the case of North West England (1146)*

Darcin Akin, Aykut Toros
*Mobility of different socio-economic groups in the city of Istanbul, Turkey:
evidence from survey data (998)*

Signe Jauhiainen
Migration and household earnings: empirical evidence from Finland (43)

Tourism and new governance structures, a relation with potential to develop depressed rural areas: the example of the Municipality of Almeida (Portugal)

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Abstract

Nowadays in Portugal some rural areas are facing the challenges resulting from the reform of traditional economic activities and new markets' characteristics. These challenges promote new local development policies that result in mobilising local resources and in expanding rural activities. In this context, tourism is considered, in many cases, a key sector for the economic growth of these territories. In rural areas tourism can include different types of tourist activities, such as community-based tourism, ecotourism, cultural tourism, adventure tourism, guest house, backpacking, riding and agro-tourism. Developing tourism in rural areas increases participation of the poor and brings wider benefits, for instance, involving ownership and territorial management.

The aim of this paper is to explore strategies for expanding tourism in a peripheral rural region of Portugal, the Municipality of Almeida. It draws on an overview of the likely challenges and motivations involved in promoting tourism. Almeida, a poor rural and peripheral Portuguese territory, is the case study presented to validate that tourist resources can emerge as a local potentiality to the territorial development. Through a prospective analysis based on stakeholder's interviews, tourism was classified as the most capable activity to revert the current regressive trend and so, different objectives and actions were explored in order to promote tourist activity in Almeida. The economic potential of tourism as a key sector of growth and development in Almeida is based on the competitive advantages that the region has in its cultural and natural resources. Tourist activities in Almeida also complement a worldwide trend towards alternative tourism, signalling a break away from the perception of sun, sea and sand as representative of the ideal holiday in Portugal. At the same time, the prospective analysis revealed the urgent need of a higher cooperation between local (and regional) entities, through a new model of governance.

Keywords: Tourism, rural areas, governance, strategic planning, territorial marketing, Almeida.

1. Introduction

This article analyses the problematic of depressed rural territories development, using the Portuguese Municipality of Almeida as a case study. The development of these areas is at the top of the preoccupations of several European Union policies and programmes, as well as at the firs-rate of national policies and it constitutes a large object of scientific researches.

In the last four decades, the Portuguese rural territories located in peripheral regions predominantly those in the East part of the country, entered in a trend of decadency as a result of changes occurred in the socioeconomic context. From a strongly rural society and economic structure in the beginning of the Sixties, when rural activities occupied 44% of the active population, the evolution until now has been characterised by a high back of the rural importance, with a proportional growth of industry and services activities. The remoteness of several of these areas and the distance to the main urban centres, the unfavourable natural conditions and the lack of economic diversification were some factors that explain the loss of competitiveness of these rural areas. Consequently, an intensive migratory movement to main urban centres and to foreign countries affected more incisively the Portuguese peripheral rural territories, weakening even more their attractive position. Depopulation, demographic regression, elderly, disinvestment, heritage and habitats' degradation are common realities that affect many of these areas and put some of them in an agonizing situation.

In Portugal, following the objectives of European Communitarian Programmes (such as Leader) or national plans (Ruris or Agris), the development of depressed rural spaces are focused on policies that stimulate the economic diversification and the emergence of new functions in these areas. These territories are losing importance in traditional activities (related to agriculture), but they can assure important functions in several other domains, in the maintenance and preservation of cultures, habitats, landscapes, etc.; besides, and in an economic viewpoint, these areas could raise their importance as leisure destinations, as second residential areas, as having attractions concerning activities, renewal energies, etc. With this polyvalence, tourism is considered a promising activity, able to promote simultaneously the economic diversification and the multifunctionality of these territories. A major constraint in trying to achieve these purposes is the governance structure frequently characterised by a hierarchic relation between public authorities and private agents, with a reduced participation of the last ones in the decision making process. As May (1991) or Burby (2003) emphasis, citizen involvement has long been used to mobilize publics for potential policies that traditionally have not gained public attention. Indeed, these areas should rethink about the governance structure, in order to promote the participation and the active involvement of all territorial actors in the development process while the public authorities

should have and stimulate local entertainment to improve local entrepreneur and attract external resources.

The Portuguese Municipality of Almeida is a particular appropriate example of these rural territories, for over the past decades it has lost a significant number of inhabitants as well as has suffered a progressive abandonment of traditional activities. To that extent, it serves as a paradigmatic example for diagnosing and testing the potential and limits of alternative processes of development in reversing the local regressive tendencies in course. Following this purpose, the article summarises a study developed by Fonseca (2006) which draws insights into the potential that a strategic marketing process can bring to achieve a more sustainable development to Almeida's future. Sustained in a prospective analysis through interviews realised to local and regional stakeholders, it was possible to define the territorial strategic vision and to fix some essential objectives and actions to reverse or, at least, mitigate Almeida's vulnerabilities. Tourism emerges as the most promising activity to invigorate and diversify Almeida's economy, but the study showed several weaknesses that blockade its development. One of them is precisely the notorious lack of cooperation between local entities (public and private) and between local and regional/national authorities. This debility is felt by all the entities interviewed and the adoption of a new governance structure is reclaimed to promote a higher involvement of local and regional actors in the decision-making process and in the celebration of partnerships. However, Almeida, like other rural spaces, presents some particular constraints associated to the reduced and the limited contribution that local entities can provide to new governance structures.

In the first part of the article, we review the literature on the dominant perspectives of rural development mainly in the Portuguese context, being noticed the focus on tourism on rural economic diversification and valorisation. In this analysis we avoid some mystification around the excessive importance frequently given to tourism, sometimes classified as a panacea for the potential to solve all the problems of the Portuguese rural areas. We then introduce the need of rethinking how local entities cooperate in the mobilisation of local resources, through new forms of governance. The remainder of the paper, we present and discuss the findings of Almeida's case study, based on the strategic marketing plan proposed to Almeida. Our data sources are based on local and regional information that was treated and on the prospective analysis based on the stakeholders interviews.

2. Contributions and constraints in rural spaces tourist development

In Portugal, tourism is considered to be one of the best positioned activities to diversify and revitalize rural regions' economy. According to the National Strategic Plan for Rural Development (NSPRD, 2007), tourist investments in rural areas are defended for they contribute to the local economy diversity. The National Programme for Territorial Planning

Policy (NPTPP, Law number 58/2007, 4th September) also confers importance to the role that tourism may have in the development of rural spaces in declining regions, based on the values of cultural, natural and landscape heritage. Even the National Strategic Plan for Tourism (Resolution of the Council of Ministers number 53/2007, 4th April) classifies as *strategic* many products that tend to be located in rural spaces, namely natural tourism, health and well-being tourism and, in a smaller dimension, cultural touring. Besides, the orientations of these documents with a national and a transversal character level, and in a local level, particularly in a municipal development perspective, tourism is almost always considered a priority sector. On a scientific level many are also the authors that value the role that tourism may have in the economy revalorization of rural spaces and in diversifying activities (Cristóvão, 1999; Orbaşli, 2000; Cànoves et al., 2006). So, it is possible to verify that there is a relative agreement about the benefits that tourism has concerning the development of rural spaces. Therefore it is important to analyse the nature and the reach of those benefits, as well as the characteristics of the tourist supply and demand that exist in rural regions.

The economic tertiarization is one of the most evident benefit of tourism development in rural spaces and results from the implementation of a series of services of support and tourist dynamization with reflexions on different levels:

(i) although being seasonal, the creation of jobs in regions where the opportunities are usually scarce is important;

(ii) in the creation of opportunities to maintain the qualified labour force or to requalify the existing one;

(iii) in dynamizing a group of activities that qualifies and identifies the tourist offer in rural spaces, namely concerning the handcraft level, local products and the local gastronomy;

(iv) and in the growing preoccupation of territory planning, safeguarding and restoring the cultural and natural heritage so that both of these most searched resources become qualified and even more searched by tourists.

This way, tourism will contribute to the preservation of cultural identity and the survival of ancestor traditions, which are at the risk of disappearing. Downstream from and in the sequence of tourism development, various benefits emerge and are related to the possibility of creating entertainment activities, organising events, rendering services, promoting commerce, among others. In more generic terms, this may also have reflexions on the attraction of equipments, infrastructures and other exterior resources (new inhabitants, more investment, etc.). Tourist activity can ensure the continuation of these benefits, as soon as it is properly planned and managed, lessening the agricultural activity problems and working as a complementary source for the local economy. However, as Rosado (1998), Cristóvão (1999) and Ribeiro & Marques (2000) reported, tourism cannot be converted in a panacea or in an

elixir for the rural spaces' development, as sometimes it is tried to be conveyed, but it must be understood as a window of opportunities which, complemented with other activities, should not be rejected.

Indeed there is a group of obstacles and weaknesses from the supply and demand side that represents risks to tourist development in rural spaces. The demographic devitalization and the lack of identity of tourist attractions are two of the main impediments of the local initiatives' development. The necessary levels of quality required by the demand are not usually correspondent to the supply (of equipments, services or resources) of rural spaces. The number of jobs created is limited and affected by stressed seasonal variations. The capacity of local firms is feeble and prevents the organisation of the offer and the professionalization of promotional campaigns. The market that seeks these motives is yet limited (Muller, 2000) and there is a great variety of destinations. Overcoming these difficulties constitutes a challenge that can only be overstepped by adopting initiative models of governance and new attitudes that set tourism (and other activities) in a process of integrated and sustainable development, motivating at the same time local entities to a more active involvement in endogenous resources' profitability. So, the new challenges of this governance are sustained in a "bottom-up" strategy and in the engagement of all the local agents that may intervene. Thus, the adoption of new territorial governance forms breaks the traditional way of management in those territories, stimulating the participation of entities and residents in the decision-making process and in the formulation of local partnerships' platforms (Robinson et al., 2005). In fact, according to some Portuguese public policies (NSPRD, 2007) or to the opinion of some authors (Barros, 2003; Burby, 2003), local entities aren't only passive elements and therefore they must play an important action in territorial development. Their contribution could be important in different moments such as in identifying the goals of the strategic proposals, configuring the respective main objectives and (more important) ensuring the future implementation of actions. Despite the special difficulties founded in rural areas due to the nature and the depth of problems involved that can reduce its success in these areas (Lowe et al., 1995), the adoption of new governance models is decisive to achieve a more sustainable process of development or, at least, to mitigate the territorial debilities.

3. The rural offer and the emergency of a new tourist demand

The rural areas offer opportunities fit in a context of tourist motivations' changes which mean that the selection of destinations is more personalised to the detriment of the destinations of masses (Fonseca & Ramos, 2008). This is the statement of post-Fordist tourism. According to Cunha (2006), post-Fordist tourism introduces the following characteristics: low density, small scale, attraction of a specific segment of the society, usually tourists who have higher incomes and a superior level of education. Salvà-Tomàs

(2000) refers that this new tourist market attitude is due to the demand of more individualised destinations, to the search of personalised services, active holidays, richer experiences, authenticity, tranquillity and the interest expressed in different cultures. Poon (1993) presents, in a peculiar way, the opposition of the Fordist tourists' and the post-Fordist tourists' profile (see Table 1).

Table 1 – Fordist and post-Fordist tourists' motivations and behaviours

Fordist search (Classic)	Post-Fordist search (Emergent)
Essentially looking for the sun	Want to experience new things
Pre-defined activities	Freedom of choice
Great itinerancy	See and enjoy without destroying
Want to show where they have been	Worry with the experiences
Superior attitude; Having	Comprehensive attitude; Being
Like events	Like sports and activities
Cautious	Adventurous
Eat at the hotel dining-room	Enjoy local gastronomy
Homogeneous	Heterogeneous

Source: based on POON, 1993.

The emerging demand is orientated by personalised destinations, by the search of motives that riches personal education, by the contact with other cultures or historical places and by destinations that allow physical exercises and the evasion of urban areas, as a way to fight against nowadays stress. In a social level there are also differences for the demarcation of a certain social status which is also reachable by the option of destinations that are not at the reach of all or by the frequency of short period holidays (the short breaks) which are usable to go out from the local residence along the year. So, as it is referred by Fonseca & Ramos (2007a and 2008), the triad of motives searched by the *post-Fordist* tourists (*excitement*, *entertainment* and *education*) is quite different from the motivations followed by the *Fordist* tourists (*sea*, *sun* and *sand*).

In this context, rural spaces present a whole of resources to the demand identified by the post-Fordist tourists. According to Umbelino (1998) rural tourism is mainly a reference of culture and activities that prevail in inland spaces that are not yet absorbed by the urban life way. Rural tourism is in itself incompatible to the tourism of masses, allowing a direct contact to nature, the local population and heritage. In a general way, the available resources in rural spaces allow us to define a whole of tourist products, i.e. a group of tangible and intangible elements centred in an activity and in a specific destination (Middleton, 1996), from which the following are distinguished:

(i) Heritage tourism, although it is not an exclusive of rural spaces, this product is based on the meeting of pre-existing cultures to which a varied array of elements that rural spaces can provide contributes, as communitarian lifestyles, cultural traditions, handcraft, archaeological and historical places of interest, monuments, festivals, folklore, etc. This product is settled in the referred group of educational and cultural tourists' motivations;

According to Ashworth (1994), Herbert (1995), or Orbaşli (2000), heritage has become a rapid growing form of tourism and a commercial product to be marketed to customers seeking leisure and tourism experiences.

(ii) Adventure tourism and ecotourism, both products have in common the development in natural areas, but differ in the activities developed. According to Cunha (2006) and although not having a universal definition, ecotourism processes itself in areas of environmental interest where natural values can be enjoyed, causing small impacts and contributing to the socioeconomic development of local populations. Adventure tourism has in its background nature, but it is based on the practice of physical activities and sports (cycling, climbing, rafting, hang-gliding, pedestrianism, etc.), which can be done by bigger groups of people;

(iii) Health tourism, a product that processes itself mainly in rural spaces and aims at the improvement of the tourists' physical and psychological well-being concerning (healing) treatments and prevention. Thermalism and climatism are two of the most demanded elements in health tourism (Cunha, 2006);

(iv) Residential Tourism, although being a product of ambiguous definition, because the concept of tourism excludes the own residence, residential tourism must be more conceived as a way of accommodation (Cunha, 2006). Rural spaces' characteristics (tranquillity, landscape quality, etc.) are proper of this product, which is searched as a second residence frequently used for short period holidays.

In a general way, these attractions have been allowing the development of what is called in Portugal as *rural spaces' tourism*, an expression, which according to Cunha (2006) or Umbelino (1998), must not be understood as a tourist product due to the complexity of its matter and content, but as an accommodation category in rural spaces. Law number 54/02, 11th March, explains that, using the natural, social and cultural factors of these spaces, exploring in a small scale and as a complementary of the local economy, rural spaces' tourism bears a group of diversified lodging types, services and entertainment promoted in a rural area. Others, such as agro-tourism and rural guest house tourism also fit in this type of tourism

4. Tourism as a key sector priority to the development of Almeida

4.1. Contextualisation of the case study

The Municipality of Almeida is located in the Beira Interior Norte (BIN) region of Portugal (Fig. 1). The Municipality is settled in a wide area of low population density and has extremely marked by rural features, where the city of Guarda stands out as the main polarised urban centre of the region. Like almost the total of BIN, Almeida is a territory that aged and

regressed demographically during the last decades. According to the 2001 census (INE, 2002), Almeida had a population density of only 16inhab/km2, the population with more than 65 years old corresponded to 29.8% (+ 13% than the Portuguese average) and the repulsive character of the Municipality is reflected in the loss of 19.2% of the residents during the Nineties. The tendency of demographic emptiness appears as one of the main weaknesses of the Municipality which has lost half of its resident population during the last 40 years.
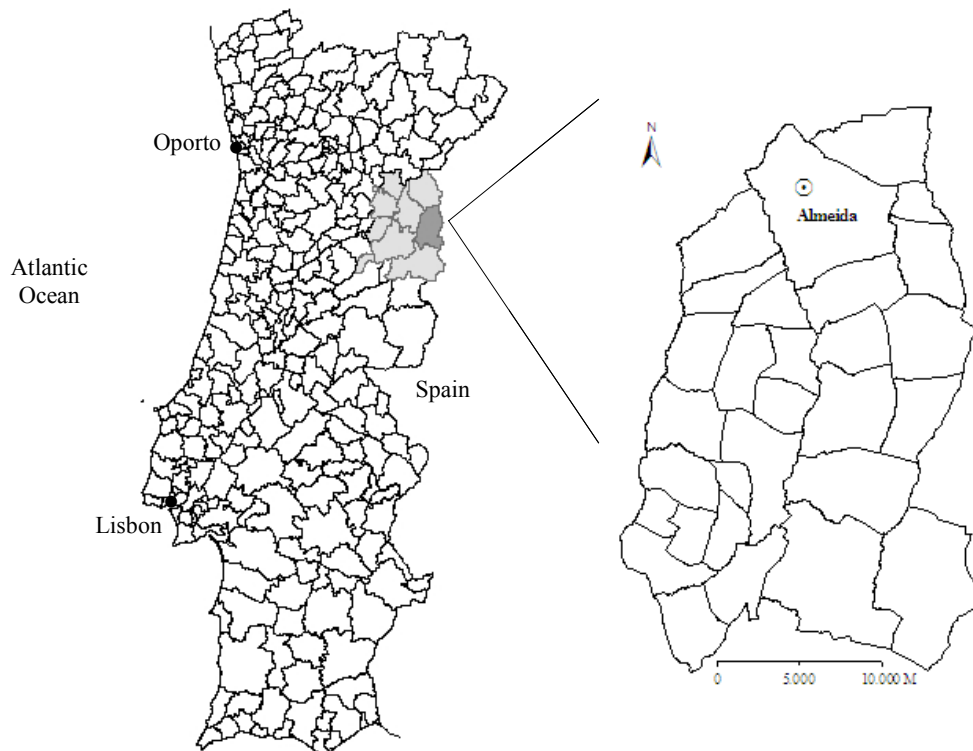
Figure 1: Geographic setting of Beira Interior Norte and Almeida Municipality in Portugal

The economic structure analysis also reveals much imbalance. In 2001, the activity rate presented a low value, the total population dependency rate (69%) revealed that the active population was inferior to the inactive one. With 63% of the population employed in activities belonging to the tertiary sector, the municipal economy proved the importance of the services and the existing commercial activities in the most important urban areas, Almeida and Vilar Formoso. In fact, they grouped 47.2% of the entire Municipality population, showing evidently the territory functional bipolarisation. The changing sector was very incipient, for the average of the existing industries was one of the lowest in the entire region. The primary sector activities had a considerable strength with 15% of the active population (more 10% of the Portuguese average, according to INE, 2002), which confirms the rural character of the Municipality. However, even the agricultural activity seems to be affected by the depopulation and demographic aging. That is why we can only understand that, according to INE (2001), the percentage of agricultural coverage and the total number of agricultural

business diminished (respectively 30% and 9%) between 1989 and 1999. The loss of the local agriculture competitive capacity was confirmed by the fact that in 70% of the agricultural business, the great part of the economic incomes had an external origin to the activity.

Reversing these regressive paths strongly settled in this rural area is a daring challenge that requires an integrated intervention and an efforts' mobilisation to increase the profit of its potentialities and to overcome its debilities. A developing strategy implies a bigger rentabilization of the endogenous resources and a greater participation and involvement from the local entities' side in this process, also promoting a greater volunteerism in acting and exteriorising the resources, so that the territory will become more attractive and therefore will strengthen its position towards the competitive markets and the threats/opportunities resulting from the globalisation. In fact, a new local governance model is reclaimed by stakeholders to reverse the actual model of governance, led by the municipal government and characterised by a strong lack of cooperation, mainly in several domains related to tourism.

4.2. Methodology to process the strategic marketing planning for Almeida

The starting point of this case study was based on the realisation of a multi-sectorial pre-diagnosis of the territory, following Güell's (2000) recommendations, that was centred in the analysis of Almeida's territorial potentialities and debilities and in its confrontation with the involving territories (BIN and the transfrontier Spanish territory). In a second phase, accomplishing the logic of the participating planning, the main conclusions taken from the pre-diagnosis were confronted with a group of local and regional stakeholders (Public Administration organisms, economic and cultural associations, businessmen, etc.), through interviews, with the aim to improve the diagnosis, to correct gaps and at the same time to identify the action and position of each of them viewing the theme in analysis. The interviews were made personally (excepting for two regional actors) through a closed questions' model (for more details see Fonseca, 2006). The selection process of the actors was determined by their role in dinamyzing socio-economically and culturally the Municipality. So, the final diagnosis resulted from the dosage between technical work and participative debate. In this process we concluded that tourism is considered a key sector for the local economic renewal and demographic rehabilitation of Almeida, and we identified a relative consensus among the interviewed people concerning the objectives and actions that must be implemented. From the four strategic axis able to improve Almeida's development, the central goal of the process, two of them are related to a better utilisation of the Municipality tourist potentialities, justifies a more detailed analysis of the resources and tourist supply in Almeida

4.3 Almeida's tourist supply characterisation

Analysing the amount of tourist supply components, according to Albino et al. (2000) we should bear in mind three main elements that are related to each other: tourist resources;

tourist products; and the equipments and tourist services. Tourist resources are physical and non material elements liable to motivate people to travel or to represent free time occupations/activities. From the resources' quantity, diversity and quality, results the organisation of products, equipments and tourist services.

4.3.1 Heritage cultural resources

The cultural heritage is a tourist resource par excellence that Almeida supplies to its tourists and visitors, essentially anchored around the military architecture:

♦ Almeida's fortress square: is classified as a National Monument since 1928. It is one of the most emblematic and well-preserved Portuguese and international example of the XVII century military architecture. It integrates the restricted list of Portugal's Historic Villages, from which it is seat, and is also a reference to the Castles and Fortresses' Route and the centre of military history. Distinction to the extensive perimeter of the fortress' bastions in a star shape, to the double arched gates and to the several architectonic elements of original military use (prison building, powder room, casemates, ancient artillery train, ancient artillery headquarter, the cannons of Alta square, and the ruins of the medieval castle destroyed during the III Napoleonic Invasion, etc.).

♦ The Historic Village of Castelo Mendo: although the castle had already been classified as a National Monument in 1946, its interest was recognised by the classification of all the urban area enclosed by the walls as Public Interest (in 1984) and also by its integration in the itinerary of Portugal's Historic Villages. It is a medieval fortress that had an important shielding function till the establishment of the definite boundary line by the Alcañices Treaty. Castelo Mendo keeps on having a medieval urban structure, with a good architectonic integration and many interesting civilian (Manueline, Hispanic, Philipin, Judaic) and religious level elements.

♦ There are all over the Municipality (Fig. 2) other elements of architectonic and historical interest, such as the walled village of Castelo Bom (with elements classified as National Monument since 1946), the medieval pillory of Vale de Coelha, the Malhada Sorda Church and the archaeological site of Malpartida (Public Interest classification), among others that are about to be classified in a national and local level and that certify a strong cultural identity and the singular role of Almeida in the Portuguese history.

♦ Intangible heritage: rurality, ancestor traditions and history are still very present in Almeida. This collective memory is materialised in the valuable and diversified handcraft production that exists in the entire Municipality (basketry, tapestry, laces, pack-saddle production, woodworks and others), in local gastronomy and in the making of regional products (whose knowledge has been preserved), in folklore, in fairs and festivals that make the village be alive and lively. Also distinguishable is the recreation of the fateful Almeida

Siege by Napoleonic troops that attracts different European Napoleonic associations to the village, as well as many curious visitors and to the Mendo Castle's Medieval Fair.
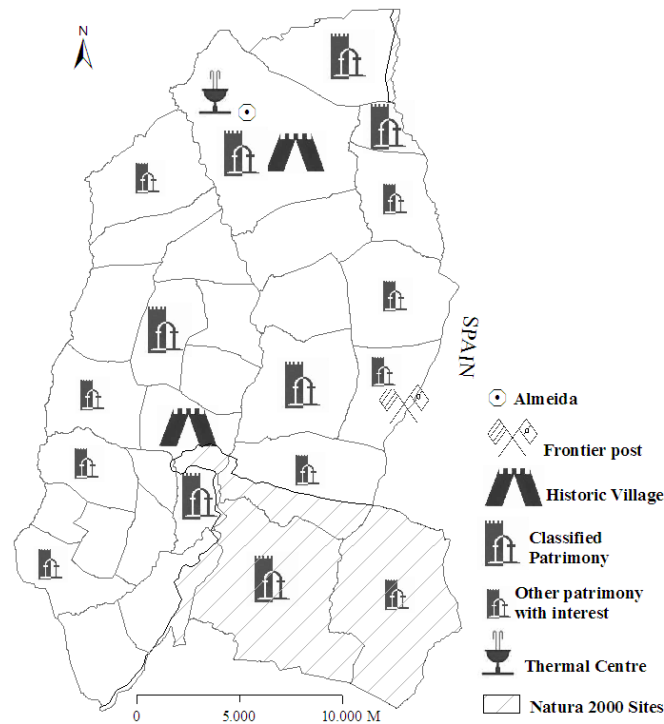
Source: Almeida's Municipality and Portuguese Architectonic Heritage Institute (www.ippar.pt).

Figure 2: Potential tourist resources in Almeida's Municipality

4.3.2 Natural resources

The natural heritage of Almeida is equally rich and diversified and it emerges as a complementary supply to cultural tourism. It includes many attractions such as:

♦ The hot spring of Fonte Santa which is one of the most precious natural resource of the Municipality, bearing in mind that the thermal demand has been increasing, not only because it prevents and treats certain illness but also due to the well-being factor.

♦ The Municipality natural conditions, characterised by the existence of a tableland, cut by Côa river's valley, the main water course of the region, which are in fact adequate to the practice of different types of sport activities and to be in contact with nature (pedestrianism, cycling, horse-riding, balloon flights, orientation, canoeing, rafting, etc.).

♦ The absence of pollution, due to its lower rate of industrialisation and urbanisation, rurality and wild landscape beauty, the existence of two places that integrate the Natura Network 2000 and the abundant cynegetic resources which are also attractive elements concerning natural resources.

4.3.3 Tourist products

In Almeida we can't find a structured *tourist product* which constitutes a strong debility in the local offer, because there is no organisational level that integrates the different entities

and components that allow tourists the acquisition of activities and routes (Middleton, 1996). As soon as this obstacle is overstepped, Almeida will be able to supply the following products, resulting from its resources:

♦ Cultural tourism, exploring the architectonic and historical heritage singularities and treasures, cultural traditions, handcraft and the rich collective memory;

♦ Health tourism, based on the hot-springs properties of Fonte Santa as healing, preventing or relaxing effects as well as well-being;

♦ Adventure tourism, based on the practise of sports and activities related to the contact with nature provided by the Municipality natural conditions;

♦ Nature tourism/ecotourism, allowed by the fauna and flora diversity and quality, as well as the landscape and environmental quality, namely Natura Network 2000;

♦ Senior tourism, the oldest aged stratum with much free time, seems to enjoy the attractions of a healthy and calm environment, as well as other historical and cultural attractions, being Almeida able to be better positioned towards this segment;

There are also two other forms of tourism that can be integrated in Almeida:

i) Tourism in rural space, the different categories prescribed in Law number 54/2002, 11th March, have in Almeida good development conditions, such as space rurality, ethnographic tradition, architectonic typology concerning regional identity and the existence of magnificent buildings to welcome these unities;

ii) Residential tourism, the availability of properties and the good urban and environmental integration of the buildings in Almeida and in other urban centres (Castelo Mendo and Castelo Bom) are good arguments of this market.

4.3.4. Equipments and tourist services

The existing equipments and tourist services in a specific territory are a reflexion of that sector's dynamization, where the accommodation and restaurant units, tourist information, supportive structures and tourist circuits/routes and itineraries are included. Concerning the accommodation capacity, we can verify that Almeida Municipality is the second best equipped in BIN, immediately following Guarda, which includes the main urban centre of the region. In 2005 the Municipality represented 17% of the number of BIN Tourism Direction written up establishments and 14% of the accommodation capacity (Figs. 3A and 3B). Almeida is a Municipality that had the greatest accommodation capacity per 1000 inhabitants (26,5). Nevertheless the accommodation capacity of the Municipality is even greater if all units were counted, especially in Vilar Formoso, where there are more 7 establishments. The position of Almeida concerning tourism units in rural space is less advantageous because there are 4 guest house tourism units which only mean 5,4% of the regional supply.
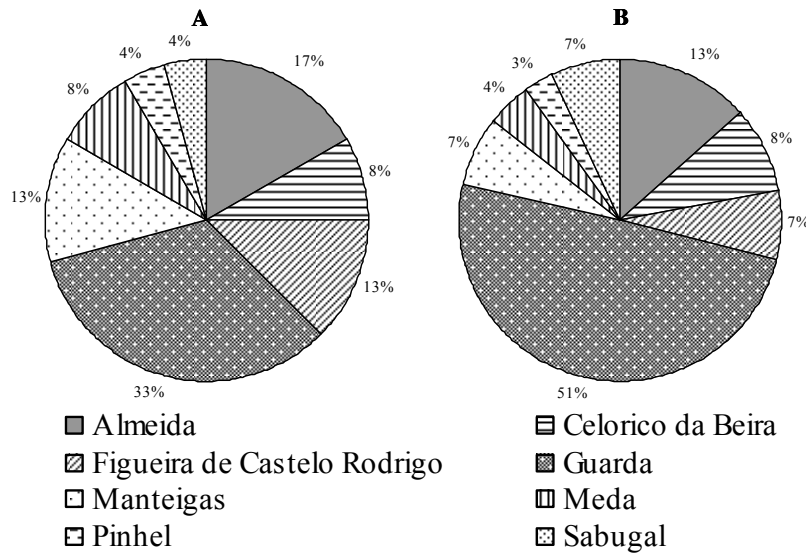
Source: INE, 2006

Figure 3 – Proportion of establishments (A) and accommodation capacity (B) of Almeida and BIN's Municipalities, 2005

In his case study, Fonseca (2006) concluded that although many local restaurants lack in service and quality, their supply is also superior to the regional average. The units, where local cuisine can be enjoyed, are scarce. However we should point out the lodging, which was many times distinguished for its gastronomy quality.

Concerning services, Almeida is the only BIN's Municipality that has two tourist offices, one settled in Almeida, guarded by the local council, and another one which works seasonally in Vilar Formoso, and depends on the Tourist Region of Serra da Estrela.

The Municipality also presents a series of diversified tourist supportive structures, such as equipments and services that contribute to the supply improvement. The ring, the municipal swimming pools, the thermal bathing resort, the auditory, the multifunctional pavilion are examples of that. Many of them are recent, the qualification effort as well as the enlargement of those services to the population and tourists during the last years are notable.

Although there are resources to overcome the tourist routes and itineraries' debility (rural routes, ancient pavements, natural corridors, etc.), they are very limited. The Tourism Region has been promoting routes that integrate Almeida Municipality, as the Historic Villages Route, the 20 Castles Route and the Côa's River Route.

4.4 Tourist demand

In developing issues, we can notice that in the last years (from 2000 to 2005), the number of temporary stays was irregular and had a tendency to decrease. Taking into account BIN, although very supported by Guarda, where the percentage of temporary stays increased 36%, there is a tendency to increase. In the referred period and according to INE, the temporary stays occurred in (written up) Almeida's accommodations had an average rate of

17500/year (20% of the regional rate). Guarda is clearly distinguished, for being the main receptor centre, having received 44% of the temporary stays occurred in BIN.

Almeida presents itself as the BIN's Municipality, where the foreign temporary stays proportion was the highest if we bear in mind the last years (from 2000 to 2005). Its boundary location is also significant, because it is near to one of the most important road axis linked to Europe. The percentage of Portuguese tourists' temporary stays in Almeida represented less than 16% in comparison to what was verified in the remaining region. The Spanish tourists' temporary stays were distinguished for they were 17% (11% more than in the region) and the French tourists' temporary stays were in a smaller scale (7.3%). The low rate of tourists' stays which was in 2005 1.1 nights (INE, 2006), revealed that it was inferior to the regional average (1.3 nights), which must be due to the lack of entertainment that may attract tourists for a longer period in Almeida.

Almeida's tourist office statistics, concerning the tourists'/visitors' number who search this service to get information, show another perspective of the local demand dynamics. Taking into account the period between 2000 and 2006 (Fig. 4B), we can verify that the number of visitors to the tourist office increased 111.6%, concerning the fact that in 2006 around 80.000 visitors went to the tourist office, a number 8 times higher than the municipal population. In this period the percentage average of national visitors (63.5%) was superior to the foreign visitors.
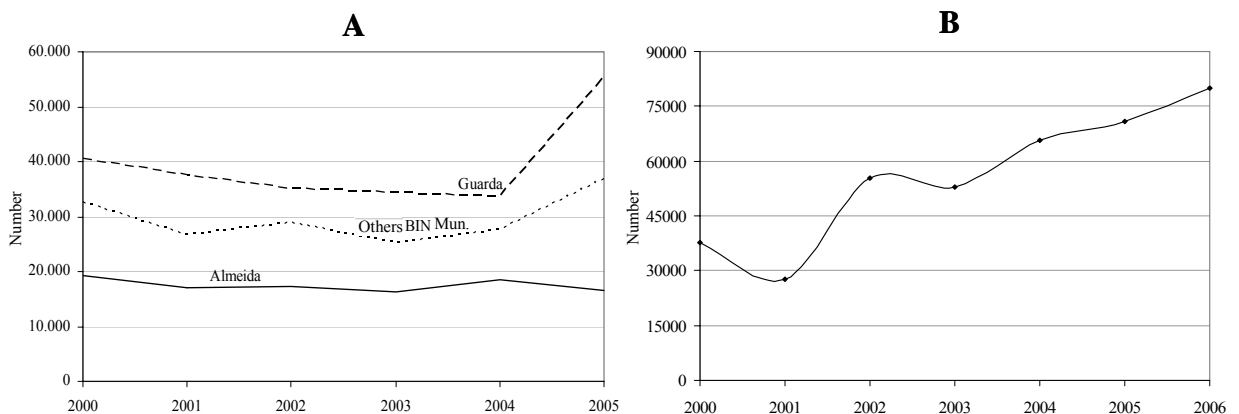
Source: (A) Portugal Central Region Statistic's Yearbook (2000-2005), INE; (B) Almeida Tourist Office Statistics

Figure 4 – Evolution of temporary stays occurred in Almeida and BIN's hotels (A)
and number of Almeida Tourist Office's visitors (B)

However the number of written up foreign visitors increased 121%. In fact, in 2006, 63% of the tourist office visitors were Portuguese, and the majority of foreign tourists were from the EU, mainly from Spain (29%) and only 0.8% came from outside EU. On the other hand visits to Almeida have been marked by a strong seasonality, as it is proved by the fact that 41% of the visits were between the months of July and August.

4.5. Diagnosis to the Almeida tourist sector

Supported in the strategic diagnosis, an aligned SWOT analysis matrix was made to clarify Almeida's strongest and weakest points (Table 2). Contrarily to the "traditional" SWOT analysis, the aligned relates the external threats and opportunities with the internal weaknesses and strengths of the territory, giving a more clearly territorial picture, based on "vulnerabilities" (weaknesses/threats), "reorientation needs" (weaknesses/opportunities), "defence capacities" (strengths/threats) and "competitiveness advantages" (strengths/opportunities). This Swot analysis reported on Fonseca & Ramos (2007b) was very useful in the detection of territorial constraints and strengths and in the formulation of the strategic vision intended by the stakeholders concerning the future.

The interpretation of Table 2 allows us to conclude that tourism emerges as a promising potentiality to stimulate local development, taking into account the tourist resources' quality and diversity. However a significant number of debilities is identified and those debilities create restrictions concerning the sustained and supported development only by tourism. As it has been mentioned, this analysis served as a basis not only for the structuring of the interviews made, but also for the further definition of a territorial vision and strategic objectives that we will present in the next section.

Table 2 – Matrix SWOT aligned analysis for tourism in Almeida

Descriptive Synthesis	
Competitive advantages	• Almeida's fortress square quality, classified as National Monument, seat of Historic Villages' Castles and Fortresses' Routes and Centre of Military History. • Existence of two Historic Villages in the Municipality (Almeida and Castelo Mendo) and many heritage elements classified in a national level. • Almeida is the most well-preserved of the three fortress squares of the national territory. • Environmental quality, lack of pollution and good cynegetic diversity. • Good railway accessibility in comparison to coastal urban centres and Spain.
Defensive capacities	• Projects that will strengthen the tourist equipments' net: Military History Museum, new thermal bathing resort, Military Architecture Study Centre, etc. • Leadership in many tourist statistics concerning BIN, excepting Guarda.
Reorientation needs	• Cultural heritage degradation, specially the architectonic, namely Almeida's defensive wall, the *ex libris* that is not being well used. • Under use of Vilar Formoso's frontier in comparison to the tourists' attraction. • Tourist supply disorganisation and absence of a marketing perspective. • Deficient tourist integration concerning the regional and transfrontier scale. • Insufficient cooperation and relationship between local entities. • Lack of identity and preservation of heritage interests.
Vulnerabilities	• Guardianship of heritage elements classified in a national level, by the Central Administration, making the properties' recovery difficult. • Low equipments/services and urban entertainment quality rate. • Low visibility of Almeida tourist resources outside BIN. • Human resources' deficit with appropriate professional formation. • Local agents' apathy concerning activities and investments. • Deficient relationship among (local, regional, national, transfrontier) actors.

Source: Fonseca (2006), Fonseca & Ramos (2007b).

5. Mobilising goals to dynamize tourism in Almeida

Almeida's singular resources and the evident dynamics in some statistic indicators, make tourism be assumed as one of the greatest potentiality to stimulate the Municipality's development and to contradict the impoverishment tendency of the last decades. This perspective was shared by all interviewed actors and was later established in two strategic axis defined to a strategic marketing planning process. This process materialises the rentabilization strategy and the external affirmation of endogenous resources, trying to make the territory more attractive so that people will invest, live there with a good quality of life, and visit Almeida, and at the same time, to make it a more competitive territory in a global market context. Tourism was assumed as a key-sector so that the central goal can be accomplished, founding in two strategic axis' rentabilization: Almeida, as a Historic Village of cultural tourism; Vilar Formoso, as a receptive and tourists' distribution platform. Although both strategic axis fall on two main urban areas of the Municipality, because they present better conditions concerning resources and also due to their localisation, it is to expect that future benefits will be extensive to the entire Municipality and the involving region. Each of the strategic axis ramifies in a series of goals that radicate in a series of concrete actions.

5.1. Almeida, Historic Village of cultural tourism

This strategic axis intends to change Almeida in a destination par excellence concerning the supply domain in rural spaces, being this axis considered by the interviewed stakeholders as the most promising sector to stimulate the Municipality development. Resources are commendable and have distinguished characteristics, mainly in the cultural domain and in the military architecture category. However many obstacles have been preventing a greater affirmation of tourism. To overcome them, three transversal goals to put Almeida in the right path were proposed and legitimated by the interviewed actors: (a) cultural heritage requalification; (b) tourist supply organisation, (c) the implementation of a professional perspective of marketing. These three goals are described in a detailed way in the following subsections.

5.1.1. Cultural heritage requalification

This goal intends to benefit the tourist resource par excellence that Almeida has (its cultural heritage), and some actions concerning tangible and intangible components have been defended. We can consider the following actions:

i) Rehabilitating the defensive wall as well as adjacent elements: to dignify Almeida's *ex libris* that lacks in cleaning actions, recovery and consolidation;

ii) Turning the defensive wall more functional: renewal the spaces near the defensive wall through the practice of different activities so that tourists can enjoy the area;

iii) Strengthening the dialogue with the Central Administration: a greater pressing near the Central Administration organisms that guard classified monuments is defended, so that the physical rehabilitation actions take place and so that some properties will be directly managed by the local council by means of the presentation of solid and credible projects;

iv) Preserving the town and architectonic planning: priority should be given to preservation policies of town and architectonic planning's identity avoiding the dissemination of constructions' typologies and dissonant elements;

v) Supporting handcraft (and local products): through initiatives that revitalize handcraft, such as the organising fairs/exhibitions, composing target groups, supporting poor craftsmen and increasing handcraft selling points;

vi) Rentabilizing local gastronomy: giving support to the establishment of, at least, one *typical restaurant* so that the local cuisine can be enjoyed.

5.1.2. Tourist supply organisation

This goal comes from a gap that must be urgently solved, due to the lack of an integrated and positioned perspective of the varied components that constitute the supply (resources, entities, equipments, services and promotion), that limits, as it was referred, the existence of tourist products and the capacity of the local tourist attraction. This goal is based on the following actions:

i) Structuring the supply: the adoption of a structure under a tourist line – resource – producer – seller – client – was a proposed action to overstep the sector's disorganisation. A structure of this type makes the action of all local entities converge consequently in food and supply qualification, not only in upstream sectors (governing, handcraft, farming, environmental protection, territorial planning, etc.), but also in downstream supply sectors (selling points, entertainment services, etc.).

ii) Stimulating the dialogue and commitment among entities: this was one of the most reclaimed actions to overcome the fragmentation of individual actions, through a new governance platform. There must be a greater preoccupation concerning the involvement of different local actors in building strategies and in implementing them, so that there will be greater synergies and increased guaranties that those strategies will be carried out.

5.1.3. The implementation of a professional perspective of marketing

This goal results from the necessity to overcome the lack of visibility that Almeida's resources show, through the implementation of a professional perspective of marketing, that will surpass the "proto-marketing" situation in which Almeida is. As a matter of fact this was one of the most defended goals by the stakeholders interviewed. The proposed actions aim at:

i) Making market studies: studying and getting to know better the Almeida tourists' profile, their satisfaction degree, their criticism, their origin, etc. We can only this way

identify tourists' opinion so that afterwards we are able to define actions that can meet their expectations and necessities;

ii) Organising and planning activities: according to the previous action's results, the activities that must be developed must obey the market studies, the different actors must participate in them and must be also able to answer a group of questions (desirable period of stay and number of tourists, routes' definition, type of entertainment, etc.);

iii) Using appropriate marketing techniques: according to the profile and origin of Almeida's tourists/visitors, through the techniques adjusted with the actors, avoiding wasting resources by using inadequate techniques;

iv) Highlighting tourist integration to a regional and transfrontier scale: although surpassing local actors, this action was strongly referred by the interviewed actors. Priority must be given to cooperation and tourist integration so that there will be a stronger support concerning the market share and the critical mass. The region resources must be seen in logic of complementary benefit, with an adjustment in investment actions, promotion, defining tourists' itineraries, etc.

v) Creating a tourist management platform: forming a structure with appropriated technical and human means, so that all the supply organisation work, activities planning and local tourist supply promotion will be feasible.

5.2. Vilar Formoso, a receptive and tourists' distribution platform

This second strategic axis intends to benefit from the four million people who, according to the Portuguese Tourism Direction (2001), pass the frontier office and make Vilar Formoso one of the busiest land frontiers of Portugal. In comparison to the rest of the Municipality, Vilar Formoso has the advantage that a great number of people, most of them tourists and visitors, pass there. With this goal we intend to promote the number of visits and the frontier office capacity which is very low. Taking into account that in 2000, and comparing the total number of foreign entrances in the frontier to the number of guests that stayed in hotels written up by the Portuguese Tourism Direction, the attraction factor was only of 0,05%. It is therefore urgent to exceed the low attractive capacity through a series of integrated aims articulating them with the goals defined in the first axis. In accordance, three strategic goals were proposed: (a) promoting marketing actions; (b) reutilising equipments for tourist purposes; (c) implementing a plan to revitalize the urban centre of Vilar Formoso. These three goals are presented in the next subsections.

5.2.1. Promoting marketing actions

One of the most referred weaknesses by the interviewed stakeholders was the lack of marketing actions in Vilar Formoso. This goal intends to mitigate this debility, considering its

integration in the tourist promotion perspective. This includes the following promoting and qualifying tourist supply's actions:

i) Creating a tourist office: this action intends to replace the tourist office that works seasonally with a permanent one, settled in fitting and attractive buildings, and having the possibility to have other valences (such as exhibition areas);

ii) Dynamizing more initiatives/events: this action intends to fight against the lack of local entertainment, and must promote more events, namely, exhibitions, fairs, festivals, etc., that win a greater number of tourists/visitors;

iii) Increasing promoting actions: promoting actions should not only be more in quantity and more attractive in Vilar Formoso, but they should be enlarged to the Spanish territory (in towns and alongside the railway before the frontier). The promotional growth must be made through more appropriate means and techniques and must be defined according to the referred marketing platform.

5.2.2. Reutilising equipments for tourist purposes

This goal has to do with the valorisation and tourist supply qualification strategy and simultaneously the requalification of the existing cultural heritage. The following actions are included:

i) Creating a museum area: this was one of the most reclaimed actions due to the local cultural values and to the existence of unoccupied buildings that may congregate this equipment. The history and the collective memory of the frontier are values that may emerge in that museum (that should be set up in the unoccupied custom house);

ii) Creating handcraft/local products' selling points: the lack of these products' selling points in the frontier areas, where shops that sell other regions' products thrive, is a supply debility that must be overcome;

iii) Revitalizing and integrating better the "steam engine": the train is related to the past and to the economic growth of Vilar Formoso. The steam engine's history of the Thirties, that moved *Sud Express*, must be better used and fixed in a tourist point of view, integrating it with other elements and routes;

iv) Creating a camping/caravan site in Vilar Formoso: this action is necessary due to the fact that Vilar Formoso is one of the main "entrance gates" to Portugal and also because this kind of equipment is scarce in the region. It must be orientated to have short stays (1 day/night), with the possibility to integrate the national/international net.

5.2.3. Implementing a plan to revitalize the urban centre of Vilar Formoso

This goal intends to recover the commercial activity in the urban centre, one of the traditional roles of Vilar Formoso, that endures some problems.

i) Giving human resources qualification inducement: this is an essential action to modernise and diversify the commercial supply in Vilar Formoso;

ii) Renewal the commercial business units: the business buildings lack in an innovating and attractive image. A greater marketing of supportive programmes and the credit of supports may be utile so that this action may be successfully accomplished.

iii) Clarifying the frontier plan concerning motorways: the future motorway link between Vilar Formoso and Fuentes de Oñoro may worsen the "effect of tunnel" and limit even more the number of stops. Although the link of Vilar Formoso is assured, it is useful to process a motorway plan near the urban centre, proceeding afterwards to the relocation of a series of services and equipments that allow people's attraction.

6. Final synthesis and conclusions

Almeida has undoubtedly potential tourist resources. However the diagnosis has shown that it includes much debilities that has been limiting a more sustained contribution to tourism concerning the economical and social development of the Municipality. The proposals presented and legitimated by the local/regional stakeholders in the marketing strategic planning process outlined to Almeida, look for rentabilizing these resources and suppressing the feeble diagnosed aspects. The large-scale of the proposed actions, in their whole, is a challenge to the innovation and enterprise's capacity of local entities, being this one of the most vulnerable points of the entire process.

To be successful, the process requires a greater involvement and cooperation of local entities in building strategies, structuring actions and then the whole process of development. So, it implies the reformulation of territorial governance, being therefore needed the creation of debate, management and process attendance platforms. Although this cooperative highlight has been reclaimed by all interviewed stakeholders, the reality of this rural space, marked by a static enterprise and by a certain resignation towards the inland problems, appears as a threat to the process. The lack of local tradition in these forms of articulation and cooperation also appears as an important threat. In Almeida, as well as in other Portuguese rural (or even urban) regions, private entities participation in public affairs is limited to the level of citizenship or reduced to an administrative and bureaucratic relation with established rules. Historically, this system increased the distance between private entities and public affairs and weakened their contribution, encouraging and legitimating even more the role of local administration.

Another debility is related to the real contribution that Almeida's public and private entities can bring to the process, because like the territory, they face serious constraints mainly in the financial domain. Even the demographic characteristics (aged people and low levels of education) appear as fragile, for, as Kotler *et al.* (1994) argue, the development's capacity of a territory not only depends on the existence of favourable factors, but also on the

determination, ability, energy and innovative capacity of local entities. Almeida's detected problems are common in other rural areas, where they appear as one of the most important challenges to accomplish the development of integrated processes and tourist utilisation (Umbelino, 1998). In fact, the vulnerability of the local actors' resources towards the magnitude of the proposed goals, reveals that the approach from "bottom-up", although priority, is not enough, and a proper articulation with other sectorial policies and a fair institutional solidarity are necessary.

However, the perception of these problems seems to have been absorbed by local entities, as the recent creation of Almeida's Promoting Agency proves. The reinforcement of regional and transfrontier cooperation (with the Transfrontier Partnership established with Ciudad Rodrigo) and the growing preoccupation with external promotion (with presences in the 2007 Madrid International Tourism Market, Lisbon Tourism Stock Market and XI International Inland Tourism Market, in Valladolid) are examples of that. This effort developed by the Municipal Government reveals a new preoccupation with the cooperation of local and regional entities in Almeida's development and could be the first steps of larger and more effective territorial governance. At the same time, this suggests that municipal government performs the leading role in the socioeconomic entertainment, due to its greater capacity of local dialogue and mobilisation.

Another aspect that deserves being taken into account is related to the real benefits of tourism in rural areas. As it was already referred, tourism is considered, in different levels, as an activity that has the potential to revitalize rural areas. However, the obtained results in Portugal advise prudence, for there is an excessive sense of optimism around its contributions (Cristóvão, 1999). We must take into account the search for more attractions in rural areas and the great destinations' multiplicity, concerning the yet reduced market. The high levels of the supply quality required by this market put many rural areas on the edge of tourist development. The seasonal frequency is another problem that prevents a more solid contribution from tourism concerning the local economy development. The existence of distinctive resources and quality in comparison to other territories is also limited. Other frequently detected problems in rural areas tourist development have to do with the lack of connection between tourism and rural economy, strongly evident by external agents (Cristóvão, 1999). In short, all these aspects seem to suggest that tourism may not be the panacea that many people reclaim to the development of rural areas.

In this context, Almeida's case presents some values, such as the unique cultural heritage in national and international context; the diversified and complementary series of resources that it has; the leadership in different indicators of tourist supply in a regional scale (excepting Guarda's Municipality); the high flow of visitors that pass annually through the

local tourist office (around 80 000 in 2006); and the good railway connection. These aspects do not however disregard the fact that the isolation problem of many peripheral rural areas in Portugal still exists and should be reversed. Tourism is yet far from giving a strong contribution to the economic development of the Municipality, as the local businessmen's difficulties and the aggravation of some regressive statistics prove, being therefore necessary to deepen the rupture in the local entities' way of thinking and acting. That is why Barros (2003) refers that "rural spaces will in the future be what the economy and society's evolution allows them to be, as well as what everybody wants them to be". Adopting a strategic marketing planning process founded in a new governance structure to dynamize tourism (and to diversify other activities' sectors) may be the necessary tool so that Almeida may become in the future what its actors aspire, "overthrowing the walls" that have been restricting its growth.

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