

HERITAGE 2008

World Heritage and Sustainable Development

Edited by

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World Heritage and Sustainable Development

Heritage 2008 International Conference

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Rogério Amoêda, Sérgio Lira, Cristina Pinheiro, Filipe Pinheiro and João Pinheiro

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Foreword

The Green Lines Institute for Sustainable Development is an institution that aims at promoting sustainability throughout scientific research and educational actions. Within the scope of its action, the organization of international scientific events aims at gathering eminent scholars and researchers in order to promote the debate and exchange of recent experience and fieldwork.

Sustainability is a nowadays a subject that commits both individuals and nations, not only on what concerns environmental and economic practices but also for the defense of cultural difference. In this sense, heritage, wherever it may be, becomes common heritage of humanity. Helping each other to preserve it from all menaces becomes common goal and common responsibility.

Heritage 2008 was a challenge to The Green Lines Institute for Sustainable Development. The decision was to organize an international event to discuss the role of heritage for a sustainable world, by gathering researchers and scholars from all over the world in a remote, small Portuguese town, Vila Nova de Foz Côa, which deserved international attention due to its proximity to one of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites – the Valley of River Côa and its engraved pre-historical rocks. Besides, Vila Nova de Foz Côa is located in another UNESCO site, the Alto Douro Wine Region, which is a cultural heritage site. It seemed to be the perfect heritage location for such event.

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The main topics for Heritage 2008 were: Heritage and Human Development, Natural Environment, and Building Preservation. Considering that heritage must be addressed in innovative-sustainable ways, this event encouraged authors to present papers on the role of human and natural heritage, both tangible and non-tangible. Presenters were also invited to make evidence of innovative undergoing approaches and researches. Presenting the topics for this event, special attention was given to the relationships between world heritage and world sustainability, understanding sustainable development at all its levels, such as environmental preservation, economy, human welfare, history and social relationships.

The responsiveness of the international scientific community overwhelmed our perspectives, the number of abstracts received being more significant than we would at first have expected. In order to guarantee scientific standards to this event, we invited a number of scholars as Members of the Scientific Committee, who reviewed submitted abstracts, proposed amendments and rejected some. The result of this process are these proceedings, where papers accepted to Heri-

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Almeida heritage as a factor for local and sustainable development

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ABSTRACT: This article analyses the potential of development in a rural Portuguese territory from the perspective of heritage and local heritage tourism. Heritage is clearly one of the most important legacies from the past to the present, a truism indeed, but of central relevance to tourism. Heritage is a rising tourist product, because visitors of heritage sites and places are looking for an experience, a new reality based on the (in)tangible remains of the past. As a result, local authorities and the policies of regional development are reconsidering and reinterpreting heritage as a marketable attraction with benefits in the conservation and economic domains. This article examines the case of Almeida, a territory which has a remarkable heritage, but is living a cycle of demographic and economic decadency. With a strategic marketing plan, following the territorial vision of local/regional entities, objectives and guidelines are proposed to promote sustainable development based on heritage tourism.

1 HERITAGE TOURISM AS A RISING PHENOMENON

Heritage is our legacy from the past, the way we live today, and what we can take on to future generations. In this sense, Masser & Wegener (1994) define heritage as “not only something we want to hand down to future generations, but also something we want to appreciate and experience to the fullest extent”. Boniface (1996), referring to Germain Greer, resumes heritage as “the cultural expression of what makes us what we are, our spiritual DNA”. In fact, such is recognised by UNESCO, our cultural and natural heritage are both irreplaceable sources of life and inspiration.

In the last decades, heritage has become more closely linked with tourism and the diversity of sites which are described as an extra “heritage”. In fact, visiting historic and cultural places is one of the most popular tourist activities and so, the term heritage doesn't mean only landscape, buildings, monuments and artefacts, but it is intrinsically linked with several activities, such as tourism (Hunter, 1996). So, providing these places with complementary activities, such as to relax, to inform or even educate, has become a component of tourism. Herbert (1995), Ashworth (1995), or Prentice (1993) describe heritage places as areas that have become a commercial product to be marketed to customers seeking leisure and tourism experiences. To Ashworth (1994) heritage tourism is undoubtedly a rapid growing form of tourism and heritage resources are seen as a near-ubiquitous development possibility in places of extremely varied heritage endowment. According to this author, heritage can be observed as “an economic resource exploited everywhere as a primary component for strategies to promote tourism, economic development and urban and rural regeneration”.

Different factors justify the rising interest of tourists in heritage sites: people have a higher educational level; leisure and holiday times have increased; people are now more mobile (in

terms of moving homes and accessibility); information is more accessible and the economic situation suffered some progress. This situation reflects changes occurred in some tourist market segments, known as *pos fordism* phenomena Conti & Perelli (2005) or Henriques (2003). In opposition to more massive (or *fordist*) forms, *pos fordism* means an emerging trend in tourism motivation characterised by a new attitude toward consumption patterns based on nature conservation and sustainable principles. The tourist experience is now more individual (travelling alone or in small groups) and there are interests that transcend leisure in *stricto sensu*, like education, work, health motivations or exciting experiences. According to Poon (1993) or Salvà-Tomás (2001) several facts justify this new behaviour based on heritage sites, the increase in value of places, artefacts and activities that authentically represent the past, as well as the search for difference and quality in a context of stronger globalisation, which also leads to a cultural homogenisation. So, heritage presents different forms to cover tourist motivations, resumed by Herbert (1989) in three: natural heritage (category which involves the natural resource); a second category vested in built environments (historic buildings and sites); and a third form summarised in *cultural* (covering a very wide and almost intangible set of conditions but, normally, related with culture). This means that heritage has different connotations for different peoples, being a contemporary product capable to serve a number of specific actual needs.

On the other hand, tourism is commonly accepted as an economic opportunity to develop territories, mainly those located in peripheral regions (Fonseca & Ramos, 2007). In Portugal different documents and plans propose heritage tourism as an opportunity to develop these regions (for instance, the National Strategic Plan for Tourism or the National Programme of Policy and Planning of Territory). Although sometimes tourism causes pollution, waste, vandalism and other problems to heritage sites (WB, 2001), heritage tourism has provided an alternative form of enterprise, creating jobs and generating wealth for local economies. This means that heritage tourism has an enormous potential for diversified local economies, especially in areas where economy is focused on single sectors, such as the rural areas. To Orbaşlı (2000) heritage tourism has become a pillar of the region's overall growth-enhancing strategy, as well as rich foundation for people's education, creating robust employment and contributing to the reduction of poverty and unemployment. The heritage appreciation by tourists has not only become a reason for conservation, but it has also intensified the increase of local interest in the environment. For this reason, tourism is a potential and important catalyst for the heritage safeguarding and the stimulation of conservation policies. Well-conserved awareness could also increase local involvement and demand for conservation and forming local associations, expanding the institutional capacities to manage these resources. Concerning this, Orbaşlı (2000) agrees that the relation between conservation and tourism is no longer an outcome of conservation, but this last is increasingly a product of tourism. Heritage tourism adds less tangible, but equally important, payoffs. A well-managed tourism programme improves the quality of life as residents take advantage of the services and attractions that tourism adds. It also promotes community pride and the identity feeling, which grows as people work together to develop tourism.

In summary tourism can play an important role for the future of heritage places and sites because: (i) it is an economic sector in itself, using resources, producing products and generating returns in profits and jobs; (ii) it works as an element in economic development, exercising a catalytic or integrating role in development projects; (iii) it is used frequently in the management of economies at various spatial scales from the international to the local and (iv) it can contribute to safeguarding endangered patrimony assets in ways that incorporate them into development strategies and yield economic and social development. However, the adoption of a sustainable process based on heritage tourism implies understanding the place and its needs, a good planning process, which encompasses the common objectives of a long-term sustainable growth, maximizing local income and achieving cultural and natural continuity and a correct projection of a place to a targeted visitor market. Only guided by these purposes will it be possible to lessen frictions between cultural/natural and tourism policies and to maximize mutual understanding and cooperation on the local scale. In fact, various authors share these principles, such as Graham *et al.* (2000) which defended that preservation and development are the two

dominant strategic ideas in managing heritage, and sustainable heritage development is an attempt to reconcile them rather than to choose between them.

2 HERITAGE TOURISM, A STRATEGIC AXIS TO THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF ALMEIDA

2.1 Case study contextualization

Almeida is located in the peripheral Portuguese region of Beira Interior Norte. According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development criteria, Almeida is a rural area, because more than 50% of the local population lives in areas where the relative population is less than 150 inab/km² (in 2001, Almeida's relative population was only 16,7 ina/km²). For these reasons, Almeida is simultaneously a peripheral territory, for its geographical position and also because it integrates a poor region.

Almeida reflects the problems and debilities of the peripheral Portuguese rural areas, characterised by demographic loss, a strong elderly process, the abandon of traditional activities and a general process of economic decadency. These problems represent risks to the heritage protection, because there are several values that can be affected by rural depopulation, both in the material and immaterial level. According to the INE (2002), Almeida's population decreased 12% between 1991 and 2001, the youth (until 14 years old) represented only 9% of the population, and the majority of actives (63%) worked in services located in the two main urban areas (Vilar Formoso and Almeida). The reduced education level of residents represents another serious debility. The following sections present a SWOT analysis to check Almeida's tourism potential and to support the planning and decision-making exercise.

2.2 Almeida's heritage and its tourist potential

The small walled town of Almeida (Fig.1) is classified as National Monument since 1928. It is one of the most emblematic and well preserved examples of the military architecture of 17th century. Almeida integrates the restricted list of ten Historical Villages of Portugal, and is their capital village. At the top of the most important elements we can see the wall in stellar shape designed by Antoine de Ville (a French military engineer of the 17th century). Its construction remounts to the Restoration of Independence (1640), when the defensive function was valued once again and the medieval walls lost their military role due to the military tactics of the 17th century. In 1663, the square of Almeida was connected to a very important victory over the Castilian troops that enhanced its strategic role in terms of national independence. Later, during the civil war, the fortress was a strategic point of dominance and the walls were again seriously damaged and rebuilt in 1853. In 1927, the fortress definitely lost its military function.

Almeida's fortress constitutes a jewel of the Portuguese military architecture of this period. Examples of this are the double doors of St^o António and S. Francisco, several buildings from original military use, such as the casemates, the powder room, the artillery-train, the headquarter, the cannons of Praça Alta and the ruins of the medieval castle, destroyed during the 3rd Napoleonic Invasion (1810). But undoubtedly, the walled structure is the most remarkable element. Surrounded by a moat of 10 meters, the walls are geometrically trimmed in projections and re-entrances. Each angle of the polygon forms a lance-shaped bulwark in a total of six, and amongst these stand some other but smaller, the ravelins in a total of six also. This design gives the fortress the form of a twelve pointed star.

In the intangible domain, heritage also includes a rich and variable craft production, an old cuisine, regional products, folk groups and a very strong collective memory. The small town is also known due to the 3rd Napoleonic Invasion historic recreation, which attracts different European associations, and represents, during three days, the siege, the fights and the capitulation of Almeida as a result of the castle explosion.

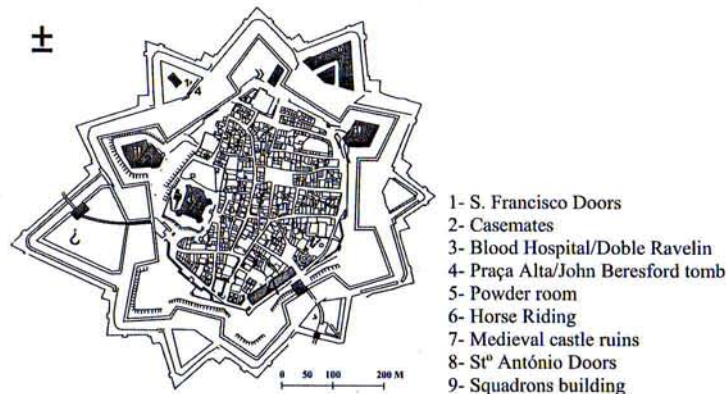


Figure 1. Historical centre of Almeida and some emblematic buildings

In Almeida municipality (Fig.2), the small village of Castelo Mendo (A) has been assessed as an important heritage place. The medieval castle elements are classified (since 1946) as National Monument and all the urban area enclosed by the medieval walls is classified (since 1984) as having Public Interest. Confirming this heritage value, Castelo Mendo also integrates the Historic Villages of Portugal. It is a very authentic village, surrounded by a landscape of wide valleys, whose narrow lanes are lined with simple stone houses. The towers that flank the main door, with the two niched zoomorphic figures (probably from Celtic origins), the pillory, one of the noblest of the region, the tribunal house and the three churches, one of them with a Mudejar ceiling, are some distinctive elements. Additionally, a medieval market brings, each year, an extra amusement to the village with different food, entertainment, clothes, and artefacts from the old times.

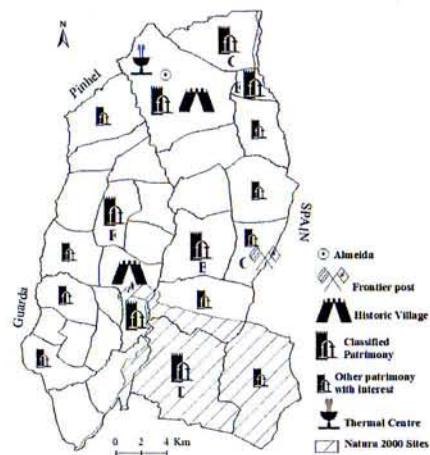


Figure 2. Distinctive heritage in Almeida municipality.

Without the quality of the related cases, Castelo Bom (B) is a historic village more affected by patrimonial degradation. However, the ruins of medieval castle are classified (since 1946) as National Monument, where some pieces of the primitive walls, the towers and the gothic door are put in relief, as well as some good examples of popular architecture. In Malpartida (C) there is an archaeological site classified as having Public Interest which has 36 graves scooped on rock, probably from the low Middle Age. Malhada Sorda (D) counts a church which integrates the national Public Interest buildings and, in the future, it will have a new classified site, the megalithic monument from the Chalcolithic Age, known as Anta da Pedra de Anta. The medieval pillory of Vale de Coelha (15th century) (E) also integrates the list of Public Interest buildings, as well as the Leomil (F) church, which first reference remounts to the 12th century (it is in a classification process). In fact, practically all the small villages of Almeida's municipality exhibit heritage elements with high interest, such as the Wellington's headquarter of the famous English general that commanded British-Portuguese armies against Napoleonic forces, that is located in Freineda. But, above all, Vilar Formoso (G) while a frontier zone, has a cultural charge and a very particular collective memory, connected to the relation with the other side and with historic occurrences such as contraband, the illegal crossings during the dictatorial regime, emigration, but also with the custom services and equipments and with the railway-station.

With more or less importance all Almeida villages have a strong intangible heritage, as a reflex of cultural identity that have, and continue to practise ancestral activities and as a vehicle for transmission of knowledge, customs, traditions and rituals. Craft remains dynamic and diversified and includes basketry, tapestry, laces, pack-saddle, woodworks and other productions. In the latest years ostrich skin leather products have also become famous. Local gastronomy includes ancient ways of confection and traditional recipes and local or regional products are still used (for instance, the quality of the sheep and nanny-goat meat is certificated in this region). Sweets, jam, cheese and liqueurs (mainly the secular *ginjinha*), as well as honey are examples of delicacies made in Almeida with local products and ancestral knowledge.

At last and because it is inseparable from the *heritage* concept according to UNESCO, natural and landscape values reveal a small impact from human activities, mainly because there is not only a low urbanisation but also a low industrialisation in Almeida's area. As a result, Almeida presents a good environmental preservation, with large areas unoccupied by human activities. The existence of two sites that integrate the national Natura 2000 Network (Malcata Mountain and International Douro and Águeda) confirm the high interest in conservation of Almeida's area. The traditional agriculture prevalence also plays an important role in the landscape and in habitats' maintenance, some of them with cynegetic interest. Côa river is a remarkable element in Almeida (and in the regional) heritage, attracting for a long time activities to its basis (to move engines, as a source of food and to irrigate fields). The hot-spring of Almeida is also known from ancient times for its medicinal and therapeutic properties and nowadays it is in a new dynamic of revitalisation with a new thermal centre.

2.3 Almeida's heritage debilities

In spite of this potential, Almeida's heritage suffers different problems that reduce its tourist capacity and represents risks to heritage maintenance. At the top of these problems the physical degradation of monuments and buildings emerge, mainly those classified as national monuments, tutored by central government departments. A significant cause of this problem is financial, because local administration does not have financial resources to develop large scale projects, depending on funding capital provided by central government. These facts explain the lack of repairs and the local (financial and technical) administration incapacity in renewing the most affected heritage values, such as Almeida or the Castelo Mendo walls.

The conflict between public and private sectors and the unrecognising of the values by some particulars constitutes other threat to heritage preservation or conservation. Traditionally and according to Orbaşlı (2000), this relationship is a friction, because there is an imposition of legislation (from public sector) against a desire to maximise profits or interests (mainly from private sectors). In Almeida there is a growing but still insufficient commitment by the local ad-

ministration which deters private initiatives that damage heritage, namely in private constructions with the use of dissonant materials, architectural typologies and the ambition to modify original structures. Some activities, in particular retail, with inappropriate shop frontages in the historic centre of Almeida are often an outcome of private sector impact in heritage.

Equally a problem is the loss of traditions in Almeida as a result of depopulation phenomena, as well as from the aged population process and the abandonment of traditional activities. In these traditions the ways of farming, crafting, cooking and feasting are included. The lower benefit of these activities associated to the lack of interest of youth and to insufficient tourist exploitation justifies the decadency of Almeida's intangible heritage. The disappearance of traditional ways of farming has negative effects in landscape maintenance, causing its homogenisation, the rise of uncultivated areas and the disappearance of habitats. The perpetuation of the old knowledge, practice and engines that still survive in Almeida are also threatened. Examples of this are the communitarian habits (communitarian oven or pasturing) and ancient engines, like *picotas* (old engines with Arab origin that extract water from wells). Protecting these traditions and buildings is not only important to tell the story of this territory, but also to attract tourists, visitors and safeguard their future.

3 STRATEGIC VISION, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS TO PROMOTE HERITAGE TOURISM IN ALMEIDA'S AREA

3.1 From diagnosis to the strategic vision

The previous analysis clarifies Almeida's heritage and tries to reveal its singularities and importance that justifies the national classification of several elements. In fact, heritage is the most valuable local resource and, as we have said, the entities interviewed agree with this opinion, although in practice some actions don't confirm their speech. On the other hand, tourist statistics put Almeida in a suitable position in the regional context, surpassing the majority indicators of the regional urban areas (except Guarda, the greatest town) such as hotel capacity and guests in hotel unities (Fonseca, 2006). In 2006, almost 80.000 tourists visited Almeida's tourism information centre, a very high value when compared with the inhabitants. Local statistics show that between 2000 and 2006, the visitors of the tourism information centre increased more than 111%. Foreign visitors in 2006 represented 37% and most of them came from Spain (77%) and France (14%). However, this observed increase could be higher and doesn't mean an amelioration of economic and social situation in Almeida, because the investment done by tourists and visitors and their satisfaction level are unknown. The lack of animation and the non-existence of some cultural and tourist equipment restrict a higher contribution of heritage tourism in local development.

The strategic marketing plan developed to Almeida seeks the promotion of tourism activity supported on heritage, solving obstacles and clarifying several questions according to the local and regional entities opinions. The nuclear plan's objective aims the improvement of a sustainable development process mainly based on a strategic vision that increases heritage tourism through an amelioration of heritage. So, the plan presents two strategic axes to stimulate tourism activity: (i) to consolidate Almeida as an heritage tourism area and (ii) to improve Vilar Formoso as a platform of tourist reception and distribution. Each axis is subdivided in strategic objectives and, each objective, in practice actions as described in the following section.

3.2 Strategic objectives and actions to promote heritage tourism in Almeida's area

The main purpose of these axes is to solidify Almeida's position in heritage tourism segment in the national and international context through a new perspective which reduces debilities and internal weaknesses. These axes are related to three complementary objectives: (i) the heritage requalification; (ii) the organization of tourist offer and (iii) the implementation of a professional marketing policy.

The requalification and cultural heritage valorisation is the focus of the first objective in order to rehabilitate the values and to improve tourist attraction. After all, the architectural and urban

preservation is important, essentially in the villages with more interesting values (Almeida, Castelo Mendo and Castelo Bom). The relationship between local government and private agents should be more pedagogic and effective so that the residents would understand the importance of heritage protection as the most valuable resource. On the other hand, it would follow and intensify the inspections of works and repairs guaranteeing more respect for rules. But the lack of urban rules is precisely the problem because the regulation follows generic instructions of an outdated (1994) director plan. However, Almeida, Castelo Mendo, Castelo Bom and the old centre of Vilar Formoso have safeguarding plans waiting for ratification. The quickly coming into force of these plans was defended in order to clearly define the rules and to solve several problems and technical questions related to the preservation and the conservation, such as traffic circulation, parking, materials and colours allowed, among others.

The physical rehabilitation of walls and their elements was a consensual action defended by all entities. It is important to clean the walls and bastions from vegetation with regularity, so that the fortress will visually be more attractive. Secondly, actions of consolidation and rehabilitation are needed in order to repair damages in walls, bastions, casemates and other buildings. However, the magnitude of these interventions restricts local government action, due to its small financial and technical capacity. In this case, a higher pressing from the local administration closed to the central administration, claiming the necessary investments and more facilities in the buildings acquisition, was proposed. Consistent projects that include the fortress rehabilitation as a decisive part of a sustainable development plan can be important to achieve this objective.

A functional rehabilitation was also reclaimed by the entities in this strategic objective. Several heritage values could be converted or have a more efficient usage namely to tourist activity. Making activities in the adjacent space of the walls, like riding and the reposition of horse cart was reclaimed because it pleases tourists. The reutilisation of emblematic buildings with high heritage interest to tourist purposes was also suggested. In fact, the Casemates will receive a museum dedicated to the Portuguese military history after the conclusion of consolidation repairs. But, the installation of another museum space in Vilar Formoso, in the unoccupied custom-house, dedicated to the frontier past, was defended. In fact it is an action which pretends to qualify and enlarge the local tourist offer. The same building could lodge a permanent tourism information centre replacing that which works seasonally and in indistinguishable accommodations. The installation of a show-room where craft, regional products and other events could be exhibited, could be possible due to the building characteristics. The historic locomotive of Vilar Formoso should also be better integrated and the surrounding space arranged, because it is in a very decadent situation and without tourist gains. At last a higher (administrative and technical) support was reclaimed to convert buildings in tourist equipments, mainly to green tourism unities, attending to the heritage value and characteristics of several buildings that exist in Almeida, Castelo Mendo, Castelo Bom and other villages.

In the intangible heritage domain, the implementation of different actions to rehabilitate the handcraft activity was defended. Firstly, it is necessary to guarantee the maintenance of old crafts to new generations, through formation plans guided to specific targets (unemployed and housewives) and to create other formations, where people can learn crafts from other regions. Secondly, handcraft products should be more divulged, through the organization of markets and public exhibitions. This action should give more visibility and could raise the craft products demand, benefiting the economic condition of producers. Thirdly, the creation of craft and souvenir shops as well as selling points in certain equipments (in tourism information centres for example) was a claimed action. Obviously, these actions imply a closer cooperation between public and private agents and draw up an inventory, because Almeida's craft is practised by artists working alone.

In relation to regional products (agro-forestry) the actions try to promote traditional activities and ways of production based on their quality and distinction. Furthermore and to heritage interest, these activities represent an economic source to inhabitants. The marketing and the quality certification of these products were two actions strongly requested to preserve its maintenance and to solidify its economic importance. Encouraging the installation of typical restaurants, dialoguing with businessmen and offering good conditions, for example, with low taxes, were actions de-

fended to preserve and promote old cuisine. In fact, the current interest in traditional food and cuisine is part of a general desire for authentic experiences (Dessièrre, 1998).

The second strategic objective attempts to solve an important debility which restricts Almeida's tourist activity. The organisation of tourist offer assumes a nuclear importance because an integrated and positional perspective of tourist attractions and entities doesn't exist. This reason explains the non-existence of tourist products in Almeida which, according to Middleton (1996), implies an organisational level between resources and local agents that will allow pack's purchase to tourists. To solve this problem, all the entities interviewed defended a higher dialogue and cooperation between public and private agents. This cooperation is important in domains such as marketing, entertainment, equipments' availability, urban preservation, among others, in order to increase the tourist competitive capacity and quality. A more effective collaboration in the strategies format and in their implementation is desirable so that certain synergies and complementarities of the common actions are created. New governance forms (and structures) are needed to materialise this objective and to involve non-public agents in the management processes.

The tourist offer structure is another vital action to achieve this objective. All the resources, activities and entities that qualify and feed tourism should be structured in a transversal and integrated perspective, including not only eminently tourist activities (hotels, restaurants, transports and informative services, entertainment, etc.), but also other upstream and downstream domains which diversify other offers (territorial planning, environment protection, craft and regional products, shops where these products can be acquired, and others).

The organisation should also include other attractions, enlarging the offer spectrum to other tourist searches (health, adventure/nature and residential tourism). Having distinctive and singular cultural resources and being it a potential leader product, Almeida's tourist organisation should integrate and promote complementary attractions to the main (cultural) offer, e.g., the nature landscape and the thermal centre. One of the most consensual critiques is related to the insufficient entertainment and exploitation of Almeida's natural attractions. Organising and promoting events and activities related to the contact with nature (pedestrianism, bike, riding, canoeing, balloon, bird watching, etc.) and giving support to local clubs were two actions proposed. Cõa river, the rural tracks, the plain morphology, the environmental and landscape quality, the cynegetic variety are in fact components that should be better exploited in a sustainable perspective.

The new thermal centre of Almeida was reported as a new opportunity to enlarge tourist offer and to attract a great number of visitors and tourists. However, higher marketing and integration with the rest of resources were defended so that Almeida would also be considered a health destination. Even the built patrimony could strengthen green tourism and the residential segments if it was better promoted, attracting not only more tourists, but also investments and promoters.

To face one of the most important debilities, the third strategic objective tries to implement a professional marketing perspective. As defended by Thomas (1989), marketing has recently emerged as an increasingly important issue to the management and development of heritage sites. But, and according to González (2001) terminology, Almeida is in a *proto-marketing* situation, because there is a strong disorganisation and a lack of cooperation between public and private agents in the marketing actions, the financial and the human resources canalised are insufficient and also because there is a prevalent (and wrong) opinion that marketing means only *publicity*. These deficiencies are responsible for the enormous ignorance of Almeida's heritage observed out of the region, restricting the arrival of tourists and visitors. The actions proposed in this strategic objective are based on three convergent domains: tourist attractions, entities relationship and supra-local integration. In relation to the attractions and in articulation with the tourist organisation, a better planning and evaluation of the activities, to understand the impact of the implemented strategies, were defended. Gathering information from tourists (through an interview) was suggested as a good way to get information, to know their satisfaction level and to collect suggestions and critiques. With this study, the knowledge of tourists profile will be better, making heritage promotion through certain means and in more appropriated places more efficient. Secondly, this information, totally ignored in the present, will be helpful to correct offer debilities and, so, to increase the tourist satisfaction level. Clarifying internal questions in the offer domain (desirable capacity, the ideal permanent time, internal ways, etc.) is also important

in a marketing definition policy. It is by these reasons that Kotler *et al.* (1994) considers that marketing goes beyond publicity, because it includes the local resources diagnosis, market studies, and the cooperation between entities in the formulation of strategies.

In relation to the second action, a higher cooperation among public and private entities was consensual, because the individual and fragmented actuation prevails until now. In fact, an efficient perspective of marketing could not be implemented if entities and their contribution are set aside from the definition's and implementation's strategies. The creation of platforms to encourage the participation and the cooperation through partnership forms could be essential.

Almeida's entities' determination was to defend a progressive touristic integration in a regional and transfrontier cooperation. Actually, the region of Beira Interior Norte presents a similar heritage, based not only on cultural riches, but also on complementary products, such as the snow (Estrela Mountain), the wine and landscape (Douro region). Behind each municipality the same concurrent level exists and the priority should be given to cooperation so that investments, marketing and common management would obtain rises in tourist arrivals and would enlarge the market portion. The action developed by regional entities (Tourism Region and the Commission of Coordination and Regional Development of the Centro), thought to be promoted by the intra-municipal cooperation, has been insufficient and developed in a descendent perspective. Fortifying the cooperation with the so-close Spanish municipalities was also proposed in the marketing domain, mainly within the walled town of Ciudad Rodrigo. This action makes sense because the largest number of foreign tourists/visitors comes from Spain.

4 CONCLUSION

The starting idea of this article was to analyse the potential of heritage tourism in the development processes, especially in peripheral and rural territories. The last decades of 20th century showed a strong growth of tourism phenomena and the beginning of a new behaviour profile, characterised by the (re)value of heritage (elements with quality, identity and authenticity). Simultaneously, the decline of these peripheral areas as a result of competitiveness loss instigated the appearance of new plans and policies which promote local resources and mobilise local entities in this promotion. As we have said, heritage tourism emerges as the most valuable resource to several peripheral territories and so, legitimately, tourism is defended as a kind of panacea to solve the development problems and heritage maintenance.

Almeida represents a paradigmatic situation in the context of these Portuguese territories. Having a very valuable heritage, mainly in the cultural dimension, with various architectonic and archaeological elements classified, tourism reveals to be until now insufficient to reverse the last tendencies of human and heritage decadency, even with the rise of visitors. Although, in the last years, some conservation actions have been made by central and local authorities in order to protect (material) heritage, such as the Historic Villages Program, which beneficiated some buildings' fronts and roofs, restoration actions and urban arrangements in Almeida and Castelo Mendo in order to preserve heritage and to improve the tourist attractiveness, were not enough. So, much more can be done, as we have concluded in the study. Almeida needs a structured plan, projected to a medium/long term, focused on heritage tourism as the anchor of the sustainable development. As we described, a strategic marketing plan can be an essential process to achieve these objectives taking into account the local reality and the debilities diagnosed. In this way and respecting the opinion of the influent agents interviewed, a lot of complementary actions are presented to preserve Almeida's heritage and to strengthen heritage tourism. Local development should be seen as a process of territorial and heritage construction, and so, the implementation of this process implies some changes and ruptures with the past, mostly in three domains. At first it implies an establishment of a horizontal relationship among different entities (hardly reclaimed) linked to heritage tourism, creating new governance forms, involving them in the decision-making processes. Secondly, it requires the adoption of a plan-process, where research, planning and implementation phases cannot be separated, and must be seen as a

continuous cycle. At last, the implementation of a professional marketing perspective is needed so that heritage resources become more visible and more effective.

The municipality authorities are the best positioned local entities, because they have more resources, competence and mobilisation capacity to conduct all the process. Recently and recognising these problems, some actions have been adopted by the local entities, which can converge to a strategic marketing plan in the future: the constitution of the Almeida's Agency Promotion, the strong investment in national and international heritage promotion, and the offer qualification with the enlargement of equipments and tourist/cultural entertainment. We expect that these steps will lead to a wider and advantageous process, *opening* the city walls to visitors and tourists and giving Almeida's past a future.

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