The agricultural links, the underlying wealth to the new major tourist projects in the Portuguese rural space: the case of Alentejo

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- New tourism practices in rural context "Niche Tourism"

Changes in rural areas

- Innovation in tourism initiatives
- Local development and tourism

Case of Alentejo
Theoretical Framework

Rural Tourism - Leisure migration in rural areas for a period superior to 24 hours. The demand is still fragmented and spread, but marked by new practices of “active tourism”, where gastronomy and wine are valued.

“Niche Tourism” - Specific interests, culture and/or tourism activities involving a small number of tourists in “authentic scenarios” (Robinson & Novelli, 2005)

Theoretical Framework

Evidence of changes in rural areas:

- Demographic decrease;
- Reduction of cultivated land;
- Increase of fallow land, natural parks, gardens ...;
- Diversification of the functions of rural areas (residential, leisure, health, cultural and often connected to tourism);
- Changes in the rural landscape.
Innovation in tourism initiatives:

- Search for synergies between agriculture and tourism;
- New rural image – new symbolic and material relationships with nature and “successful” agriculture;
- Enhancement of the wealth and elements of the local landscape (hills, vineyards, olive groves, barrocal...) with the contribution of renowned architects and landscape architects;
- Fragmentation of rural space - new forms of use and activities in the business;
- Partnerships between local promoters and foreign tour groups;
- Mediating role of local promoters.
Theoretical Framework

Local development and tourism

The official entities trust the potential of tourism:

- Enhancement of resources;
- Diversification of the local economy;
- Job creation;
- Sale of handmade products.
Niche areas in Alentejo

Alentejo - One of the least populated regions in Portugal, but relatively close to the Metropolitan Area of Lisbon and with good accessibility
Herdade dos Grous (Beja)

Hotel/Village with 24 rooms and 2 restaurants in a 730ha estate with agricultural and livestock production (cattle, olive groves and 73ha of vineyards).

Web: www.herdadedosgrous.com
Herdade da Malhadinha Nova (Beja)

A 450 ha estate with 27ha of vineyards and livestock production (the Alentejo pig and Alentejo cattle). Wine tourism, wine hotel with 10 rooms and restaurant.

Web: www.malhadinhanova.pt
L’AND Vineyards (Montemor-o-Novo)

5-star wine resort on a 66ha estate. 44 million euro investment.
Village with 125 houses with different designs. Hotel with 22 suites (some sky view suites). Restaurant and wine club. Possibility of private vineyards. Architectural integration of the landscape.

Web: www.l-andvineyards.com/pt/
São Lourenço do Barrocal
(Reguengos de Monsaraz)

- 780ha estate (560ha farm with olive groves, pasture for cattle in organic production and 15ha vineyards);
- Integration of the local landscape (barrocal).

90 million euro tourism project:
- 5-star hotel (15 rooms);
- Tourist village (30 houses);
- 90 barrocalos of 1ha for residences with 1 floor.

Web: www.barrocal.pt
Research questions

- Who are the agents promoting these initiatives?

- What sorts of activities are combined in these tourist units?

- What is the relationship of these places with the environment where they are located?

- How do authorities regard the regulation of these places?
**Main conclusions**

**Promoters** – descendants of farmers with higher education and important mediators between the agricultural and tourism sectors.

**Activities** – leisure and agriculture activities aiming to offer costumers “a rural experience in a comfortable contemporary setting”.

**Relationship with the environment** - the developments emerge from a “logic of enclave” with poor continuity with its surroundings. The dynamism and prestige conferred to the rural space need further evaluation. The strongest relationships are established with distant areas (customers, skilled labour).

**View of the public authorities** - the official entities trust the potential of tourism and based on their mission to ensure the development of the territory they follow with interest these enterprises.
Other questions

What is the economic sustainability of these projects?

- return on investment
- importance of mobilized funds
- effective creation of jobs (full and part time jobs, throughout the year and seasonally) and salaries
- effective capacity to attract population

What is the degree of satisfaction of the participants?

Do rural and urban areas maintain their individuality?