

A Model for Understanding the Dynamics of Territorial Networks: The Case of Tourism in the Douro Valley

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Abstract

Traditionally, the territory has been considered as static entity confined to well-defined administrative borders. This point of view considers territories as mere resources containers filled up with an array of factors the must be managed. However, such approach does not seem appropriate to understand territorial dynamics. Territories overflow their administrative boundaries and can be regarded as networks interacting with multiple actors, such as other territories, countries, companies or individuals. Since the territorial space is built upon interactions between heterogeneous actors, geographical distance tends to lose its relevance. It is thus important to regard the territory from a network perspective.

Based on the IMP group conceptual framework, this paper aims at contributing for a better understanding of the territorial dynamics. From a network perspective, territories have characteristics similar to those of organisations. The actors-resources-activities model is likely to be used for their understanding and considerations in terms of relationships, positioning and change seem applicable. Built on the basis of the concept of 'issue-based net', the paper develops a model for understanding the dynamics of territorial networks. This is very much dependent on collective actions performed by both formal and informal organisations. These organisations struggle for the defence of their mutual interests by changing or preserving their position within the overall network.

The main research findings reinforce the relational and collective nature of territories. The territorial environment has an effect on the resources' value of networks that operate in such a territory. The relational environment is a key factor for the emergence of issue-based nets. These, aggregating actors who share mutual interests and perform a joint action, are created in order to deal with adverse relational configurations or to exploit conjoint opportunities.

The study also includes some managerial implications. The major challenges faced by territorial managers are not subject to any physical constraint. Rather, they must be understood within the framework of a broad network of heterogeneous actors. As such, a restrictive territorial management which is dominated by administrative criteria is likely to restrain the potential value of a territory since it blocks the indirect access to competences owned by other territories or organisations.

Keywords: Relational space, territorial networks, collective action, issue-based net, tourism

Introduction

Territories have gradually been defined in dynamic terms. Human geography considers space as a result of relationships and influences spreading well beyond its physical boundaries. Under such perspective, distance loses its prominence as a blockade to regional development because it can be overpowered by the establishment of privileged relationships. These, may grant access to new resources and develop new activities to attract actors, who may give a new dynamic impulse to the territory.

Regional limits have a dynamic, social, political and cultural nature (Amin, 2002). According to this relational view of the territory, Murdoch (1998, p. 358) states that “distance becomes, like space, plastic, as it continually changes shape and form within differing sets of relations”. For this author, space, whilst partially physical, is completely relational. Consequently, regions must be analysed regarding their relational connectivity because of a “rise of compositional forces which are transforming cities and regions into sites immersed in global networks of organisation and routinely implicated in distant connections and influences” (Amin, 2004, p. 33).

Most human geography researchers tend to analyse territories from a network perspective. As Murdoch (1998, p. 357) puts it, it is a “useful way of thinking about how spatial relations come to be wrapped up into complex networks”. Taking into consideration the territorial dynamic, interactive and relational characteristics, the conceptual background of the IMP group seems to have a privileged adequacy capable of strengthening this territorial approach. This paper’s objective is to contribute to the understanding the space dynamics based on the conceptual framework developed by the IMP group.

This paper is divided in six sections. Firstly, we address territorial studies under a perspective of an interorganisational network. We also mention the major premises from such theoretical approach in regards to tourism networks. Secondly, we describe and justify the methodology used in this research project. Then we present the analytical model for territorial dynamics based upon the theoretical approach detailed in section one. It follows the case of the Port Wine Route. The last section presents the conclusions and management recommendations as well as suggestions for further research.

Conceptual Background

Territories as Networks

“Places overlap with so many other places that it makes it very difficult to say that they are truly concentrated in one location” (Amin and Thrift, 2005 p. 14). Territories are often characterised as a closed geographic space, which only hosts organisations. By contrast, this paper regards the territory as an interactive and interrelational reality. Its resources’ articulation with other resources may be considered as a proxy of its value. Under such perspective, territory may be considered a reality analogical to any other organisation, which influences and becomes influenced by those organisations it interacts with.

This network view of the territory is compatible with the characteristics of interorganisational networks studied by the IMP group. A territory has resources, actors and a specific surrounding for the development of activities. In a network, every territory can be analysed (Håkansson *et al*, 2003). However, IMP studies aimed at understanding the territorial component and relational dynamics are still scarce. There is a huge window of opportunities to increase such knowledge through synergies and adequacy of analytical tools under this approach and the relational territorial characteristics.

Håkansson *et al* (2003) and Johnston and Araújo (2002) have presented works which we deem as the most important studies within IMP to take on space as an element equivalent to an organisation and thus adjusted to be analysed as an interorganisational network. According to Håkansson *et al* (2003), a territory’s value depends on how a certain number of resources is combined and used jointly with other resources. In this case, a territory can be seen as an organisation, comparable to any enterprise,

and its value depends on how all its resources are combined and used within it. The relationship network in a region is also essential for its perception and the conditioning of all actors who act in such a territory. Such network becomes in itself a resource for the region where it is located.

If territories are regarded as organisations, each company or enterprise is considered as a special combination of resources. A resource becomes a value, which can be seen as a part of a huge constellation of resources. Thus, the character of social and institutional relationships that develop and originate in a territorial context is somewhat unique, inimitable, affecting the potential and attractiveness of the region where they are located. According to these authors, space can be a heterogeneous factor, something simultaneously created and differently used by organisations with a large dynamic component changing with time. Accordingly, space will be considered “as something that not only affects the individual company, but also the way the individual company interacts with other companies” also considering that “the companies’ interaction creates the place” (Håkansson *et al*, 2003, pp. 8-9).

In accordance with this premise of the territory influencing and being influenced, Hess (2004, p. 177) states that “economic actors become embedded there (in particular territories or places) in the sense that they absorb, and in some cases become constrained by the economic activities and social dynamics that already exist in those places.” Consequently, a territory can be characterised by the way their organisations interact. In the extreme, such organisations will have capacity to create or to ascribe a value to the territory. However, such value shall depend upon on how the territory is articulated and configured.

Håkansson *et al* (2003) use the concept of ‘position’ to characterise territorial dynamics. A territory’s position is dependent on the inner resources’ activation as well as on the relationships they keep. Resources may be interlinked by compatible territories giving way to a broader and more powerful territory. Accordingly, territories are, to some extent, equivalent to any organisation as typified in the ARA model. As a dynamic entity, territories will see an increase in their value and position in regards to other territories. Such mobilisation is due to resources’ activation and interaction of actors and activities. Indeed, the territory may create dynamics or obstacles for the actors who operate there and the networks they belong to.

Such territorial point of view is also considered in the study of Johnston and Araújo (2002) the authors conceived space as an atmosphere where organisations are active elements and shall be configured all over relationships based upon resources and activities located in such specific atmosphere. In fact, Johnston and Araújo (2002) state that space can be seen as an organiser of interrelational relationships. They disallow the territorial view as a mere receptacle of economic activities, and take it as a relationship structure, which depends on specific resources. Hence, “territories can contain a variety of firms, industrial systems, networks and institutional governance forms,” strictly spatial analyses “can only make superficial analysis of interorganisational relationships. The generic term ‘territory’ is vague on the relations that constitute that territory as well as on the dynamics and connectedness of those relationships” (Johnston and Araújo, 2002, p. 9).

The authors suggest that “territories are environments in which organisations are directly active and have a presence at a point in time, and are configured through relationships formed on the basis of activities and resources found within that specific environment” (Johnston and Araújo, 2002 p. 10). Yet according to the same authors: “space itself is inseparable from individuals, institution and organisations. (...) Spatial locations, whether they are called cities, agglomerations or regions, as abstract conceptualizations, are not of much use. The relevance of a spatial perspective lies in the associations and functions of factors that interact within and across a given space.” (Johnston and Araújo, 2002, p. 5).

Under such a dynamic perspective, “the territory is no longer considered as a simple support of localisation factors but more and more as a group of territorial agents and economic, socio-cultural, political, and institutional elements having specific organisation and regulation patterns shared rules and norms” (Cova *et al*, 1996, p. 654). And Johnston and Araújo (2002, p. 14) add that “within that bounded space there are structures and mechanisms (for example institutional actors) that may aid firms develop relationships with other firms who may, knowingly or unknowingly, be exposing themselves to potentially valuable activities”.

Under such a perspective, spatial relationships shall not be bound to specific borders but can be developed through interaction, kept at a distance, between different areas (Sayer, 2000). Thus, they will provide the space and the conditions for developing other activities. Such conditions shall be time dynamic and may attain a tangible or intangible character (Johnston and Araújo, 2002).

A Network Perspective of the Tourism Industry

“Tourism is a phenomenon that comprises a collage of producing and consuming moments. It is essentially a global process, which manifests itself locally and regionally, and explicitly involves the construction of place. As such, the study of tourism provides great potential to reveal the dialectics of production and consumption, the tensions between the global and the local, and core issues associated with social and spatial polarization” (Milne and Ateljevic, 2001, p. 386).

The tourism industry has a growing significance. WTO (1999), in its long-term growth forecast document, *Tourism: 2020 Vision*, expects the sector to increase an average of 4.1 percent a year over the next two decades. Such an increase will mean a rise in international arrivals from 565 million in 1995 to more than 1 billion in 2010 and up to more than 1.5 billion in 2010.

The tourism industry is made up of partners' networks often intertwined by co-operative arrangements (Schmoll, 1977). In fact, this industry encompasses multilevel interdependence between large numbers of partners who develop activities in industries other than tourism. In some cases, they are not even aware they belong to it. To build up a tourism product requires a coordination task between diverse companies and transversal levels of offers (Smith, 1994) quite complex for the partners involved in the industry. Leiper (1979) emphasises coordination when defining the tourism industry considering it as the joint coordination of activities aimed to serve the tourists. This position shifts the typical technological replaceability criterion from belonging to the industry to involvement and participation in the coordination of the tourism production (Tremblay, 1998). Crouch and Ritchie (1999) also recognise changing patterns on the global tourism concept. These, call for greater cooperation and group effort at a lower level to ensure a tourism product able to compete globally.

The tourism destination appeal results from a range of resources with varied sources. These resources qualified as “common pool resources” fall under diverse property ownership regimes - state, private, communal or open access - both before and after tourism development (Healy 1994). The integration and coordination amongst these different holders becomes crucial to the destination image. It is indeed a hard task since they usually have different perspectives, positions and interests. They do not easily realise that their product attractiveness could linger on other actor's offers and decisions. A lack of interaction will thus frail the global tourism product, and accelerate the destination multi-fragmentation process (Pavlovich, 2003) which will translate in its non-sustainability and lack of competitiveness.

Traditional marketing theories have only a limited value to the tourism enterprises because they often assume that the company has a large or even full control over the marketing, image-creation and quality of its product (Grängsjö, 1998). In fact, these theories ignore the multilevel interdependence of the tourism partners, the composite character of the tourism product and even the social processes that influence companies' behaviour. It is necessary to include on those explanatory theories the interaction, the dependence between diverse attractive destinations and the social process that affect the behaviour of the companies. Even those organisations, which do not consider themselves tourism dependant, shall - according to their actions - condition their development since they contribute for a socioeconomic dimension of the destination image (Grängsjö, 2003).

In fact, the tourist decision to visit a destination will not only depend on the marketing strategies adopted by one but by various partners. Accordingly, no partner has a whole tourism product but every partner incorporates a composite product. These complementary characteristics, the interdependence, the weak boundaries between partners' activities, and the simultaneous competition and cooperation process, remarkably fit the explanatory capacity of the Network Approach. However, the research and knowledge coming from the network approach are, by now, only marginal, (Tinsley and Lynch, 2001)

Managing and marketing destinations will benefit from the network approach as the promotion of a destination as a tourism product depends upon the overlapping of political boundaries, and heterogeneous professional and personal interests (Buhalis, 2000). Under such perception, the boundaries of tourism destinations should not be delineated according to administrative factors but by sharing common norms of complementary understanding. As a matter of fact, a tourism destination weaves intra and interterritorial relations, which create connections among disperse territories. Possible tourism destinations will only become attractive after eliminating various administrative barriers thanks to joint relationships. Simply put and adapting the words from Grängsjö “the boundaries within the destination have to be flexible and questions of mutual interest can constitute the *best boundaries for a tourist destination*.” (Grängsjö, 2003, p. 443).

There must be a perception of common interests and complementary activities capable of enhancing agents’ resources and of considering tourism destination as an organisation. Acting in a network environment will reduce dependence from public participation, since it will allow mediating a simultaneous relationship of cooperation and competition. This, coupled with the commitment and trust created, by then, will translate into reduced risks for new investments, (Tremblay, 1993, Tremblay, 1998). It can also promote an atmosphere of innovation and valuation in the tourism destination, through informational fluxes, continuous interaction and shared theories.

Indeed, tourism management “depends crucially on the capacity of groups of firms to learn-by-interacting, among them and with their customers. Much of that learning process takes place through the web of loose and flexible communication channels arising out of industrial networks.” (Tremblay, 1998, p. 851). This author shows three possible models of network for the tourism market. First, a horizontal model between organisations with similar technological capabilities but located in different destinations and supplying diverse markets (e.g. hotel networks or associations). Secondly, a tourism network made up of various organisations whose clients belong to a specific group connecting heterogeneous but complementary resources around a given product. Such linkage can be vertical, lateral or diagonal creating a quasi-organisation (groups that may link complementary activities such as airlines, travel agencies, hotels).

The last type of networks deserves a special attention since it deals with resource coordination at the last leg of tourism service for specific destinations. In this particular, and in a specific destination, the organisations share infrastructures, attractions, public natural scenery as well as social attitudes towards tourism. It is through relationships and multiple interactions that they coordinate the existing public resources and minimise the negative external factors. This means that those organisations will try to coordinate, determine and enhance the local tourism “cake” and through their influencing interaction will try to reinforce their position and increase their “market share.”

Komppula (2000) studies this last type of tourism networks applying the concept of issue-based net introduced by Brito (1996). An issue-based net is “a form of association mainly based on cooperative relationships amongst actors who aim to cope with a collectively recognised issue by influencing the structure and evolution of the system(s) to which they belong through an increased control over activities, resources and/or other actors (Brito, 1996, p. 97). Komppula mentions that “in principle all the companies which act in some area of the tourism industry, and all the other actors, belong to different local and product-based nets, which, for their part, form the regional tourism network”. A regional tourism network shall be an issue-based net “which are based on regional administration or the division of marketing regions, and the common goal of which is to make the region in question better known as a tourist destination, as well as to increase the revenue from tourism (...) The actors in the net are mainly tourism enterprises, but representatives of public administration, different organisations, associations, events and local population may also be involved in it.” (Komppula, 2000, p. 3).

The Model

“Any object or phenomenon is many different things dependent on the angle chosen to approach it and explore it, and can be approached from different angles. Different perspectives result in different pictures of the landscape where different features of it appear or disappear and assume major or minor proportions. Perspectives always entail “distortions” of the phenomena, but then again no

picture can embrace all perspective and any picture always implies a certain point of observation.” (Snehota, 2003, p. 2).

In this section, we define a way, which will trace a perspective of analysis based upon a model with which it will be linked. The chosen perspective for analysing reality will become the privileged conceptual basis and subsequently will mould the research procedure. It is the network approach that whilst supporting a conceptual background has revealed to contain all automatisms that may render this phenomenon intelligible and a dialectic relationship of tourism destination integrated in a territorial dimension.

When one takes a territory as an organisation, such as identified by Håkansson *et al* (2003) and Johnston and Araújo (2002), it allows us to see it as a dynamic reality or as “systems of social relations embodying distinct cultures and practices” (Sayer and Walker, 1992, p. 141), as a territorial reflexion of how they are integrated in the activities’ pattern of the organisations who operate there (Johnston and Araújo, 2002).

The model has the objective of trying to understand the relational dynamics of a territorial base, which condition the acts of the actors and the performance of territorial networks, in this particular case the tourism network (Figure 1). This broad objective can be split into to more specific research questions:

- How does a territory interact with its respective tourism industry?
- What is the role played by collective forms of organisation in such a context?

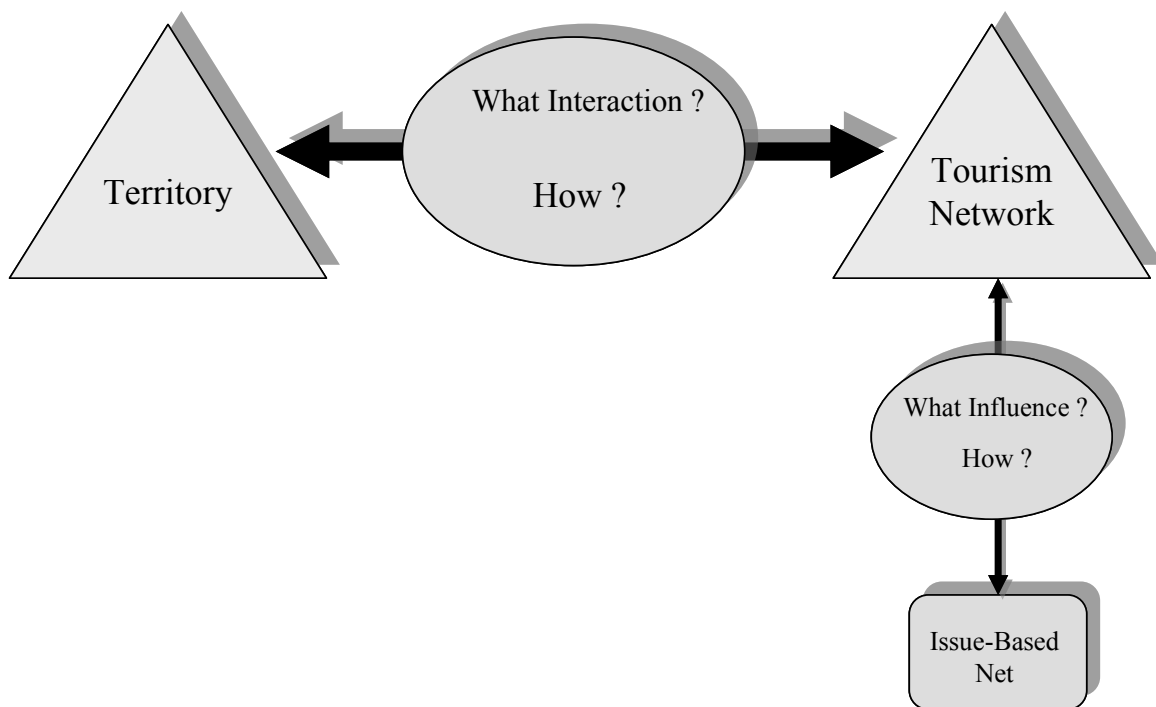


Figure 1
Research Questions

Understanding territory as mainly a relational reality, which encompasses a multiplicity of actors, and never limited to work as a receptacle, becomes a strong activator of action by all elements. When territories fight as organisations do, to improve their global ranking, i.e. their attractiveness, they need to create potential for their actors with new and reinforced resources capable of generating new and articulated activities, increasing their value. However, this organisation previously disaggregates itself in a multiplicity of partial networks, which are part of it. In order to understand the influence a territory

exerts on its modelling and the predominance of the dynamics of its multiple networks over the relational configuration of the territory, one has to use the analytical model as presented in Figure 2.

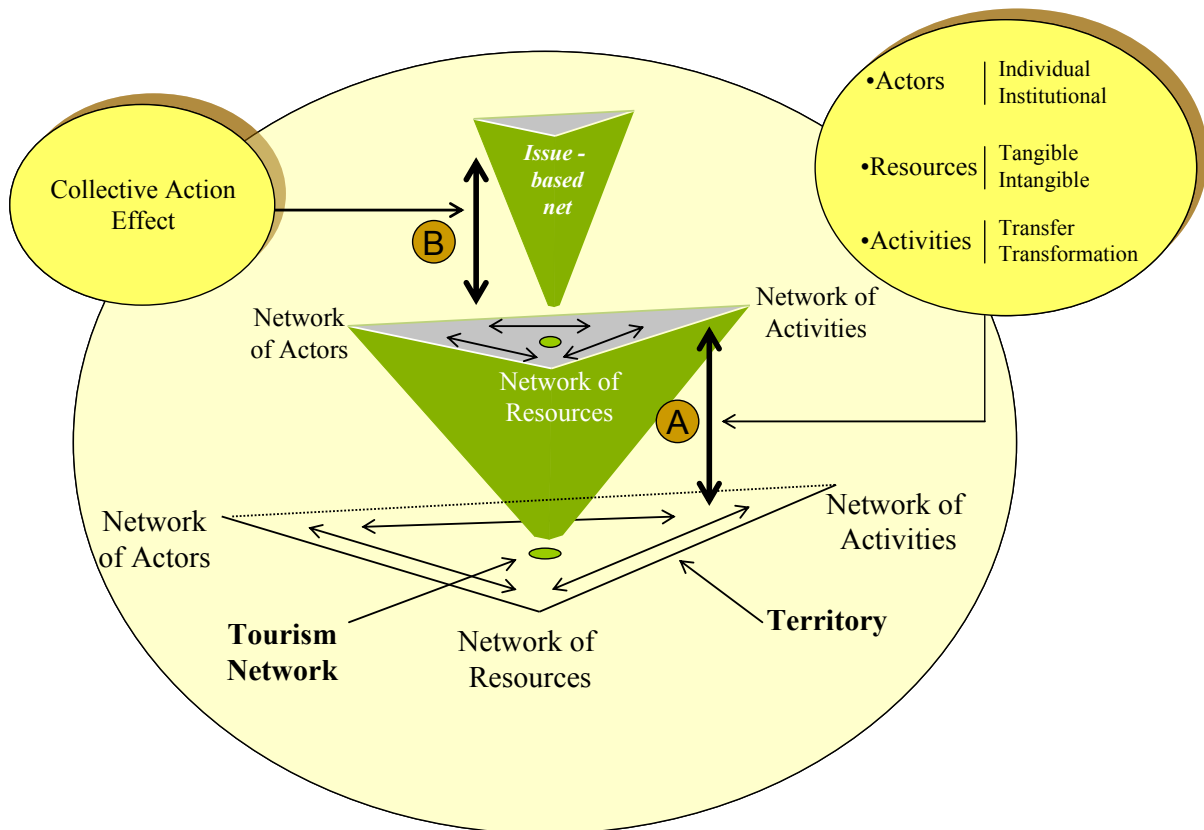


Figure 2
The Model

Among these networks, we stress the importance of the tourism network, since this is a private territorial resource. Indeed the tourism network is but a part of the economic sector, which makes it only a parcel of the territory taken as an organisation. From a tourist's point of view, these two realities are inseparable and we shall try in the model for analysis to decipher and understand their reciprocal modelling. On the other hand, in a tourism network integrated in an organisational territory some actors come out fighting for resources because when controlling them they increase their network power. The purpose of a tourism destination taken as an organisation is to increase its power (translated into attractiveness in this particular case) in relation to other destinations. To reach such an objective their constituting actors shall establish multifaceted relationships of which, some will be of cooperation and competition in order to promote and model change.

To attain such a target, the tourism network must put together and activate resources, develop activities and integrate more actors (working as differentiated elements of destination) whilst keeping the existing ones. It has to be assessed if the interests of individual tourism actors (their increased power within the network) are compatible with the interests of the collective territorial organisation. In order to do it one must identify the critical mass of partners in the tourism network in order to analyse how they integrate within the organisational territory.

Thus, within the various territorial networks, there might be some associated actors, and we should stress, in our particular case, the collective tourism actors. These collective actors will try initially to improve their ranking within the tourism network and shall have to rely on common or similar interests, which will concur to influence the network. Such action is intimately linked with the territory that supports it, and in the long-term will have the potential to model the territorial dynamics. However, these identified bidirectional relationships are only visible and separable for research purposes, since

as it was previously referred to the tourists' eyes they will appear as one and only which is precisely the field we intend to clarify and study.

Methodology

We conducted sixteen personal interviews from May to July 2005 in order to establish the connection between the territorial configuration and the dynamics of the tourism net that operates inside it. Three diverse groups were established. The first was made up of experts with merit and visibility due to their experience and work field. The second group included executive members and staff of the Port Wine Route. The third group encompassed some of the route's associate members. The reason for this division was trying to get representatives of all interests being analysed, in order to capture different perceptions and reflections of the global context. Indeed this is the method suggested when adopting a methodology for the study of complex social realities (Yin, 1994).

The interviews were semi-structured to get objectivity and a linkage in the information research. It also needed some flexibility essential when capturing personal perceptions and opinions, since an overly structured interview loses information the interviewee introduces during the research. It was taken into consideration the qualitative and somewhat exploratory character of this privileged source of information without taking any merit away from its explanatory component (Yin 1993). Firstly, we tried to insert a series of questions to integrate the interviewee in the spirit of the research and get the first references on the theme. It also aimed at understanding the tourism dynamics in the Douro region and the local importance of the wine. Secondly, when the interviewee was integrated in the objectives of the study we tried to obtain his/her perception of the Port Wine Route namely the relevance of collective action and the resulting importance for the associate wine producers and global tourism dynamics in the Douro Region.

The Case of the Port Wine Route

"Douro is wine, wine and vineyards. It may be river, soil, region or village but it is mainly wine" (Barreto, 1993, p. 9). The Port Wine Route (PWR) operates in the Douro valley located in the northern Portugal. It was the first demarcated wine region in the world, with its boundaries being officially established in 1756. It has an area of 250.000 ha, being more or less 30.000 ha occupied by vineyards. UNESCO considers the region a World Heritage site under the caption "a living evolutive cultural landscape", having associated multiple wine producers' throughout its territory, numbering up to 40.000 with multiple interests, perspectives and different priorities. The vineyards are planted in slopes that form a unique landscape alongside river Douro and have become one of the main tourism attractions.

The multiplicity of vineyards and wine producing farms is one of the most prominent Douro attractions, providing in selected environments wine tasting sessions, take part in vintage, sleeping and eating at the farm, apart from selling their own brand of wine.

Generally, starting from a global resource such as wine producing with landscape, tradition and its people, one can prepare diverse tourism products somewhat complementary (Figure 3). We hereby bring out such more structuring products that are basically part and parcel of more basic components. These, require accommodation and hospitality industry, safety, infrastructures, acceptance and understanding of tourism value-added by the residents and on the other hand, coordination, articulation and interaction of public and private tourism operators. Only then will they become wholesome tourism products capable of creating value-added economic advantages for the territory.

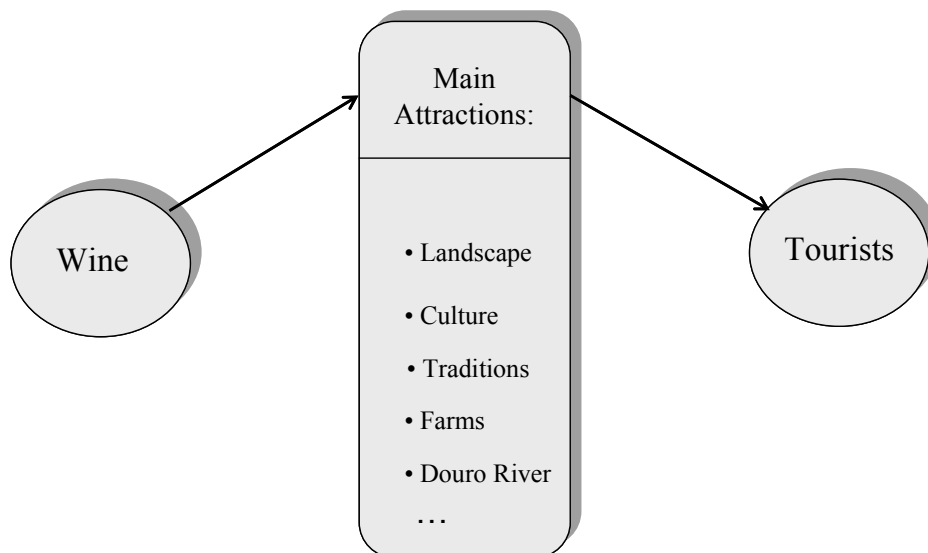


Figure 3
The wine as a tourism magnet

Wine culture is inevitably linked to tourism demand in the Douro Region, because tourists search for its landscape, culture and its people that, whichever approach you take cannot be dissociated from wine culture. Wine producing culture has not only modelled today's impressive landscape but will also enable the tourist to get in touch with the process and the surroundings of its final product, in what has become an ever increasing income source for the average wine producer: enotourism.

One of the major obstacles to the region's tourism development is the high number of spokespersons with associative responsibilities since the region is divided into four districts and three regional tourism offices. This makes it difficult to have an articulate communication between agents, creating an over imposition of powers and leading to diversified strategies around municipal councils and tourism regional agencies. It is hard to leverage territorial resources in a tourist articulate and coherent manner resulting from too many intervening parties. Actually, "the region still faces serious difficulties in organisational terms, to articulate its different members and to concerted interests, perspectives and strategies which are an obstacle to the success of public intervention and block their developmental process" (Ramos, 2002, p. 11).

The territorial situation shown together with existing financial support systems has led to the creation of the PWR (Port Wine Route) in an attempt to provide more regional coherence in terms of divulging and structuring a globally encompassing and coherent tourism product. As a matter of fact, farms and vineyards in the Douro valley offering wine tourism and enotourism are structured around the Port Wine Route whose mission is to divulge the region and congregate efforts between its members to create a coherent tourism product based upon wine and wine-producing activities.

The Port Wine Route was created on August 3, 1995 around farms and vineyards in the Douro valley structured around wine. It tried to be a broad project to divulge and provide dynamism to all wines from the Douro valley together with all tourism activities linked with it. This allowed for another source of income not strictly linked to wine producing but to all interlinking activities namely the tourism potential. Figure 4 represents the major actors involved in the route. Divulging wines and promoting culture, tradition and landscape, prompting the development of enotourism, this route aims at providing an image and a unified promotion of a scattered and splintered administrative region as Douro is. Notwithstanding this event's dimension, PWR activity goes much further since the Route has installed its Showroom in one of the most traditional areas of the Douro Region. There it operates a Central Reservation System, a wine direct sale point for the associates and a local information bureau as PWR always intended.

Professional training is also organised by PWR, since the regional image the tourist glimpses is based on local contacts with the population especially the people involved in the hospitality industry. A

special Training Module was developed for all members and associates aptly named “Contributing for Enotourism.” It aimed at explaining wine serving and service techniques apart from clarifying doubts from members and hospitality staff improving the tourist product. On the other hand, the route works as Central Reservation System it provides a global product through its associates who lead tourists to visits, accommodation and meals or channels them to outside partners. These may include river cruises, tourism train rides or even hotels (when the associate members cannot satisfy the huge demand internally). All this can congregate and mobilise various means and agents for the entire Douro region, or even further away as long as the tourist stays overnight and lodges with one of the associate members.

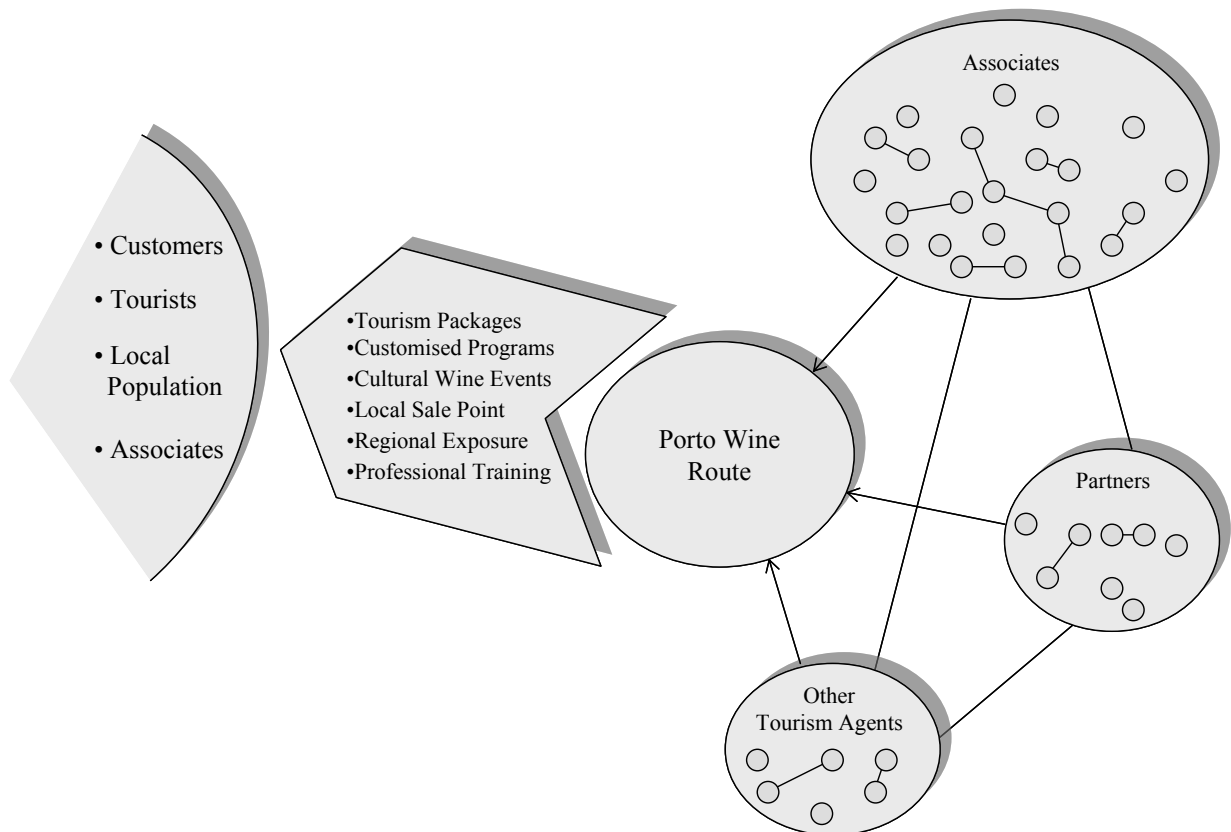


Figure 4
PWR relationship network

One can certainly say that PWR mobilises the regional and surround areas players’ and tourist resources’ since all revenue resources derive from this articulation and later offer or sale of tourist services by third parties. In theory, this articulation potential is enormous since it relies on the territory players, resources and tourism activities.

Results

“Geographers have suggested that the increasing interconnection and interdependence between places does not mark the end but the beginning of geography” (Passi, 2004, p. 536).

The analysis of the PWR case follows the key conceptual constructs of the model presented in Figure 2:

- Individual and institutional actors
- Tangible and intangible resources
- Transfer and transformation activities

- Collective action effect

Individual Actors

It has been noticed that individual actors evolve essentially around wine and tourism. A type of tourist actor identified was the cruisers' operators. Even though they carry almost 400.000 passengers a year the value for the territory development is only modest because the passengers, they spend their time almost on board being the interaction with locals nearly inexistent.

The main idea retained from the interviewees was that there were not a relevant number of actors in the territory. Generally, they are spread out and have a very limited interaction being unable to create potential and develop territorial resources. They are not a resource or a territorial attraction capable of fostering the attraction of new territorial actors looking for complementary partners for the conception of an integrated product. There is a twofold problem: there are no interactions between actors which harm the constitution of an elaborated product, and the critical dimension is too small to attract significant actors who could internalize all the activities needed for the offer of a composite product. These limitations and characteristics of individual actors are intimately related to the characteristics and actions of territorial and institutional tourism actors. For many interviewees, they are the fundamental reason for a very limited territorial attractiveness.

Institutional Actors

From the characterisation of institutional actors by interviewees the global idea to keep, is their lack of regional dimension and the absence of territorial partners, operating globally in the Douro territory. This fact causes the prevalence and superimposition of district strategies, which may be diverse or antagonistic when taken territorially. Indeed they have competences at a very narrow scale that sometimes is not coherent or compatible with other. It doesn't exit a global vision of the Douro valley territory. Because of that, the interviewees unanimously referred that relevant institutional regional actors do not exist. At a small scale the institutional actors considered were the municipalities and the tourism commissions.

At the territorial level the municipalities are the more relevant institutional actor. There exist 13 municipalities on the Douro Valley that manage the territory of their community; they have an important role on the infrastructures and the organization and promotion of tourist events and other activities. However their territorial focus is very narrow. They don't have enough dimension or critical mass to generate considerable events. Simultaneously the cooperation and interaction between municipalities is inexistent. The result of these situations is the waste of resources used in multiple but ineffective actions of promotion. There is an overpower of the municipalities attributions in terms of tourist tasks that is not followed by the comprehension about the practical consequences of that.

These considerations are supported by the opinion of an interviewee who stated:

“Each municipality create its dynamic without knowledge about what the others municipality, plans sometimes there are similar events in the same days. The initiatives have now significance or relevance as they could have if they act together. They seem not notice the potential leverage effect of such a connection. A territory like the Douro Valley that is by its nature and characteristics the same reality nature is being managed in very different ways.”

At tourism level there is a similar situation, which is only aggravated by the fact that this activity requires an interaction and articulation for its affirmation and sustainability in order to allow for the creation of an integrated product. Such institutional configuration is compatible with the low structure of individual regional actors since it makes harder their interaction and avoids the appearance of new individual actors. On the other hand, resources watch their potential and value becoming limited due to the lack of stimuli and restricted regional view of institutional actors.

Regional Tourism Commissions (RTC), are the main institutional tourist actor identified by interviewees. These RTC are responsible for a range of theoretical attributions that goes from the

prospect and diagnostic of tourist potentialities, plans of action and promotion to tourist liveliness and information. There exists 3 RTC in the Douro Valley. In practical terms their action is very inconsequential because once again their administrative boundaries are no the same as the global destination. They also have competencies similar to those of the municipalities, and the interaction between them is extremely weak. As a matter of fact, an interviewee argued:

“The existence of three different RTC that don't identify with a space that want to assume itself as a tourist destination presuppose evident consequences as for example the inexistence of any strategic definition and coordination of different actions.”

By this way we have 3 competitive actors that develop partial efforts of which only can result partial results in terms of the global territory. This institutional configuration figures out in an artificial management of a territory that have similar and common characteristics and in the duplication of means or resources to attain similar goals. It is difficult to delineate a strategy to all the territory, that in turn difficult the already weaken interaction between the individual actors. This is a clear hindrance for the relational connectivity.

Tangible Resources

Generally, the territory is shown as very feeble in infrastructural terms, which limits and makes harder the use of their generous resources. These resources are based upon wine, the Douro River, historic villages and tradition that when combined, generate a landscape with unique characteristics, however fragile, which do not tolerate tourism development models that do not respect such fragility and singularity. Wine producing is named by all interviewees as being the modelling force for the territory. Structuring in a dynamic and decisive manner all intervening forces, this economic activity, works simultaneously as a symbol of the territory and its people represented in its World Heritage landscape.

Along these lines, an interviewee declared:

“Without wine, Douro ceases to be a tourist product, both in production and in culture since everything that is linked to wine producing, industry and the own wine culture and the vineyards are what motivates the visit, that is why I reckon that wine is an essential stronghold in the strategy of Douro's tourism development.”

To the interviewees this is also the most adequate tourist attraction for tourism in the region creating value-added for its population. It requires tourists to integrate in the territory, admiring its culture and traditions, being locally hosted, and creating revenue for the farms, vineyards or rural tourism places. They buy local arts and crafts and help them perpetuate. Simultaneously, this attracts tourists for a customised product instead of a mass tourism, which could originate the collapse of the sustainability of the tourism attraction itself.

Territorial resources end up conditioning and modelling the tourism process, which runs there, but there are threats to this natural model that may render unviable its development, since they are based upon instant procedures, that are massive and destructive of the major territorial resources. Such threats are a result of the great territorial weakness as far as their tangible resources are concerned.

Intangible Resources

Globally the territorial intangible resources do not favour an adequate exploitation capable of providing a benefit to the tangible resources. The institutional actors responsible for the operational side have a logic for action that is not equipped with sensitivity and does not pay adequate attention to tourism activity, and once it does, uses doubtful sustainability criteria, which favours instant policies.

There is a serious lack of professionalism in the numerous interveners and this shows up in inconsequent policies and tourism practices without any visibility disturbing the regional splendour. On the other hand, individual actors do not see benefits when caring for the landscaping factors related to agricultural activity, which implies the progressive debacle of this resource, a true engine of the regional attractiveness and therefore causes a rarefaction of intangible resources such as values,

spirit, mystique that are part and parcel of this territory. This way, tangible resources are antagonistic to the intangible territorial component and are questioned by the lack of coordination. It is thus fundamental – according to the interviewees – that reformed policies be put in place to create a territorial undertaking more adjusted to the regional realities.

Transfer Activities

From the interviewees statements it is clearly noticeable that transfer activities in the territory are almost totally related to the wine ownership from small proprietors to collective representatives who deal with its commercial marketing or its sale to exporters (such is the case of Casa do Douro), such as wine cooperatives. This type of activity creates a much-limited vitality to the territory since the value added to resources by the new owner is reduced or when it is bigger, it is because it happens outside of the territory.

It seems evident the need to add value to wine as a local territorial resource and this can be done mingling it with tourism. From this joint action, one achieves an activity transfer enabling a higher value for the territory. On the other hand, the linkage between wine activities and tourism propels it into an area which demands mainly transform development activities.

Transformation Activities

Generally, interviewees agree on the importance of development of territorial transformation activities, especially in the tourism activities. It is essential, according to the interviewees, to create more points of interest with connecting territories, which have a complementary interest and are compatible to be jointly exploited.

Notwithstanding the unanimous recognition of having activity cycles and preparing integrated products, such activities are still scarce in the territory. This is because of poor interaction between actors, intangible resources available. Integrated products are yet a reality to be. There must be a special mention to the notable exception of the Port Wine Route as an agent capable of articulating the different products being offered and scattered throughout the territory.

Indeed this need for value-added wine and tourism helped congregated all intervening forces around the route: farms and vineyards that saw a natural return for their investment having only to promote the new tourism product through the route's advancement.

This idea was clearly expressed by an informant who said:

“The old concept of farm limited to grape production and sale, or even selling their homemade wines to large distributors ceased to be feasible. That is why the route was advanced, opening up the farms, articulating various agents and divulging the product [...]. There was the need to create a value-added letting our visitors know and share this type of activity so intrinsic to Douro and its wine, adding new components which could become tourist attractions such as the landscape, gastronomy, culture and arts and crafts.”

Collective Action Effect

The major specific problem that was mentioned by the interviewees as capable of creating motivation for an issue-based net, RVP is directly linked to the configuration and dynamics of the tourism network. It aims at attaining a higher regional tourism coherence translated in operational terms, mainly by the creation of a structured product around multiple interests and actors and by divulging the region and their associates in general terms. To solve this problem and because of collective action the tourism network must be changed becoming more dynamic, structured and visible. Due to the mutual influence between the tourism network and the territory, it will imply a change in territorial configuration.

RVP as a collective player created a model of endogenous sustainable tourism development, capable of congregating supplemental value. This happened in a territory marked by an adverse tourism and territorial environment, characterised by multiple players and constantly superimposing interests. Indeed, this model congregates diverse participation and enables the physical regional resources; it spreads the effects and benefits of tourism throughout the territory. It involves endogenously territorial individual agents maintaining the sustainability of traditions, revitalising the workforce, and making Douro's population responsible for its continuous modelling of the landscape. In fact, an interviewee stated:

“With the route they have something, an organised product and a methodological offer. It allows the offer of a tourism product of some dimension.”

Effects of collective action have translated into a clear modelling of the tourism network, which has influenced the need to start an issue-based net capable of creating an effect in the network. As a fact, the tourism network linked to the Douro territory was characterised by the interviewees as having a dynamic, administratively shared by multiple regional actors, translating into the lack of supply of integrated regional tourism products capable of creating value added for the territory.

Due to this state of affairs, and taking into consideration the specific problem that defines the route's operation, the collective action effectively made a definite input for a new and coherent space sustained by complementarities and interactions from agents with common interests. This gave way to the definition and subsequent materialisation of an endogenous development model and enhancer of existing resources. They originate in a unified product, which is coherent and creates territorial virtuality. In brief, the collective action effects translated into an increased dynamic and territorial attractiveness, which is the base for tourism activity. Along these lines, an interviewee contended:

“Those who adhered to the route have a higher perception of landscape preservation as a strong element in attracting tourism. The isolated farmer who does not directly benefit from tourists visits has an inclination to become lazy, indifferent to the rubbish it lays on the corner. Indeed, the producer who bottles his own wine and is linked to the route reaps benefits from tourism, no matter how small they are. It is thus only logical to adopt new options when planting grapes, destroying walls, or opting for more adequate supporting walls, such is the gap that the route helps to bridge.”

One other dimension of collective action effects deals with the acquisition of a dynamic regarding regional disclosure, being this the only vehicle for Douro's integrated divulging and its adherents. Once this effect materialises into a bigger territorial visibility and the creation of an associated image it awakens tourist motivation, especially for tourism and specifically for the territory. According to the interviewees, the route is able to satisfy its members' interests and create new focal points around the most diverse regional partners. Utmost, the Wine Vintage is the major event, which congregates diverse regional partners around common points for the region's exposure. RVP became the “engine” articulating all partners around that common objective, and the territory benefits in terms of visibility and exposure.

Generally, all interviewees had an awareness of associate partners as members of a global offer. This is indispensable for a wider exposure of the Douro region and for the creation of a common offer. These partners become supplementary and avoid the strict competitive view between them. They adopt a cooperative point of view full of reciprocal value. The route becomes a collective player in a double sense. Firstly, on a territorial scale, secondly by the diversity of players. These collectively support this new tourism model around the existing resources.

Conclusions

Economic actors influence and are simultaneously influenced by territorial characteristics. Such influences have been systematically studied. However, these studies are essentially based upon material factors and advantages arising from spatial proximity. The relational component which affects territories has been ignored.

This paper extends knowledge regarding space as an interactive and relational element, contributing for its characterisation according to the interorganisational theory of the IMP group. This paper provides a conceptual analytical model, based upon a territorial dynamic point of view capable of adjusting its resources and becoming more or less attractive to develop activities and to capture new actors throughout time. Actually, territories can be considered as an organisational network that enables the development of activities through the interaction between actors and resources. Under such a perspective and broadening the relational scale, a focal territory shall only be a knot in a vast territorial network, occupying a certain position which assigns its own characteristics and personality. A territory should be relationally linked with diverse relational spaces, promoting interdependence under a clear perception of a regional administration which is not confined to the physical borders under the tutelage of regional entities but broadened to encompass other regions, rich in resources and capable of raising the former dynamics which are accessible through networking. This means that territories may promote alliances with other territories even when they are not spatially close to them.

This approach allows for territorial administrative institutions to have an essentially dynamic perception of space, where its tangible resources are only a fraction of reality, which can be adjusted through interlinking with other spaces. Consequently, territories can become modernised, make investments to become more attractive to new actors or investors in the same manner as organisations. These actors and investors will provide dynamics and new resources. Sometimes it will require common strategies in what should be territorial joint ventures, where the territorial relational configuration shall have a predominant place to promote a sustainable development.

We have also introduced relevant issues to stimulate tourism understanding as an essential network with a propensity to be influenced by its dynamic. This study opens a window of opportunity for tourism becoming an area object of studies of network approach. Such study will be more pertinent and accurate due to its characteristics of invisible industry filled with multiple interactions, with porous boundaries, multifaceted and complex interests, and such characteristics can be exemplarily adjusted to the potential of such approach.

Due to an opening of IMP conceptual space to territorial study it is quite significant its application to the analysis of formation of relational spaces. This will allow for determining the motives that lead to inclusion of confined spatial areas within broader relational territories enabling them to attain a larger dimension and have access to new resources. It would also be relevant to study the dynamics of a relational territory throughout a period. One other question that may be subject of further research is the importance of elements localised in differentiated territories for the dynamics of development of a certain territory, i.e. addressing in further research the matter of interterritorial relational resources. This would help to understand the importance of resources localised in the territory vis-à-vis with resources not located there but that can be reached via territorial partner relationships. It can also be relevant to apply in a more systematic manner the network approach to the tourism industry, making pertinent such approach as a preferential analysis of such reality.

To sum up, we believe that the current study has the potential to open up an area of research until now quite limited under IMP approach. Such opening may preclude a substantial number of future works, which will translate into exceptionally relevant data of highly practical use, enabling a more robust and encompassing approach for the benefit of the entire academic community and those organisations to who such knowledge shall be transferred.

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